

DATA STANDARDIZATION AND THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTION

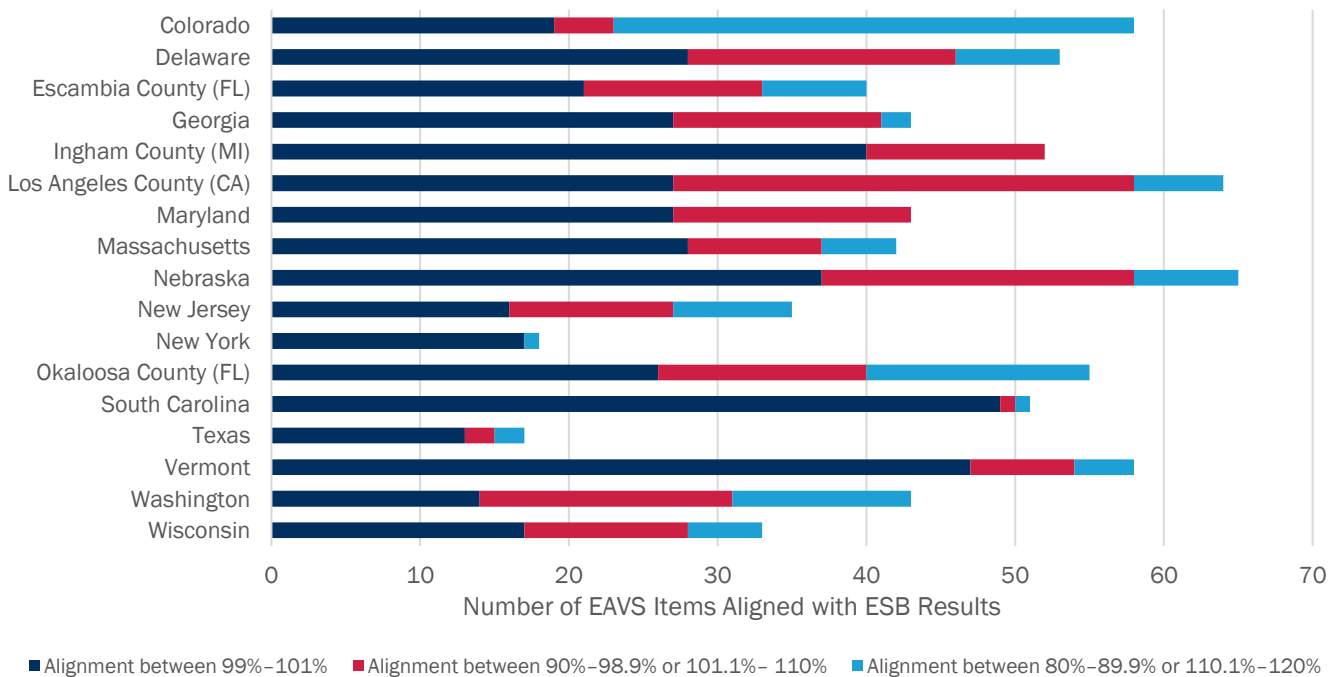
ESB effectively reproduced a large portion of the items from Section B of the EAVS.

The collection of transactional data is an innovative way to obtain information about the voting process and the impact of Congressional reforms like the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*, which protects the voting rights of military members, their families, and overseas citizens. Since 2015, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) has been working with The Council of State Governments (CSG) Overseas Voting Initiative (OVI) to develop a standardized format that captures data about military and overseas voters in the Election Administration and Voting Survey Section B (ESB) Data Standard at the transactional level.

The transactional nature of the data and the availability of dates on which each transaction is recorded by the election office provides a reliable snapshot of how and when *UOCAVA* voters complete the steps of the voting process. ESB data can also generate the aggregate-level metrics requested in Section B of the Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS). Thus, ESB data allows states to potentially automate the completion of Section B of the EAVS and reduce the time burden associated with it. For the 2022 general election, 13 states and four jurisdictions reported transactional data for ESB, and their data accounted for 41.5 percent of the total *UOCAVA* population in the United States, the largest coverage in ESB history.

Results. ESB data was used to produce the results for 79 of the 80 items in Section B of the 2022 EAVS. Figure 1 shows the level of alignment between ESB-produced metrics and EAVS results, where 100 percent alignment reflects that both approaches yield the same result; results below 100 percent mean that the ESB-produced metric underestimates the EAVS result; and values above 100 percent mean that the ESB-produced metric overestimates the EAVS result.

Figure 1. ESB-Produced Metrics Yield Results Within 20 Percentage Points of EAVS Results for Most Section B Items.

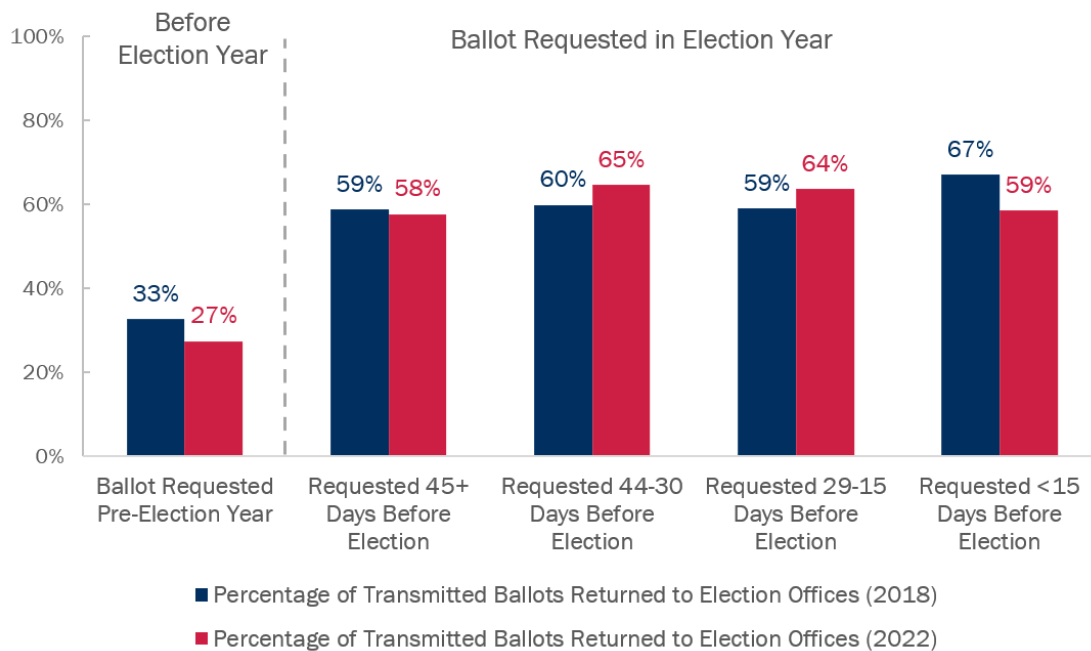


RESEARCH SUMMARY

The results in Figure 1 show that for most states, over half of the ESB-produced items aligned within 20 percentage points of the EAVS results. For Ingham County (MI), Los Angeles County (CA), Nebraska, South Carolina, and Vermont, 50 or more of the 79 EAVS items calculated using ESB data obtained levels of alignment ranging between 90 percent and 110 percent. Overall, the results suggest that many ESB participants are close to a point in which they could complete Section B of the EAVS automatically using their ESB data. However, there are some states and jurisdictions with low levels of alignment and which require additional assessments to learn about the sources of the discrepancies. Mismatches between ESB-produced metrics and EAVS are in some cases the result of ESB being able to capture data that was reported as not available in EAVS. In other cases, mismatches point to limitations calculating EAVS items when some ESB item has missing information.

ESB data show that 36.8 percent of *UOCAVA* voters in reporting states and jurisdictions returned their ballots for the 2022 General Election. Interestingly, about two-thirds of ballot requests originated before 2022—most of them in 2020—displaying a similar pattern as that found in the 2018 ESB Research Note that shows a “carryover effect” of ballot requests dated during the previous Presidential Election being active in the following Midterm election. The ballot return rate, however, varied depending on when the ballot was initially requested. As displayed in Figure 2, ballots had a higher return rate when requested during the election year compared to those requested in previous years. Additionally, ballots requested during the election year before the 45-day deadline had the lower rejection rates,

Figure 2. Ballots Requested in the Election Year had Higher Return Rates Than Ballots Requested Previous Years.



Conclusions. This research note provides evidence that ESB data from some states and jurisdictions align well with data reported in EAVS Section B. Moreover, in some cases, ESB data can complete EAVS fields that were originally not available in the 2022 EAVS submission. The continued growth in the percentage of the *UOCAVA* population represented in ESB further supports the relevance of this project. The analyses conducted using the 2022 ESB data highlight the importance of *UOCAVA* and related Federal statutes in making it easier for military members, their families, and overseas citizens to complete the voting process on time. The analyses show that the 45-day deadline was effective in giving *UOCAVA* voters enough time to successfully cast a ballot. Results also show that ballots requested during the election year and before the 45-day deadline had the lowest rejection rates, further supporting FVAP’s recommendation that *UOCAVA* voters send a ballot request early every election year to ensure that their information is up to date and that they will receive a blank ballot with enough time to successfully complete the voting process.