

2022 EAVS Public Comment

We are all political science researchers affiliated with University of California, Los Angeles. The EAC's EAVS survey is of vital interest to the academic community. The survey provides a unique data source on the health of US election administration and has done so reliably for nearly 20 years.

We are currently undertaking research examining the extent to which Democratic and Republican-affiliated local election officials administer elections differently. As part of this project, we utilize EAVS data to discern whether partisan officials implement different policies while in office. The current data allows us to test for partisan differences in election administration across a wide range of county-level metrics, including the number of Election Day polling places per 1,000 residents, the share of votes cast provisionally, the share of provisional ballots rejected, the share of absentee ballots rejected, the share of voting-age residents registered, the share of registrants removed from the voter roll, and the share of registrants registered with the Democratic party. This data has allowed us to confidently rule out partisan differences across most of these measures. Additionally, I (Joshua) have utilized this data in a separate project to test whether appointed and elected local election officials pursue different election administration policies. In short, without the EAVS survey, we would know significantly less about the state of US election administration.

We encourage several additions to the survey to improve its utility. First, we encourage additional data collection on local election administration budgets. There is currently no good source for such information, and this would be a fairly easy request for officials to be responsive to. Specifically, we would like to know the size of the budgets, who has authority for writing/approving them, and how they are spent. Second, additional questions around poll worker pay, training, and demographics would be of interest. Third, there is currently no good source of information on voter wait times. While local election officials may be unable to provide exact data, even impressionistic responses would be of interest.

We have two more wide-ranging recommendations. First, we encourage more responses from local rather than state election officials. In many states and for many questions, local officials are better equipped to provide accurate information as they are the ones tasked with running elections. Second, we hope that data irregularities and missingness can be minimized further. Additional backend data checks would ensure that obviously erroneous responses are corrected or removed before the data is made public. Finally, it is difficult to combine multiple survey years together, especially due to year-to-year changes in the questions asked and the numbering of similar questions. We encourage the EAC to consider ways to improve the ease of combining multiple years of data together.

We thank the EAC for the important work they do and look forward to future improvements in the EAVS survey.

Sincerely,

Joshua Ferrer

PhD Student, Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles

Igor Geyn

PhD Student, Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles

Dan Thompson

Assistant Professor, Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles