



Best Practices: Election Results Reporting

Voters look to election officials for trusted information about election results. How election officials display election results can play a key role in facilitating public confidence in election outcomes. The greater the stakes in an election, the greater the possibility that voters may not trust the results. Vote totals released on election night are unofficial and may change before final election results are certified. There are several reasons vote totals change, including adding eligible late-arriving mailed ballots and provisional ballots to the final tally. The timeframe for local election officials to complete the certification process ranges from one to 30 days after the election. It is important for election officials to provide context when sharing election results after polls close on election night until results are certified.

Example Election Results Reporting Website

Your County Elections, Your State

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Election Results

Your County Elections publishes unofficial results for elections to its website after the polls close on the night of the election. Election results are unofficial until canvassed. The purpose of the canvass is to account for every voted ballot and ensure that each valid vote is included in the official results. After the canvass is completed, the results of the election will be audited. This audit will review voted ballots to confirm that the election results are accurate before they are certified as official. Official results are available after certification.

November 8, 2022 Election Results

Unofficial Election Results Last Updated, November 10, 2022, 2:34 pm

Your County Clerk (Vote for 1) Precincts Reporting 100%

Candidate A [Bar Chart]

Candidate B [Bar Chart]

Voter Turnout 83%

Votes Cast by Type of Voting [Pie Chart]

Total Registered Voters 5224
Total Ballots Cast 4324

Type of Ballots Cast: Early In-Person (25.46%), Election Day (41.19%), Mail (33.35%)

Download Results

1st unofficial election results as of 8:00 pm, November 8, 2022. Includes totals from all mailed ballots and early voting processed prior to Election Day.

2nd unofficial election results as of 9:30 pm, November 8, 2022. Includes totals from in-person voting on Election Day.

Glossary

Precincts Reporting - The number of in-person voting locations included in the vote totals. There still may be additional absentee and provisional votes added to the final tally prior to certification.

Contact Your County Elections +123-456-7890

Provide Clear, Concise Information

- Explain the election reporting process in plain language

Display Report Timestamps

- Each results report should clearly show the date and time of the report

Make Data Easy to Download

- Use common data formats
- Provide results as .csv or .xml files
- Include information about which ballots (i.e., early voting, by-mail and absentee, election day, provisional, write-in votes) are included in each report
- Post all reports in chronological order to show how votes changed throughout the reporting period
- Provide a timeline for when to expect updates

Define Key Terms

- Provide a glossary of election terms
- A Glossary of Election Terminology, defining nearly 1,300 words in 21 languages can be found on the EAC website: https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/glossaries-election-terminology_

Display Election Information Visually - Charts and graphs can quickly convey key information about the election and make the results easier to understand.

- **Bar charts** are easy to read, and their lengths are proportional to the values that they represent. Bar charts are widely used to display candidate vote totals
- **Pie charts** show the comparisons between different categories and provide useful context for election data
- **Radial Progress charts** help visualize percentages towards a goal of 100%

Ensure Accessibility

- **Alt-Text** - Also called alt tags and alt descriptions, alt text is the written copy that appears in place of an image on a webpage to help screen-reading tools describe images to visually impaired readers. Learn more: <https://www.section508.gov/create/synchronized-media/>
- **Section 508 Compliance** - Section 508 is a federal law mandating that all electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities. Learn more: <https://www.section508.gov/test/web-software/>

Additional Resources

- **U.S. Web Design Systems (USWDS)** - USWDS was created by a collaborative team at 18F and the U.S. Digital Service in 2015 to make accessible, mobile-friendly government websites: <https://designsystem.digital.gov/>
- **18F Methods** - The 18F Methods are a collection of tools that describe how teams put human-centered design into practice: <https://methods.18f.gov/>