

# STATE CONFIDENCE IN ELECTIONS: RESULTS, PRACTICE, AND LEGISLATION

Joseph Loffredo  
Charles Stewart III





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Electoral Studies

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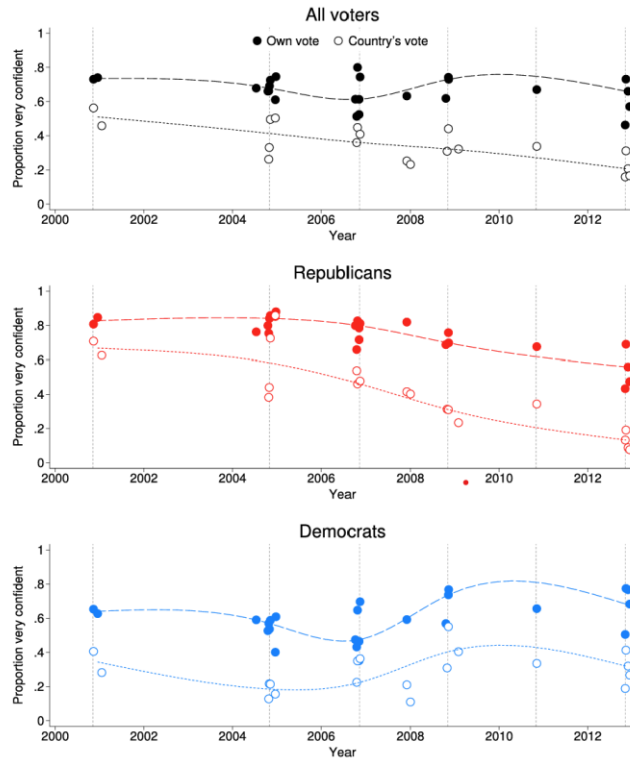
Partisanship and confidence in the vote count: Evidence from U.S. national elections since 2000<sup>☆</sup>

Michael W. Sances<sup>a,\*</sup>, Charles Stewart III<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Political Science, University of Memphis, 421 Clement Hall, Memphis, TN 38152, USA

<sup>b</sup> Department of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, E53-470, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA

M.W. Sances, C. Stewart III / Electoral Studies 40 (2015) 176–188



# COMMUNICATING WITH VOTERS TO BUILD TRUST IN THE U.S. ELECTION SYSTEM

## BEST PRACTICES AND NEW AREAS FOR RESEARCH

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A Research Practice Partnership to Chart Voter Experiences and Test Best Practices for Building Trust in Elections

Thad Kousser, UC San Diego Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research (primary contact)  
Mindy Romero, USC Center for Inclusive Democracy  
Seth Hill, UC San Diego Department of Political Science

*in partnership with*

Dr. Judd Choate, State Election Director, Colorado  
Jesse A. Harris, Ph.D., MPA, Deputy Director, Elections Division, Georgia  
Keith Ingram, past Elections Director, Texas Secretary of State's Office  
Dean Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar





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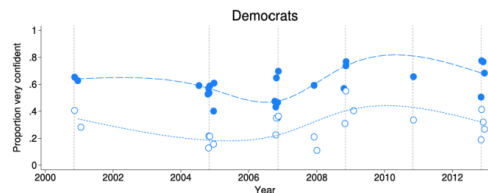
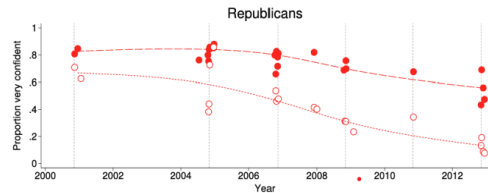
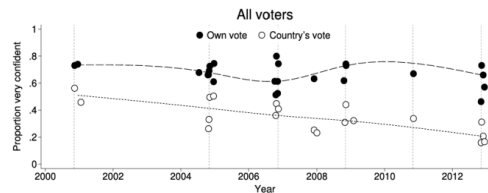


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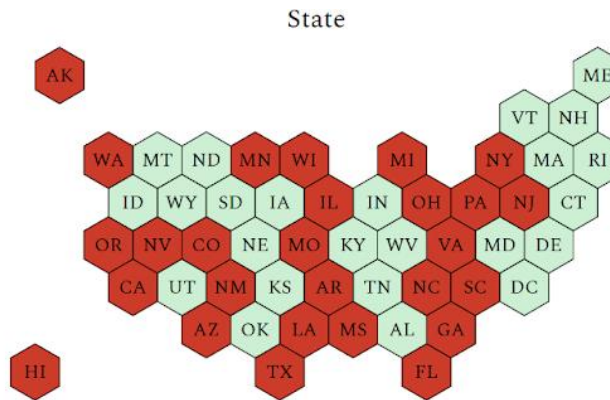


# State Confidence in Elections: Results, Practice, and Legislation

Joseph R. Loffredo  
Charles Stewart III

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Draft of March 12, 2025



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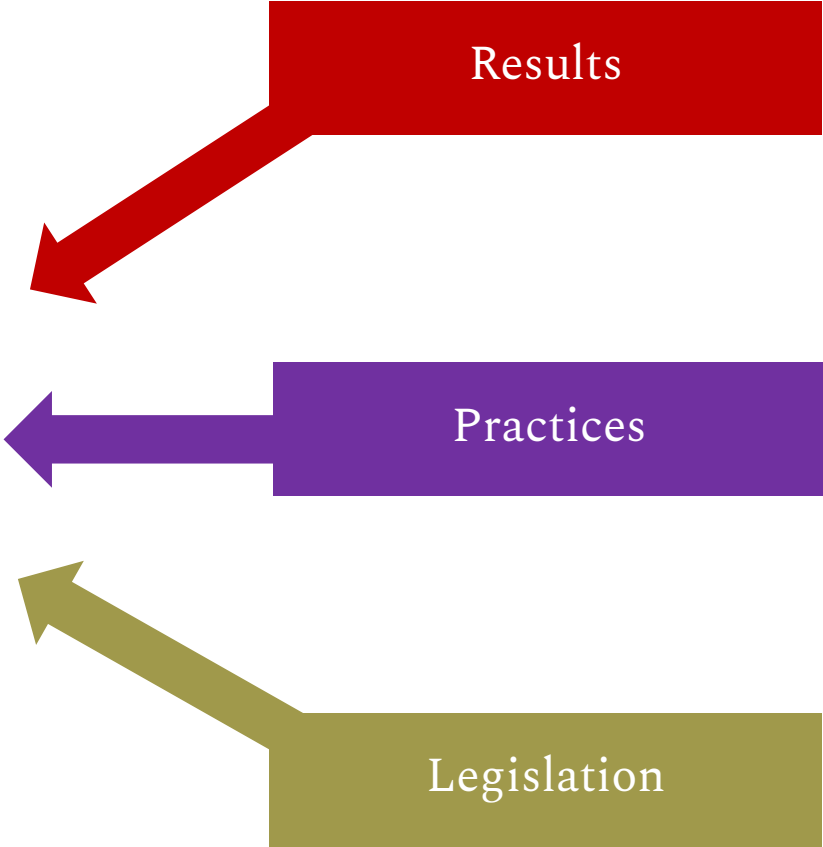
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# THE IDEA

Confidence  
Measured at the  
State Level



National Winner's Party

State Margin of Victory

States Flipping

State Winner's Party

Volume of Mail Ballots

Ballot-Counting Speed

Volume of Expansive Laws

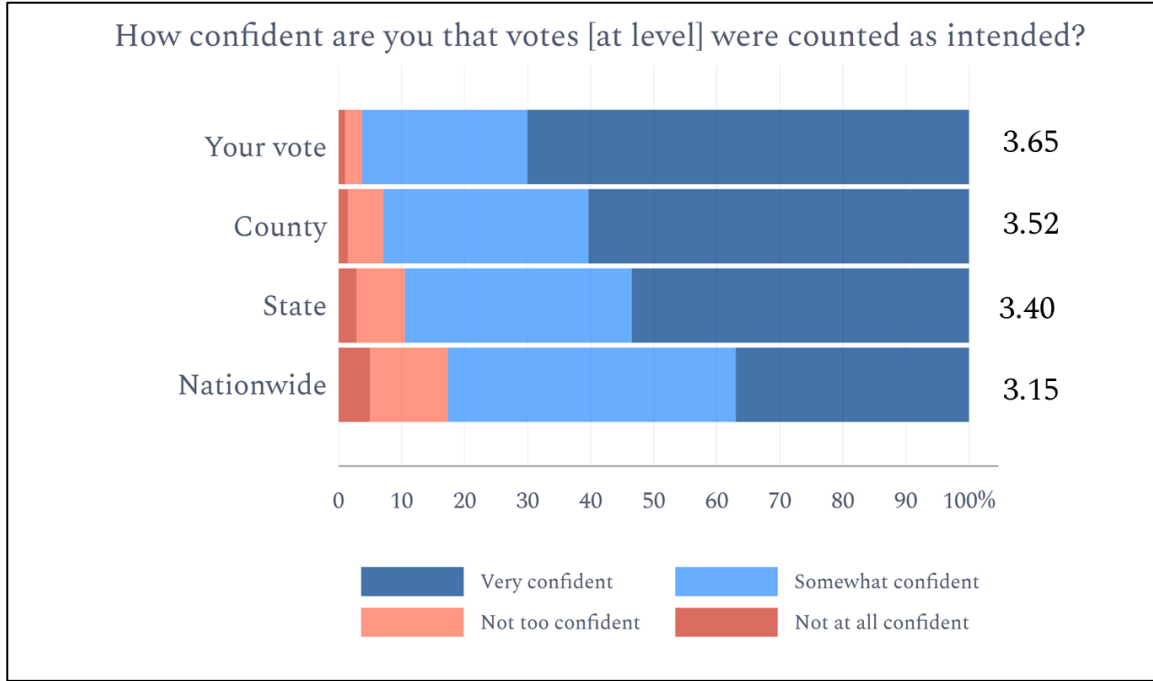
Volume of Restrictive Laws

# TRUST QUESTIONS

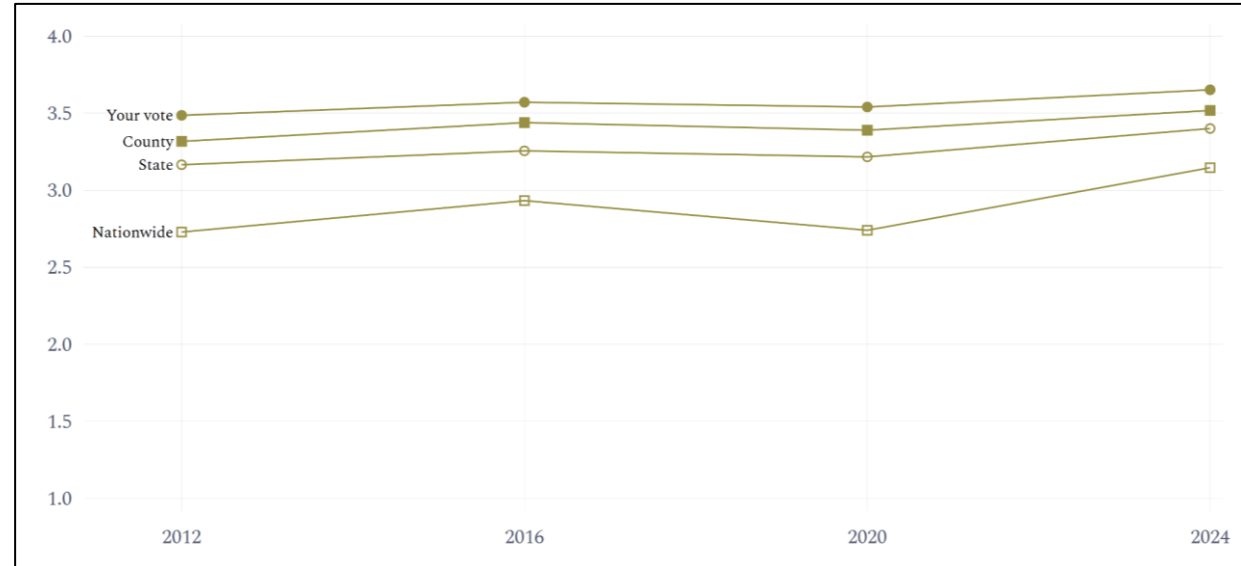
- + How confident are you that **your vote** in the [year] General Election was counted as you intended?\*
  - + Think about vote counting throughout **your county or city**, and not just your own personal situation. How confident are you that votes in your county or city were counted as voters intended in the [year] general election ?
  - + Now, think about vote counting throughout **\$inputstate**. How confident are you that votes in **\$inputstate** were counted as voters intended in the [year] general election?
  - + Finally, think about vote counting throughout the country. How confident are you that votes nationwide were counted as voters intended in the [year] general election?
- + Very confident (4)
  - + Somewhat confident (3)
  - + Not too confident (2)
  - + Not at all confident (1)
  - + I don't know (Excluded)



## Distribution of Responses in 2024

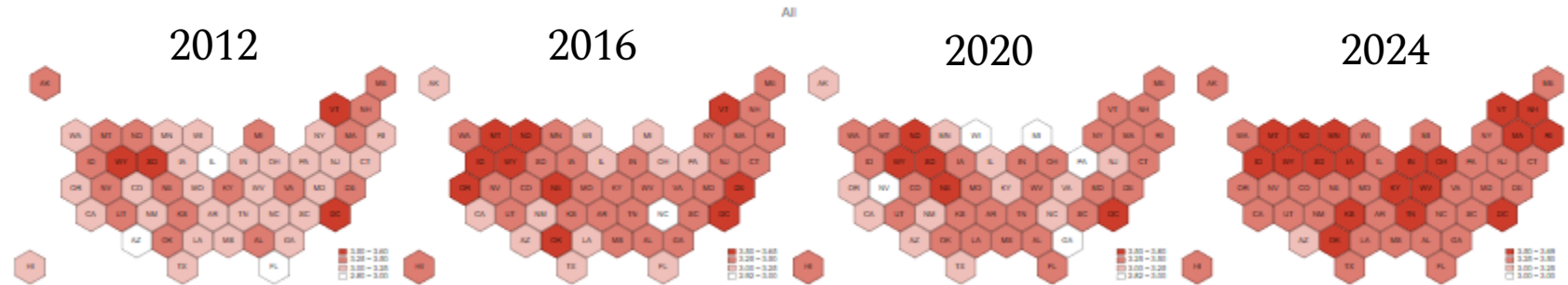


## Average Responses, 2012 – 2024

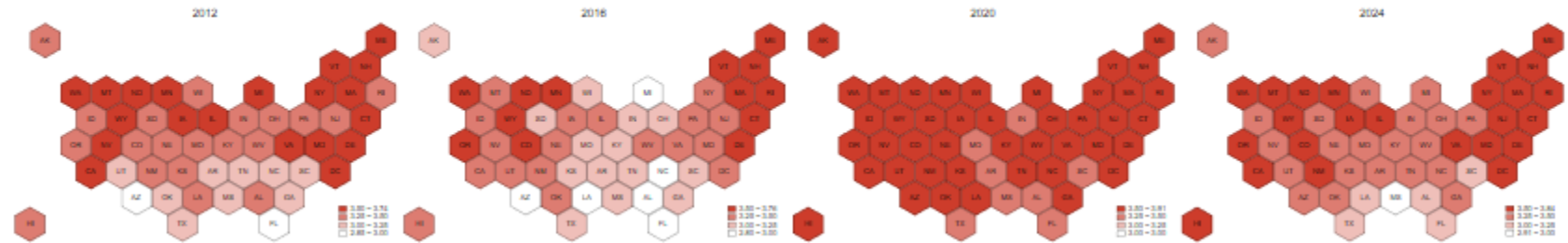


# GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF STATE CONFIDENCE, 2012 - 2024

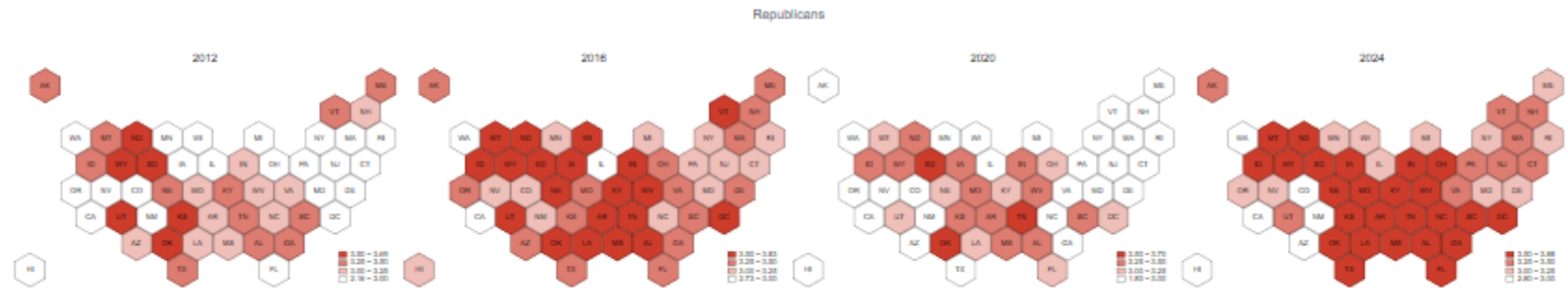
All



Democrats



Republicans



# RESULTS (WINNER/LOSER EFFECT)

- + Which party wins the nation
- + Which party wins the state
- + Two-party state vote margin
- + State “flipping”

2012 D → R	2016 D → R	2020 R → D	2024 D → R
IN	FL	AZ	AZ
NC	IA	GA	GA
	MI	MI	MI
	OH	PA	NV
	PA	WI	PA
	WI		WI

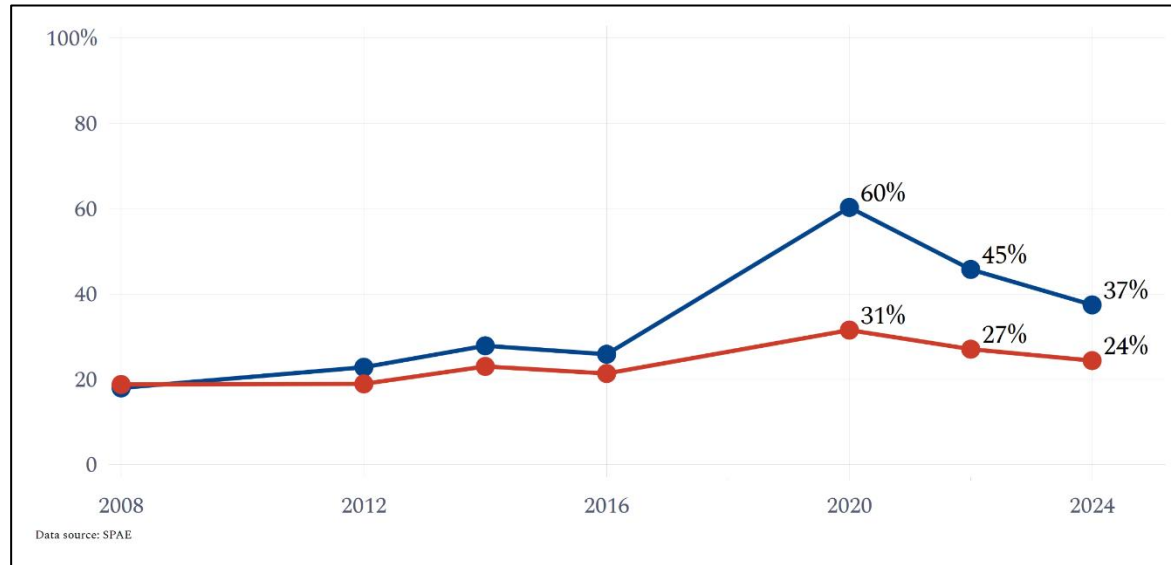
# PRACTICES

- + Voting by mail
- + Counting speed

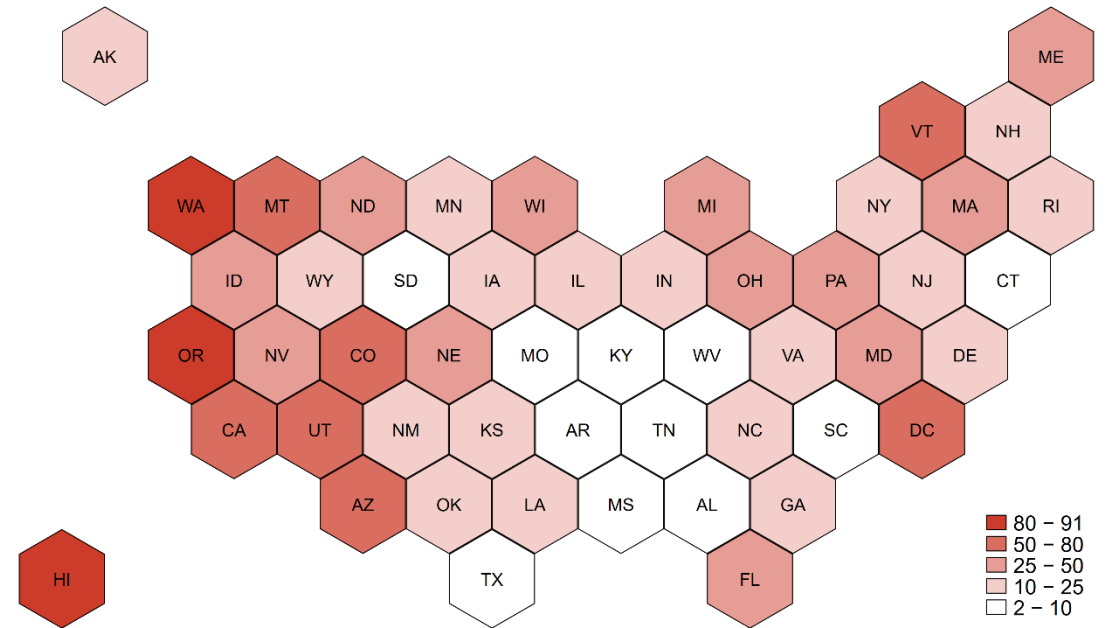


# VOTING BY MAIL

## Voting Mode Time Series by Party



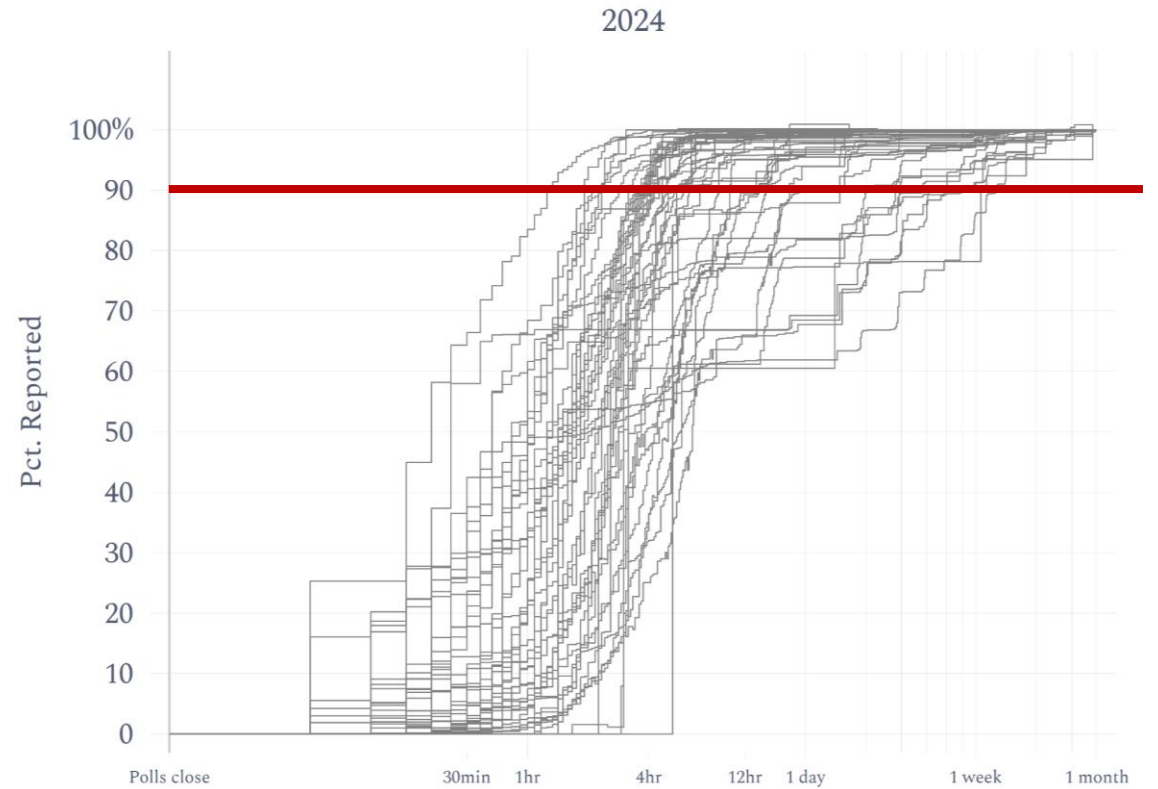
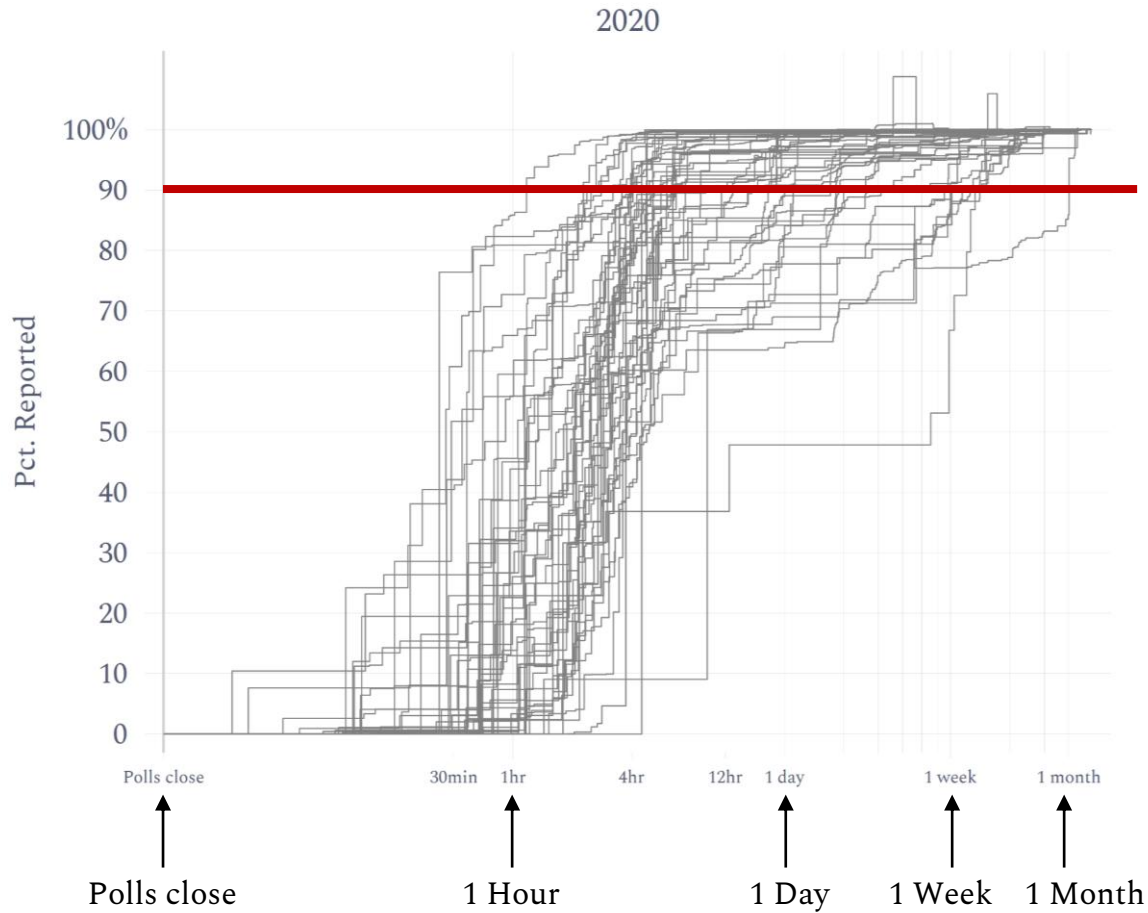
## Vote-by-Mail Percentage, 2024



Source: SPAE



# COUNTING SPEED

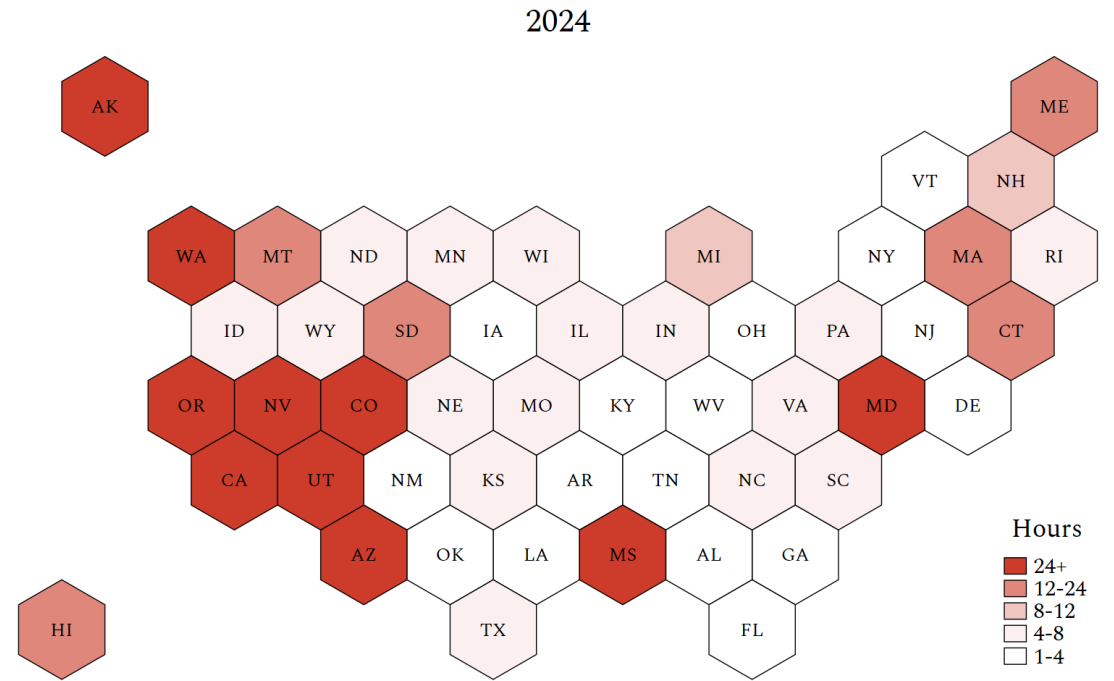
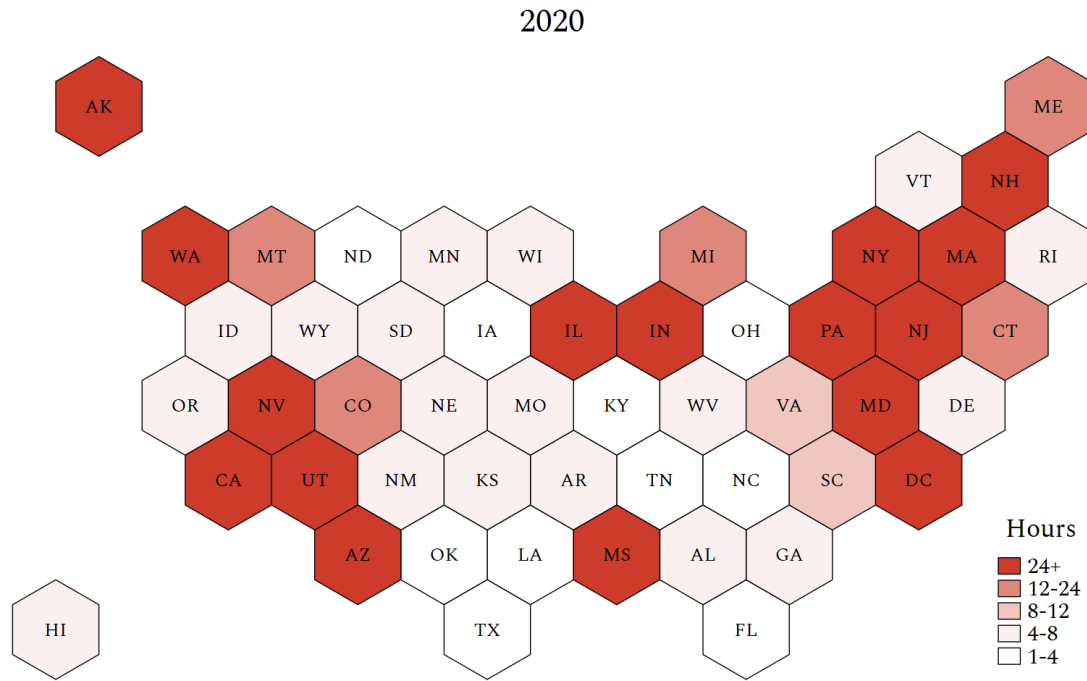


Source: Edison Research

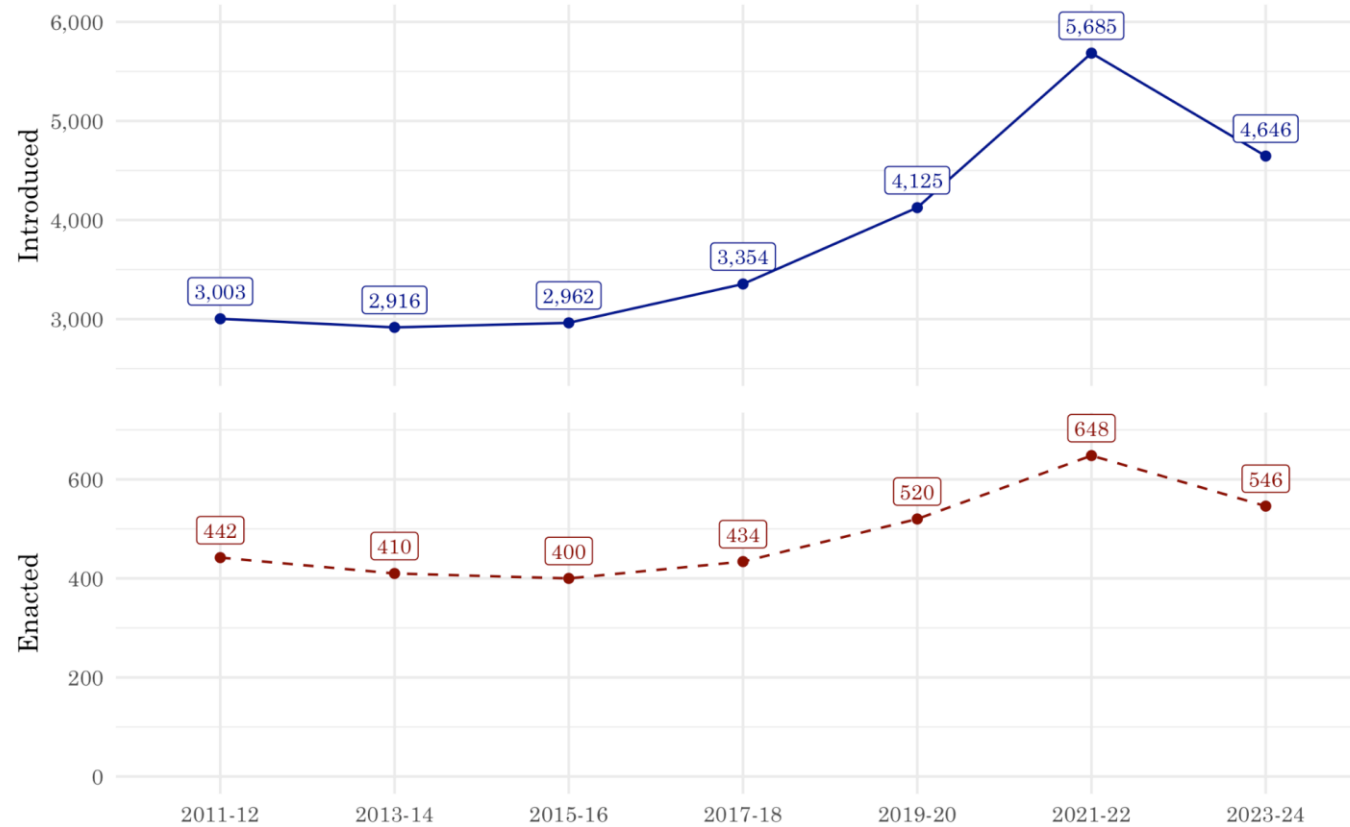
Source: Associated Press



# COUNTING SPEED IN 2020 AND 2024



# ELECTION BILLS INTRODUCED AND PASSED IN STATE LEGISLATURES, 2011 - 2024

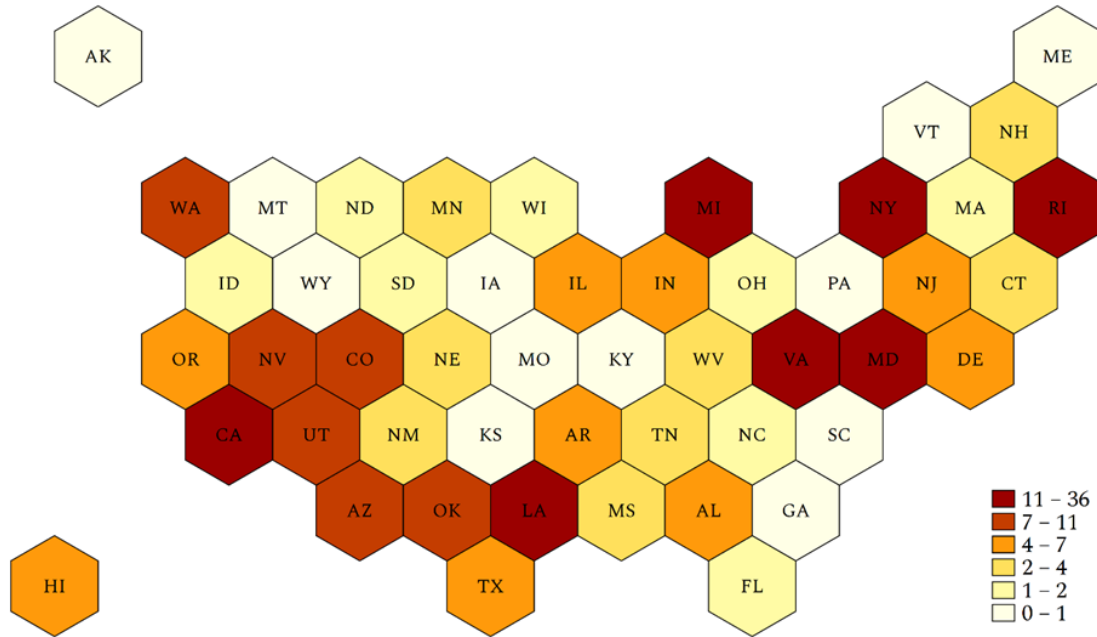


Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, State Election Legislation Archived Database

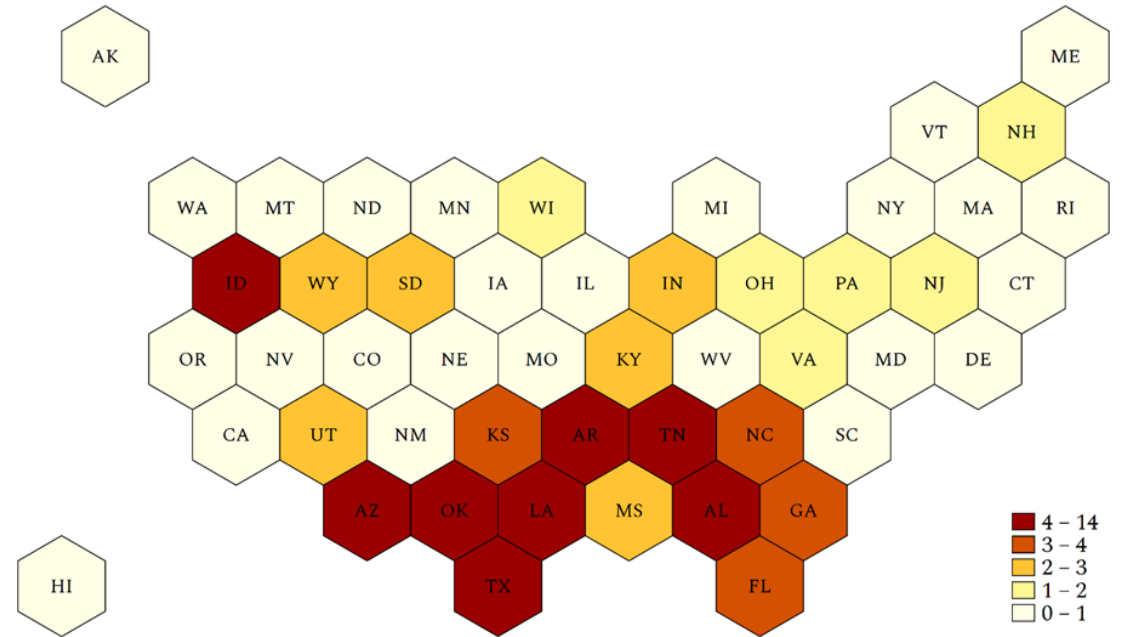


# LEGISLATION: EXPANSIVE/RESTRICTIVE ELECTION BILLS, 2021 - 2024

Expansive Laws



Restrictive Laws



Source: Voting Rights Lab



# RESULTS

	All	Democrats	Republicans
Results	Vote margin	+	++
	Dem. won	+	--
	State flipped		
Practices	Mail %		-
	Reporting time		-
Legislation	Restrictive laws	-	-
	Expansive laws		
Results	Year = 2016	+	+
	Year = 2020	+	+
	Year = 2024	+	+



# CONCLUSIONS ABOUT STATE ELECTION CONFIDENCE

- + Confidence among the **mass public as a whole** has been unaffected by **mail ballot volume, counting speed, or state legislation passed**. Overall, it has drifted upward since 2012.
- + Confidence among **Republicans** but not **Democrats** has been sensitive to the **volume of mail ballots & counting speed**.
- + The **passage of legislation**—expansive or restrictive—does not increase confidence among either Republicans or Democrats, and probably depresses it.

