2026 Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS)

Glossary of Terms

November 17, 2026

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Purpose of the 2026 Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) Glossary

This glossary defines over 140 terms and phrases used in the 2026 Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) and the Policy Survey. The primary audience for this glossary is the state and local election officials who complete these surveys. The purpose of this glossary is to assist survey respondents in understanding the survey questions and providing data that are accurate and comprehensive, as well as to establish data consistency across states and jurisdictions.

This glossary is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of all election terminology or all potential uses of the terms contained in this glossary. See the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's (EAC) Glossary of Election Terminology for a more thorough guide to election terms.

Within this glossary, question numbers that start with **Q** denote questions in the 2026 Policy Survey, and questions that start with **A** through **F** denote questions in the 2026 EAVS.

A

Access audit

Appears in: Q48

An assessment of whether legal procedures were followed to ensure the election's accessibility to voters with disabilities, or an assessment of whether voting locations met the accessibility requirements.

Accessible absentee voting

Related terms: Accessible online ballot delivery; remote access vote by mail; remote ballot marking; electronic absentee voting

Appears in: Q8, Q29

A process whereby a voter with a disability may access a ballot online, mark it privately and independently, and return it to election officials.

Active voter

Related terms: Active status; active registered voter

Appears in: Q11–Q11b, A1, B1

Fully eligible voters who have no additional processing requirements to fulfill before voting.

Affidavit

Appears in: Q25a, Q26a, Q33, Q49b, C9

A written statement confirmed by oath or affirmation. It can be used to attest to a voter's identity or their eligibility to cast a ballot.

All-mail election

Related term: All-vote-by-mail election

Appears in: Q23–Q23a, C2, F1

An election in which all registered voters, or all active registered voters, are automatically sent a mail ballot. Some in-person voting may still occur. An all-mail election may be conducted statewide or only in selected jurisdictions.

Armed forces recruitment office

Related term: Military recruiting office

Appears in: Q5, Q16, A4–A9

An office at which members of the U.S. armed forces assist individuals in signing up for military service. In some states, these offices may also serve as voter registration sites.

Automated independent ballot audit

Appears in: Q48

An audit that recounts all paper ballots through a different tabulation system to confirm the accuracy of the election results. This audit method provides a visualization of each ballot.

Automatic registration

Related term: Automatic voter registration

Appears in: Q6–Q6a, A10

A system in which an eligible voter is registered to vote, or an existing voter record is updated, after the person interacts with a state government agency (e.g., motor vehicles agency, agencies for people with disabilities, public assistance agencies, agencies designated by the state's chief election official or governor). The option to register can be automatic, preselected, or not preselected. If the option is not preselected, then the individual cannot complete the interaction without selecting whether or not they wish to register to vote (or update their voter registration record). If the option is automatically selected or preselected, then the person may be able to opt out during the interaction or by responding to a notice sent after the interaction has concluded.

B

Ballot

Related terms: Electronic ballot; mail ballot; paper ballot

Appears in: Q8, Q9–Q9b, Q16, Q20–Q20a, Q21, Q23–Q23b, Q23d, Q24–Q24b, Q25–Q25d, Q26–Q26a, Q27, Q28–Q29c, Q30–Q30b, Q31, Q32, Q33, Q33c, Q34, Q36–Q37, Q40–Q45e, Q47–Q48, Q49, Q49b–Q49c, A1, A2, B2–B33, C1–C9, E1–E3, F1–F10, F12

The official presentation of all the contests to be decided in an election and the mechanism for voters to show their voter preferences. Ballots may be offered in both paper and electronic format.

Ballot curing

Related terms: Successfully cured ballot; unsuccessfully cured ballot; challenged ballot

Appears in: Q25–Q25d, C7

The process of allowing a voter who has returned a mail ballot with an error (such as a missing or non-matching voter signature or missing documentation) to correct the error so that their mail ballot will be counted. If a voter corrects the error, the ballot is successfully cured. If the voter does not correct the error and the ballot is rejected, the ballot is unsuccessfully cured.

Ballot design audit

Appears in: Q48

An assessment of the usability of the ballot(s) in an election, often focusing particularly on voters with disabilities or voters who use ballots in languages other than English.

Ballot marking device (BMD)

Related terms: BMD; electronic ballot marker; EBM

Appears in: Q33c, F5

An electronic system that produces a paper record but does not tabulate votes. The device permits contest options to be reviewed on an electronic interface, produces a human-readable paper ballot, and does not make any other lasting record of the voter's selections.

Ballot-on-demand (BOD) system

Related terms: BOD; ballot-on-demand equipment

Appears in: Q20–Q20a, F10

Equipment that prints the appropriate ballot for a voter when the voter checks in. A ballot-on-demand system is reported as election equipment and may be subject to state testing or certification requirements.

Ballot reconciliation audit

Appears in: Q48

A comparison of the published election results with the number of voters who signed poll books during in-person voting or whose mail ballot envelopes were checked in.

Ballot request

Appears in: Q8, Q35, B4

An act by which a registered voter requests that a ballot be transmitted to them. Usually applies to mail voting or voting by Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters.

Ballot statement

Appears in: Q25a

A document that accompanies a returned mail ballot, typically attesting the voter's eligibility to cast a ballot and requiring the voter's signature (and, in some cases, a witness's signature). Some states or jurisdictions may reject a mail ballot that is missing a ballot statement or that has an incomplete ballot statement.

Ballot tabulation

Related terms: Ballot tally; vote tally

Appears in: Q47–Q47a, Q48

The process of counting ballots and tallying votes to determine the results of an election.

Ballot transmission

Related term: Transmitted ballot

Appears in: Q40, B5–B28, B32, C1–C2

The act of an election office sending a blank ballot to a voter, usually by mail or electronically.

Bottom-up system

Appears in: Q4–Q4a

A registration system in which data is stored and maintained in local jurisdiction election offices. These systems upload information retained at the local level and compile it at regular intervals to form the statewide voter registration list.

C

Canvass

Appears in: Q16, Q27, Q45d

(1) The post-election process of aggregating or confirming every valid ballot cast and counted, which includes mail ballots, in-person voting during early voting or on Election Day, provisional ballots, and ballots from Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters. (2) The process of going door to door to collect information from registered voters on their voter eligibility.

Cast a ballot

Related term: Cast ballot

Appears in: Q9–Q9b, Q31–Q34, Q45a–Q45c, Q47–Q49, Q49b, A2, C1, C7–C9, E1–E2, F1

The process by which a voter marks a ballot (either a paper ballot or an electronic ballot) with their preferences and submits the marked ballot to an election office (by placing the voted ballot in a ballot receptacle or a drop box, submitting the ballot at an election office, or returning the ballot electronically). Once a ballot is cast, the voter's preferences usually cannot be changed.

Challenged voter

Appears in: Q45a, E2

A voter whose eligibility to cast a ballot has been questioned.

Close of registration

Related term: Registration deadline

Appears in: Q9–Q9a, Q13, A1–A14, B2

The last day that an individual can register to vote or update their voter registration before an election.

Compliance audit

Related terms: Procedural audit; process audit

Appears in: Q48

An audit that examines whether the established processes and procedures were followed throughout the election.

Confirmation notice

Related terms: Confirmation of registration notice; removal notice

Appears in: Q15–Q15a, A11–A14

A letter, postcard, or other printed document that is mailed to a voter to confirm changes to their voter registration. It may ask the voter to verify the accuracy of the information. Some notices are required by NVRA Section 8(d)(1)(B) and Section 8(d)(2). States exempt from the NVRA (Wisconsin, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Idaho, Wyoming, North Dakota, and all territories) may still send these notices for other reasons, and some states may have additional notification programs required by state law. Some states call these "removal notices". A removal notice should be reported in the EAVS only if it meets the criteria established above. Examples of when confirmation notices may be sent include when it is believed that the voter may have moved out of the jurisdiction; when the voter has not voted in a federal election for several cycles; or when it is believed that the voter may have a criminal conviction that makes them ineligible under state law. Opt-out mailers for voters automatically registered through an automatic registration program do not count as confirmation notices for EAVS.

Counted ballot

Related terms: Tabulated ballot; tallied ballot

Appears in: Q25c, Q45c–Q45e, Q48, Q49b–Q49c, B18–B32, C1, C6, C7, C8, E1, F1, F3–F7

A ballot that has been processed and whose voter preferences expressed on the ballot have been included in the vote totals for the election.

Cross-jurisdiction change of address

Related term: Change of address

Appears in: Q13, Q15a, Q16, Q45a, A3, A11–A12

The act of a voter moving to a new election jurisdiction that is different from the jurisdiction in which they were previously registered and re-registering to vote to update their residence or mailing address.

Curbside voting

Appears in: Q34–Q34c

A process by which eligible voters may cast their ballot in person outside the voting location. Typically, election workers will bring the voter a poll book to sign, a ballot, and any other voting materials needed to cast a ballot privately and independently.

D

Direct-recording electronic machine (DRE)

Appears in: Q33c, F3–F4

A vote capture device that allows the electronic presentation of a ballot, permits electronic selection of valid contest options, and electronic storage of contest selections as individuals vote. It also provides a summary of these contest selections.

Disqualifying criminal conviction

Appears in: Q15a, Q50–Q50c, A12, A14

An action or offense that renders a voter unable to participate in an electoral process pursuant to applicable state law.

Domestic civilian voter

Appears in: Q26, Q28, Q30–Q30b, Q44

A non-military citizen who resides within the United States or one of its territories and is eligible to vote in federal elections.

Drop box

Related terms: Place of deposit; secure ballot intake station

Appears in: Q8, Q24–Q24c, Q31, C3–C6

A locked container (located either indoors or outdoors) where voters (or voters' authorized representatives, if allowed by state law) may deliver their voted mail ballots for collection. Drop boxes may be staffed or unstaffed and are operated or controlled by election officials. Secure containers at vote centers or voting locations can be considered drop boxes if the election office tracks them. Drop boxes are separate from ballot boxes, which are located at in-person voting locations for voters to place their ballots immediately after voting in person.

Duplicate ballot

Related terms: Duplicate ballot transmission; duplicate ballot return

Appears in: B5–B10, B11–B16, C1

(1) An additional ballot transmitted to a voter who has already been transmitted a ballot, usually because the original transmitted ballot has been lost or spoiled. (2) An additional returned ballot that originates from a voter who has already cast another ballot.

Duplicate registration

Appears in: Q14, A3, A6, A10, A14

An application to register to vote from a person who is already registered to vote at the same address, under the same name and personal information.

E

Early voting

Related terms: In-person absentee voting; advance voting; one-stop voting; walk-in absentee voting

Appears in: Q9a, Q24a, Q31–Q31b, Q32, Q33, A2, C3a, C5, D4, D6, F1, F3–F9, F12

Voting that occurs before Election Day wherein voters complete their ballots in person at an election office or other designated polling site under the supervision of election workers. For EAVS purposes, simply hand-delivering a mail ballot to an election office or drop box is not early voting.

Early voting location

Related term: Early voting site

Appears in: Q24a, D4, F1

A location at which voters may cast their ballots before Election Day in person, such as at an election office or other designated polling site, under the supervision of election workers.

Election

A formal process of selecting a person for public office or of accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting.

Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS)

Related term: EAVS Comprehensive Report

A biennial data collection effort by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to collect data on election administration and other election activities following each federal general election. This term may refer specifically to the survey that collects data on voter registration, Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voting, mail voting, in-person polling operations, provisional voting, voter participation, and election technology within 90 days of a federal general election. It may also be used to refer collectively to the data collection effort that encompasses the EAVS and the Policy Survey.

Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) Comprehensive Report

A report written by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) that highlights findings from the EAVS and Policy Survey, particularly those findings related to election administration and other election activities. The report is delivered to Congress and publicly released no later than June 30 in the year following the federal election for which the EAVS and Policy Survey data were collected.

Election audit

Related term: Audit

Appears in: Q48–Q48b

(1) A systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact, or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled. (2) The verification of statistical or an exact agreement of records from different processes or subsystems of a voting system. (3) A review of a system and its controls to determine its operational status and the accuracy of its outputs.

Election certification

Related terms: Certification of election; certification of official election results; certification

Appears in: Q46

(1) A written statement attesting that the tabulation and canvassing of an election are complete and accurate. (2) The act of confirming the final official results of a jurisdiction's election. This event occurs after results from valid ballots are tallied from all voting methods, and results are validated and approved by those legally responsible.

Election Day registration (EDR)

Related term: Same-day registration (SDR)

Appears in: Q9–Q9b, A2, A3, A4–A9, F8–F9

An act whereby a voter may register to vote on Election Day and cast a ballot in person on the same day.

Election Day voting

Appears in: Q9–Q9a, Q24, Q32–Q33, A2, A3, A4–A9, C4, D3, D5, F1–F12

An act whereby voters cast ballots on Election Day.

Election night reporting system

Appears in: Q21

A web-based technology used to collect, compile, display, or otherwise report preliminary election results on election night. Election night reporting systems may be interoperable with voter registration systems.

Election office

Related term: Election division

Appears in: Q1, Q8, Q9b, Q15–Q15a, Q16, Q24a–Q24b, Q31, Q33–Q33a, Q36, A2, A4–A9, A11–A12, B4, B5–B10, B11–B16, C4–C5, D3–D4

The department of government that is charged with administering elections. These offices may be a part of a state (or equivalent) government or a local government.

Electronic ballot delivery system

Related terms: Online ballot delivery portal; electronic ballot interface; ballot delivery portal

Appears in: Q21, Q28–Q30b, Q40–Q41, B22, C1–C2

A web-based system used to transmit blank ballots electronically to voters. Depending on jurisdictional law and system design, it may also facilitate the return of voted ballots.

Electronic data transfer

Appears in: Q5

The transmission of information from one computer system to another, not including information sent by email or fax.

Electronic poll book (EPB)

Related terms: E-poll book; EPB

Appears in: Q5, Q19–Q19b, Q33c, F8

A device that partially automates the process of checking in voters, assigning them to the correct ballot style, and marking voters who have been issued a ballot. It may be used in place of a traditional paper poll book. Electronic poll books can be stand-alone at the precinct with a separate copy of the registration list, or they can be networked into a central voter registration system where election officials or poll workers can check and update voter records in real time.

Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)

Appears in: Q16

A public charity nonprofit membership organization that assists states in improving the accuracy of America's voter rolls and increasing access to voter registration for all eligible citizens. These objectives are accomplished by sharing data from member states and other data sources on voters who have moved (either within states or between member states), voters who have died, and voters with duplicate registrations in member states to facilitate voter registration list maintenance.

Eligibility audit

Appears in: Q48

A process to verify that the ballots that were counted were legally cast.

Eligible voter

Related term: Voter eligibility

Appears in: Q8, Q11, Q13, Q14, Q16, Q45a, Q45e, Q50c, A1, A3, A4–A10, A11, B1–B3, C9, E1–E2

The universe of all voters who, if they cast a ballot, would have the legal right to have eligible contests on that ballot tabulated. This includes individuals who do not appear in the list of eligible voters because they did not or could not register ahead of time and live in a state that offers same-day registration and/or Election Day registration or does not require voter registration.

Email

Related terms: Email ballot return; email ballot transmission

Appears in: Q25c, Q28, Q29b, Q30–Q30b, Q40–Q41, A4–A9, B7, B13, B17c, B20

A method of transmitting and receiving messages electronically across computer networks. Uses of email to support elections include as a method of transmitting or returning ballots, a method of voter registration, or a method for an election office to notify a voter of the need to cure the voter's ballot.

Email ballot return

Appears in: Q30, Q30b, Q41, B13, B20

The return of a voted ballot from a voter as an attachment to an email message. Some states and jurisdictions may allow this ballot return method for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters, voters with a disability, or in other circumstances. Other electronic means of returning ballots, including fax, online ballot delivery portals, and other internet-supported applications, are reported separately from ballots returned by email in the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS).

Email ballot transmission

Appears in: Q28, Q29b, Q40, B7, B17

The delivery of a blank ballot to a voter as an attachment to an email message. Some states and jurisdictions may transmit ballots using this method to Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters, to voters with a disability, or in other circumstances. Other electronic means of transmitting ballots, including fax, online ballot delivery portals, and other internet-supported applications, are reported separately from ballots transmitted by email in the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS).

Excuse for mail voting

Appears in: Q22, Q31a

The act of requiring voters to provide a valid excuse to be permitted to vote by mail in an election. Common excuses include the voter being away from their county on Election Day, having an illness or disability, being incarcerated but otherwise qualified to vote, or having a work shift during all voting hours.

F

Fax

Related terms: Ballot return; ballot transmission; facsimile; UOCAVA

Appears in: Q28, Q30, Q30b, Q40–Q41, A4–A9, B8, B14, B21

A machine that scans a document as a single, fixed graphic image and transmits the contents of the document via the telephone system. The received document is reconstructed so it can be printed. Ballots may be transmitted to some types of voters through fax, and in some cases, voters may return their voted ballots to an election office by fax.

Federal general election

Related term: General election

A general election in which a candidate for federal office (president, senator, or representative) appears on the ballot.

Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)

Appears in: Q35–Q37, B2–B4

A uniform registration and ballot request application for military and overseas voters that is accepted in all U.S. states and territories.

Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)

Related term: UOCAVA

A division within the U.S. Department of Defense that works to ensure Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so. The data collected in Section B of the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) are the result of a collaboration between the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and FVAP to study the implementation of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).

Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)

Appears in: Q35, B29–B33, F1

A blank ballot provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) through which military and overseas voters can vote by writing in their choices and returning the ballot to their election office. The FWAB is typically used when a voter's regular UOCAVA absentee ballot does not arrive in time. FWABs originate from the voter and are not transmitted by any election office.

G

General election

Related term: Federal general election

An election in which all eligible voters, regardless of their party affiliation, are permitted to select candidates to fill public office and/or to vote on ballot measures.

H

Hand cancellation

Related term: Postmark

Appears in: Q26a

Imprints applied to stamped mail pieces that cancel the affixed postage. Unlike physical postmarks applied by machines, these imprints are applied by hand using a stamp provided by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Hand cancellation may be used to satisfy postmark requirements for mail ballots in some states.

Hand count

Appears in: Q48, F7

Counting paper ballots and/or selections on paper ballots by human examination.

Help America Vote Act (HAVA)

An act passed by the U.S. Congress in 2002 to make reforms to the nation's voting process. HAVA addresses improvements to voting systems and voter access that were identified following the 2000 election. The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) assists the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) in meeting its statutory requirements under HAVA. HAVA established the EAC and includes requirements concerning voting systems, provisional voting, and statewide voter-registration lists.

Help America Vote Verification (HAVV)

Related terms: HAVV system; SSA verification

Appears in: Q16

A service operated by the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) that lets election officials check voter registration applicant information, such as name, date of birth, and the last four digits of the Social Security number, against SSA records. States use it to verify identifying information required under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and, in some cases, to help identify records that may be invalid or belong to deceased individuals.

Hybrid system

Related terms: Bottom-up system; top-down system

Appears in: Q4–Q4a

A registration system that combines elements of both top-down and bottom-up registration systems.

I

Inactive voter

Related terms: Inactive status; National Voter Registration Act (NVRA); Inactive list

Appears in: Q11–Q11b, A1, A14, B1

Voters who remain eligible to vote but require address verification under the provisions of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

Ineligible voter

Appears in: Q15–Q17, B3

A voter who does not have the legal right to register to vote and/or to cast a ballot in an election under federal, state, or local law.

In-person voting

Appears in: Q9–Q9b, Q23, Q23c, Q24, Q28, Q30, Q31–Q31b, Q33, Q34, Q45a, Q48, Q49–Q49a, A2, C1, C9, D2–D6, E2, F1–F12

Voting that occurs in an official location, such as a voting location, vote center, or election office, under the supervision of election workers.

Intelligent barcode

Related term: Intelligent Mail barcode (IMb)

Appears in: Q26a

A 65-bar U.S. Postal Service (USPS) barcode applied to a mail piece. When applied to a mail ballot envelope, this barcode allows election officials to track individual ballots as they are mailed between the election office and voters.

L

Legal audit

Appears in: Q48

An assessment of whether the election practices comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

List maintenance

Appears in: Q15, Q16, A11–A14

The process that state and local election offices use to maintain and update voter registration rolls on a periodic basis by canceling registrations for voters who are no longer eligible to vote.

Local election office

Appears in: Q1, Q15, Q24a, Q31, Q33a

An office that oversees election administration below the level of the state, including counties, cities, districts, boroughs, towns, townships, villages, and parishes.

Local jurisdiction

Appears in: Q2

Governmental jurisdictions below the level of the state, including counties, cities, districts, boroughs, towns, townships, villages, and parishes. The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) collects data at the local jurisdiction level.

Logic and accuracy testing (LAT)

Related terms: LAT; pre-election testing; L&A testing

Appears in: Q19b, Q48

A test to examine whether the voting machines are tabulating votes correctly before vote tabulation begins, usually by creating a test deck of ballots and running them through the machines.

M

Machine recount

Related term: Recount

Appears in: Q47a

A repeat tabulation of the votes cast in an election to determine the accuracy of the reported election results wherein the repeat tabulation is conducted by using machines, not humans, to examine the voting records.

Mail ballot

Related term: Absentee ballot

Appears in: Q8, Q9, Q16, Q23–Q23a, Q24, Q25–Q25d, Q26–Q26a, Q31, Q42–Q44, Q45a, Q48, A2, C1–C9, E2, F1, F5–F7, F12

A ballot cast by a voter through a method other than in-person at a voting location (such as a voting location or an election office). Mail ballots are marked, unsupervised, at a location of the voter's choosing before being returned to election officials. Mail ballots are typically mailed to voters but can be issued over the counter from an election office. Depending on the jurisdiction, mail ballots can be returned by mail, in a drop box, or in-person. For the purposes of the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), in-person absentee voting that takes place at an election office is considered early voting.

Mail voting

Related terms: Absentee voting; vote by mail

Appears in: Q8, Q22–Q30b, C1–C2

Voting via a physically transmitted ballot that is not returned in person at a physical voting location. Voters mark their mail ballot, unsupervised, at a location of their choosing either before or on Election Day before returning the ballot to election officials. Common methods for voters returning their mail ballots include by mail through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), at a drop box, or at an election office. For the purposes of the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), in-person absentee voting that takes place at an election office is considered early voting.

Manual recount

Related term: Recount

Appears in: Q47a

A repeat tabulation of the votes cast in an election to determine the accuracy of the reported results of an election wherein the repeat tabulation is conducted by humans examining the voting records by hand.

Motor vehicle agency

Related term: Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Appears in: Q5, Q6a, Q7a, Q16, A4–A9

A government agency that manages motor vehicle registration and driver licensing. The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) requires that states offer the opportunity to register to vote at state motor vehicle agencies.

N

National Change of Address (NCOA)

Related terms: NCOALink

Appears in: Q16, A12

A secure data set of approximately 160 million permanent change-of-address (COA) records consisting of the names and addresses of individuals, families, and businesses who have filed a COA with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Election officials use NCOA to update records in their voter registration databases.

National Mail Voter Registration Form

Related terms: Federal voter registration form; NVRA form; NVRF

Appears in: A4–A9

The voter registration application form developed under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and administered by the EAC for use in registering to vote in federal elections. EAVS includes a distinct reporting source for transactions submitted using this form.

National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)

Related terms: Motor Voter Act; motor voter

Appears in: Q5, Q11, Q15, Q16, A1, A4–A9, A11–A12

An act, commonly known as the "Motor Voter Law," that requires that states offer the opportunity to register to vote at their motor vehicle agencies (known as the Department of Motor Vehicles [DMV] in many states), state offices that provide public assistance, state-funded programs primarily engaged in providing services to people with disabilities, and armed services recruitment offices. NVRA also provides guidelines on registration list maintenance and sets limits on how voters can be removed from the rolls.

New valid registration

Appears in: Q13, A3, A5, A10

A successful voter registration application submitted by an individual who meets the eligibility requirements and does not duplicate or modify a voter registration record that already exists within the voter registration system.

Non-military/civilian overseas voter

Related terms: Overseas citizen; overseas voter; UOCAVA voter

Appears in: Q35, Q38–Q43, B1–B3, B5–B16, B18–B33

A U.S. citizen who is living outside of the United States and is eligible to vote in their last place of residence in the United States.

O

Online

Related terms: Ballot return; ballot transmission; online ballot delivery portal; voter registration

Appears in: Q6, Q7–Q8, Q25c, Q28–Q29, Q30b, Q40–Q41, A4–A9, A10, B9, B15, B22

(1) A method of ballot transmission or return whereby a blank ballot is transmitted to a voter electronically or a voter returns a voted ballot to an election office electronically. The transmission or return of ballots as an attachment to an email message is reported separately from ballots that are transmitted or returned online in the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS). (2) Online websites may also be used to collect information that is used to register individuals to vote.

Online ballot delivery portal

Related terms: Electronic ballot interface; electronic ballot delivery; electronic ballot return; online portal

Appears in: Q25c, Q28, Q29, Q29b, Q30, Q30b, Q40–Q41, B9, B15, B22

An internet-supported application that transmits blank ballots to voters electronically. Some portals may also allow voters to return their voted mail ballots using the same application. Some states and jurisdictions may use these applications to facilitate voting by Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters, voters with a disability, or in other circumstances. The transmission or return of ballots as an attachment to an email message is reported separately from ballots that are transmitted or returned using an online ballot delivery portal in the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS).

Online registration

Appears in: Q6, Q7–Q7a, Q28, Q30, A4–A9

A process whereby individuals may submit a voter registration application or update an existing voter registration via a paperless form filled out on an internet site; the paperless form is submitted electronically to election officials for review and, if valid, added to the state's voter registration rolls. This process typically parallels the traditional paper-based process but does not require a paper form to be submitted by the voter.

P

Partially counted provisional ballot

Appears in: Q45c, E1, F1

A provisional ballot for which only some voter preferences are included in the official tally of the votes, typically because the voter cast their ballot in the wrong precinct and was only eligible to vote in some of the contests on their ballot.

Permanent mail voter

Related term: Permanent absentee voter

Appears in: Q23b–Q23d, C2

A voter who has applied to use a mail ballot to vote for all elections and has met the qualifications to be a permanent mail voter in their jurisdiction. In reporting data on permanent mail voters in the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), voters who receive a mail ballot because they reside in a state or jurisdiction that transmits mail ballots to all registered voters, or all active registered voters, in each election (typically called an all-mail election) should be excluded.

Policy Survey

A survey that collects data from state election officials on the applicable election policies and procedures to provide context for the quantitative data included in each state's Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) submission. The Policy Survey is collected before the election for which data are being sought. States' Policy Survey responses may pre-populate some responses in each state's EAVS submission.

Poll book

Related terms: Roster; electronic poll book; paper poll book

Appears in: Q5, Q19–Q19b, Q33c, Q34, Q45a, Q48, F8–F9

An official register of people entitled to vote in an election that is used at in-person voting sites to verify and check in voters before issuing them a ballot. Poll books may be printed on paper or used electronically.

Poll worker

Related terms: Election judge; booth worker; warden; commissioner; election inspector; election worker

Appears in: Q8, Q33–Q33d, Q34, Q45a, D5–D9, E2

An official who is responsible for the proper and orderly voting at a polling location or an election process. Poll workers perform duties that may include verifying the identities of voters; assisting voters with signing the register, affidavits, or other documents required to cast a ballot; providing voters with ballots or setting up voting machines for voters; and other functions as dictated by state law. Poll workers do not include observers stationed at voting locations, regular office staff who do not serve poll worker functions in an election, or temporary office staff not hired specifically to serve voters in either early or Election Day voting.

Postal mail return

Appears in: Q41–Q43, B12, B19, C1

The return of a voted ballot from a voter to an election office through the postal mail, including the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), or through a private courier shipping service. Ballots that are typically returned by mail include mail ballots, Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) absentee ballots, and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWAB).

Postal mail transmission

Appears in: Q40, B6, C1

The transmission of a blank ballot from an election office to a voter through the postal mail, including the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), or through a private courier shipping service. Ballots that are typically transmitted by mail include mail ballots and Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) absentee ballots.

Post-election tabulation audit

Appears in: Q48

Records from a fixed number or percentage of randomly selected voting districts or voting machines are recounted (either manually or by machine) and compared to the originally reported vote totals.

Postmark

Related term: Hand cancellation

Appears in: Q26–Q26a, Q42–Q44, B27, C9

A postal marking made on an envelope, parcel, postcard, or the like, indicating the place, date, and time that the item was delivered into the care of a postal service, or sometimes indicating where and when received or in transit. Postmarks may be used to determine that a mail ballot or a Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) absentee ballot was submitted in a timely manner and is able to be counted in an election.

Precinct

Related terms: Voting precinct; tabulation district; ward

Appears in: Q32, Q45c, D1, E1–E3, F3–F7, F12

An election administration division that corresponds to a contiguous geographic area that is the basis for determining which contests and issues the voters legally residing in that area are eligible to vote on.

Pre-registration

Appears in: Q10–Q10a, A1, A3

A process by which persons under age 18 submit a voter registration application so that they will be registered when they become of voting age. Not all states allow pre-registration. State rules differ on eligibility and processing.

Provisional ballot

Related terms: Affidavit ballot; fail-safe ballot

Appears in: Q8, Q33c, Q45–Q45e, Q49b–Q49c, C1, E1–E3, F1, F3–F7, F12

A ballot cast by a voter when there is some question regarding the eligibility of the voter (e.g., the voter was not on the list of eligible voters, the voter's information was incomplete or not accurate, or the voter had already received a ballot in the mail and was allowed to vote). Provisional ballots are usually kept separate from the other ballots and are not tallied until an election official can determine if the voter is eligible to vote.

Provisional voter

Appears in: E1–E3

An individual who declares they are a registered voter in the jurisdiction where they desire to vote and is eligible to vote in an election for federal office, but (1) the voter's name does not appear on the official list of eligible voters for the voting location, or (2) an election official asserts that the individual is not eligible to vote.

Public assistance offices

Appears in: Q5, Q6a, Q16, A4–A9

A government agency that administers a program that provides either cash assistance or in-kind benefits to individuals and families from any government entity. State public assistance offices are mandated to serve as voter registration sites under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

R

Received ballot

Related terms: Returned ballot; ballot receipt; ballot return

Appears in: Q8, Q16, Q24, Q24b, Q26, Q29, Q30–Q30b, Q41–Q43, B11–B33, C1, C6–C9

A ballot that has been cast by a voter and returned to an election office to be tallied. Received ballots are reviewed by election officials to determine whether they should be counted or rejected.

Recount

Appears in: Q46–Q47a, Q48

A repeat tabulation of the votes cast in an election to determine the accuracy of the reported results of an election. Recounts may be conducted for a variety of reasons, and the repeat tabulation may be conducted by hand or by machine, depending on the local laws and procedures.

Registered voter

Related terms: Active voter; inactive voter

Appears in: Q11, Q13, Q15a, Q23b, Q24c, A1–A3, A11–A12, A14, B1, E3, F1

A voter who is listed on an electoral roll for the jurisdiction where the voter resides. Registered voters may be further classified into active voters, inactive voters, and other types of registered voters (such as provisionally registered voters, voters whose registration applications are still being processed, or voters whose registration status is pending).

Registration drive

Related term: Voter registration drive

Appears in: A4–A9

An effort by a government authority, political party, or other entity to register to vote persons otherwise entitled to vote. Participants in a voter registration drive distribute voter registration forms, provide assistance in completing them, and return the forms to election offices for review.

Registration form

Related terms: Registration card; voter registration card; voter registration application

Appears in: Q13, B2–B3

An official sworn statement of information used by voters to register to vote. Registration forms may contain multiple updates on a single form.

Registration source

Related term: Registration mode

Appears in: A4–A9

The means through which a voter registration form is submitted to election officials for processing. Common registration sources include paper forms submitted through mail/fax/email, motor vehicle agencies, and registration forms submitted online.

Registration status

Related terms: Active voter; canceled voter; inactive voter

Appears in: Q8, Q11–Q11b, A1, A3, A14

A term used by election officials to describe whether a voter's record shows that the voter is eligible to vote. Common status terms include active, inactive, canceled, pending, and other jurisdiction-specific statuses.

Registration update

Related terms: New valid registration; rejected registration; transaction

Appears in: Q7, Q13, A3, A7, A10, E2

A registration transaction that modifies or edits voter information for an individual with a current, valid registration in the election jurisdiction. Examples of updates include a change to the individual's name, contact information, address (either within the same jurisdiction or an address change that crossed jurisdiction borders), or political party (where applicable).

Rejected ballot

Appears in: Q45c, B24–B28, B31–B33, C1, C9, E1, E3

A ballot that has been cast by a voter but cannot be counted due to a defect on the ballot, the ineligibility of the voter, or the ballot being received after the deadline for returning ballots.

Rejected registration

Related terms: Invalid registration; rejected transaction

Appears in: Q14, A3, A8, A10

A registration transaction that did not result in the creation of a new registration record or an update to an existing registration record because the transaction was not completed properly or did not meet the requirements for registration according to state or federal law.

Risk-limiting audit (RLA)

Related term: Risk-limiting tabulation audit

Appears in: Q48

A procedure for checking a sample of ballots (or voter verifiable records) that provides a prespecified statistical chance of correcting the reported outcome of an election if the reported outcome is wrong (that is, if a full hand count would reveal an outcome different from the reported outcome).

S

Same-day registration (SDR)

Related terms: Election Day registration (EDR); same-day voter registration

Appears in: Q9–Q9b, Q45a, A2, E2, F8–F9

An act whereby a voter may register to vote on the same day that they cast a ballot in person. This may occur either on or before Election Day.

Scanner

Related terms: Ballot scanner; ballot tabulator

Appears in: Q33c, Q47a, F6

A device used to read the voter selection data from a paper ballot or ballot card.

Secrecy envelope

Related terms: Secrecy sleeve; privacy sleeve; inner envelope; identification envelope

Appears in: C9

An envelope that encloses a voted ballot to maintain the secrecy of how a voter marked their ballot. Some states or jurisdictions require voted mail ballots to be placed in a secrecy envelope when they are returned and will reject mail ballots that are not in a secrecy envelope.

Spoiled ballot

Related terms: Surrendered ballot; replacement ballot; replaced ballot

Appears in: Q28, C1

A ballot that has been incorrectly marked or altered by a voter. A spoiled ballot is not cast, and the voter may request a new ballot to mark correctly.

State election office

Appears in: Q1

An office that oversees election administration for a state with its own government and borders within a larger country subordinate to a federal government. The Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) and Policy Survey collect data for the 50 U.S. states, five U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. The territories and the District of Columbia should complete the EAVS and Policy Survey as if they are states.

State-to-State (S2S) Verification Service

Related terms: S2S; State-to-State Verification

Appears in: Q16

A data-sharing service, managed by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrations (AAMVA), that lets participating states check whether an individual holds a driver's license or identification card in another state. Election officials may use S2S results to identify registered voters who have likely moved or obtained a license in a different state.

Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) System

Related terms: USCIS SAVE; SAVE system

Appears in: Q16

An online verification service operated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that lets authorized government agencies confirm the immigration status or citizenship of an individual. Some states use SAVE as a data source to identify registered voters who may not be eligible to vote because they are not U.S. citizens.

T

Top-down system

Appears in: Q4

A registration system that is hosted on a single, central platform or mainframe that is maintained by the state with information supplied by local jurisdictions.

Transaction

Related term: Registration form; Registration transaction

Appears in: Q13–Q14, A3–A10

A unit of work performed to a voter registration record within a voter registration database. Transactions may involve adding a new registration record, updating the record of an existing registered voter (such as updating the voter's name, contact information, or address), or removing a record if the individual is no longer an eligible voter in your jurisdiction. Multiple transactions may be performed on one voter registration record during the period between the close of registration for the 2024 general election and the close of registration for the 2026 general election. In addition, when a voter moves between jurisdictions, it may trigger registration transactions in the jurisdiction the voter was previously registered as well as in the jurisdiction that the voter is newly registered.

Transmitted ballot

Related term: Ballot transmission

Appears in: Q40, B5–B17, C1–C2

A blank ballot that is sent from an election office to a voter to be marked and returned. Ballots are most commonly transmitted by mail but are sometimes transmitted by email or other electronic means to Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) voters and voters with disabilities.

U

U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC)

Appears in: Q18a, Q19b, F13

A federal agency created by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to assist the states regarding HAVA compliance and to distribute HAVA funds to the states. The EAC is also charged with creating voting system guidelines and operating the federal government's first voting system certification program. The EAC is also responsible for maintaining the National Voter Registration form, conducting research, and administering a national clearinghouse on elections that includes shared practices, information for voters, and other resources to improve elections. The data collected in the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS) and the Policy Survey assist the EAC in meeting its statutory requirements under HAVA and the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).

U.S. Postal Service (USPS)

Appears in: Q26a, A11–A12, B6, B12, B17, B19

An agency within the federal government that is responsible for providing postal service in the United States, including within its territories. The USPS may be involved in sending election mail, mailed ballots to voters, and voted ballots from voters to election offices.

Undeliverable

Related terms: Undeliverable ballot; undeliverable mail; undeliverable confirmation notice

Appears in: Q15a, Q16, A11–A12, B17, C1

A piece of mail or a ballot that is sent from an election office to a voter or an individual but cannot be delivered to its recipient. Reasons an item cannot be delivered may include the U.S. Postal Service is unable to deliver the item or the item is associated with an incorrect postal mail address, email address, or fax number. Items that are unable to be delivered by postal mail may be returned to the election office.

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)

Related terms: UOCAVA voter; UOCAVA ballot; UOCAVA voting

Appears in: Q8, Q26, Q28, Q30–Q30b, Q35–Q44, B1–B33, C1, F1

An act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1986 requiring that the states and territories allow certain groups of citizens to register and vote absentee in elections for federal offices. These groups include Uniformed Services voters (members of the Uniformed Services, Merchant Marine, Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on active duty who may be residing domestically or overseas) and their eligible spouses and dependents, as well as overseas citizens (non-military U.S. citizens residing outside of the United States). These groups of voters are eligible to vote in their last place of residence in the United States. This act outlines processes by which these groups may participate in federal elections.

Uniformed Services voter

Related term: Military voter

Appears in: Q42, B1–B3, B5–B16, B18–B33

A member of the Uniformed Services in active service, including Army, Navy, Air Force (including Space Force), Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on active duty. This includes the eligible spouses and dependents of these voters.

Unreturned

Related terms: Unreturned ballot; unreturned confirmation notice

Appears in: A11, C1

A mail piece or ballot that is sent from an election office to a voter or another individual but that is not returned to the election office, either by the recipient or by the deliverer (such as the U.S. Postal Service [USPS]).

V

Voluntary Electronic Poll Book Certification Requirements (VEPBCR)

Appears in: Q19b

EAC-adopted federal requirements that may be used to evaluate electronic poll books. States may require certification to these requirements as part of their electronic poll-book approval process.

Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG)

Appears in: Q18a

A set of specifications and requirements against which voting systems can be tested to determine if the systems meet required standards. Under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) is responsible for developing, maintaining, and approving these standards. Some factors examined under these tests include basic functionality, accessibility, and security capabilities.

Vote by mail (VBM)

Related terms: All-mail voting; mail voting; postal voting

Appears in: Q8, Q22–Q23a, Q29, C1–C2

A method of voting by which eligible voters are mailed ballots and information packets by an election office (or, in some circumstances, issued over the counter from an election office). These ballots are marked unsupervised at a location of the voter's choosing before being returned to election officials. Voters can return their marked ballots by mail, to a voting location, or in drop boxes, depending on the jurisdiction. For the purposes of the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), in-person absentee voting that takes place at an election office is considered early voting.

Vote center

Appears in: Q31, Q32–Q32a, Q33c, D2–D4

A physical location where voters from multiple precincts may cast their ballots (i.e., voters are not assigned to one location).

Voter identification

Appears in: Q25a, Q45a, Q49–Q49c, C9, E2–E3

A means of proving a person's identity for the purposes of casting a ballot in an election, according to the laws of the jurisdiction. Common forms of identification include driver's licenses, passports, and state issued identification cards.

Voter registration

Appears in: Q3, Q4–Q14, Q21, Q28, Q30, Q32, Q35, Q50b–Q50c, A1–A14, B2–B3, C2, E2, F8–F9

The requirement in most states for citizens to register with a state or local election office in order to be eligible to cast an official ballot in an election and, in some cases, to participate in certain election-related activities (including but not limited to signing petitions, serving as poll workers, and running for office).

Voter registration record

Related terms: Voter registration system; registration database; centralized voter registration system; transaction

Appears in: Q6, Q8, Q11, Q12–Q13, Q35–Q36, Q50b, A3, A12, A14

An electronic record that contains information regarding an individual's eligibility to vote in an election jurisdiction, including their registration number, registration date, name, party affiliation, birth date, residence address, precinct number, voting location address, vote history, etc.

Voter registration record removal

Related terms: Voter registration record; removed voter; list maintenance

Appears in: Q12–Q13, Q15a, Q16, Q50b, A12, A14

An act whereby election officials remove a voter registration record from a voter registration roll after confirming that the individual associated with the record does not meet voter eligibility requirements under federal, state, or local law.

Voter registration roll

Related term: Voter registration list

Appears in: Q4–Q5, Q15a–Q16, Q45a, A12, A14, C2, E2

A list of the individuals that have registered on an electoral roll where a voter resides as a prerequisite for being entitled to vote.

Voter registration system (VRS)

Related terms: Voter registration database; registration database; centralized voter registration system

Appears in: Q4–Q5, Q7, Q21

A voter registration system (VRS) is a combination of hardware, software, or firmware and materials and documentation used to streamline the process of voter registration and to secure voter information in a county, state, or election jurisdiction by election administrators. Voter registration systems are connected to a private network, administered through state or local jurisdictions, and hold the capability of administrative functions to aid in the voting process on Election Day. In some jurisdictions, VRSs may be interoperable with electronic poll books, election night reporting systems, and/or election management systems, but they are not the same. Voter registration systems are designed by either private sector manufacturers or in-house jurisdictions and are managed by manufacturers and jurisdictions based on high level standards of cybersecurity and data infrastructure maintenance.

Voters with disabilities

Related terms: Persons with disabilities; disabled voters

Appears in: Q3, Q5, Q6a, Q16, Q23c, Q28–Q29c, Q30, Q31, Q33c, Q34b, Q48, A4–A9, C2, F3–F7, F12

Voters who may require assistance during the election process to interact with systems not designed using universal design.

Voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT)

Related terms: Voter-verified paper trail (VVPT); voter-verified paper record system (VVPRS)

Appears in: Q47a, F3–F4

Physical paper records of voted ballots as voters have cast them on an electronic voting system. If an election recount or audit is called for, the VVPAT provides a supporting record. The "voter-verified" part of the VVPAT refers to the fact that the voter is given the opportunity to verify that the choices indicated on the paper record correspond to the choices that the voter has made in casting their ballot. Thus, the result of an election is an electronic tally of the votes cast and a paper record of the individual votes that have been cast.

Voting district

Related terms: Precinct; district

Appears in: D1

A political subdivision established within a specified geographic area.

Voting location

Related terms: Polling site; polling location; polling place; polling station; poll; voting service center; voting center

Appears in: Q8, Q9b, Q24–Q24a, Q31, Q32, Q32a, Q33, Q33c, Q34–Q34a, Q45a, Q48, Q49b, A2, A4–A9, C1, D2–D4, E2, F1, F8–F9, F12

A location at which voters may cast ballots in person under the supervision of poll workers or other election workers. These locations may be open for voting either on Election Day or before the election.

Voting machine

Related terms: Voting equipment

Appears in: Q33, Q33c, Q47a, Q48, F3–F6

The mechanical, electromechanical, and electric components of a voting system that the voter uses to view the ballot, indicate their selections, and verify those selections. In some instances, the voting machine also casts and tabulates the votes.

Voting System Test Laboratory (VSTL)

Appears in: Q18a, Q19b

Privately owned testing laboratories that test voting systems (and other election systems) for conformance to the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG) or other requirements, including individual state requirements. VSTLs are periodically reviewed for conformance to the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) administered by the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST).

W

Witness signature

Related term: Notary signature

Appears in: Q25a, C9

The requirement that a ballot not marked under the supervision of an election worker (which may include mail ballots, Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act [UOCAVA] absentee ballots, Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots [FWAB], and accessible absentee voting ballots) include a signature from a person who is not the voter and who can attest that the ballot was marked by the correct voter or that the voter was entitled to vote using the method by which the ballot was cast. Some states have additional requirements for who may serve as a witness.