Colorado

State Rank: 1
Overall Score: HIGH

Index 1: Voter Registration - Confidence level - HIGH
Colorado offers automatic, online, and same-day (through Election Day) voter registration. The state does not purge voting lists no matter how many years of nonvoting. There was a high number of total purges conducted in 2020. Youth can preregister to vote beginning at age 16. Voting rights are automatically restored to those incarcerated for felonies upon release. 2022 law allows voters to maintain their registrations after their homes have been destroyed by a natural disaster or other reasons if the voters intend to return to their homes after rehabilitating or reconstructing them.

Index 2: Voter Identification - Confidence level - HIGH
Colorado has a non-strict non-photo voter ID law. The state is a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) which seeks to help states improve accuracy of voter rolls. Few voters contacted the 1-866-OUR-VOTE legal hotline in 2020 during the last week of the election to report concerns with voter ID requirements or being absent from the voter rolls/database. No laws were enacted in 2021 or 2022 to impose restrictions.

Index 3: Early Voting - Confidence level - HIGH
Colorado offers early in-person voting beginning 15 days before Election Day. State legislation was passed in 2021 to further improve access. Colorado also offers all-mail or no-excuse absentee ballot voting.

Index 4: Safe Voting - Confidence level - HIGH
Colorado has been a vote-at-home state since 2014. Ballots are mailed to all voters (no applications necessary), ballot return options are robust, prepaid postage is provided, and the state offers accessible electronic vote-by-mail ballots to voters with disabilities. State law in 2021 increased ballot drop off sites. It does have some restrictions on who can return the ballot on behalf of the voter. Colorado ranked among the top five states in this index.

Learn more about how to vote and voting rights in Colorado: VOTE411
Learn about voting laws recently passed or enacted in Colorado: State Voting Rights Tracker by Voting Rights Lab
If you or anyone you know encounters problems while voting, call the Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE or 866-687-8683
Learn how to take action to protect voting rights in Colorado: DemocracyMovement.us
Index 5: Ballot Acceptance - Confidence level - HIGH
Colorado had a moderate percentage of mail-in ballots returned in 2020, with a very low rejection rate. Its statewide ballot tracking service is statutorily required. The state allows election administrators to preprocess returned ballots, allows voters to correct ballots for discrepancies, and has a signature verification program. A signature confirmation form must be returned to the county clerk and recorder within eight days after Election Day to count. Colorado does not have prepaid postage.

Index 6: Logistical Barriers in Voting - Confidence level - HIGH
Colorado allows employees to take up to two hours paid leave to vote. The state has many provisions to help voters with access issues, such as hand delivering ballots to nursing homes, language assistance at polling sites (with a multilingual hotline), high quality accessible voting machines options, and allowing voting at a different polling site if the original is inaccessible due to a voter's disability. Colorado law has advanced the voting rights of Native Americans, college students, the homeless, and incarcerated. In 2020, the state had a good ratio of poll workers to polling sites and was rated high for investments made in the 2020 elections to improve processes while being cost effective. Colorado ranked first among all states in this index.

Index 7: Equipment, Security, and Auditing - Confidence level - HIGH
Colorado has a statewide verified paper audit trail. All voting centers use hand marked paper ballots and offer Ballot Marking Devices for voters with accessibility needs. The state conducts tests of the equipment according to federal standards. Colorado received a fair overall election security score in 2018. The state uses risk limiting audit methods to double-check for machine recording errors, including before the ballots are counted and during the statutorily required post-election period. Colorado tied with Rhode Island for the top ranking in this index. 2022 law mandates new election equipment security procedures, creates new felonies relating to tampering with voting equipment, and clarifies the use of ballot tabulators and when to count ballots by hand.

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Although Colorado has established the constitutional right to a secret ballot, it does not prohibit election interference by the legislature. 2022 laws were passed to expand state oversight of local election officials, enforce new security procedures, enforce election codes through injunctions, and ban those convicted of election or insurrection offenses from serving as election officials.

Public opinion surveys showed that Colorado voters had no trust in the 2020 election news coverage, while political scientists gave the state low media integrity ratings. Although there was a moderate number of reports by voters about in-person voter intimidation and police presence at the polling sites, there were confirmed threats made to election workers. Colorado law does not address voter intimidation and false election speech, weapons, or police presence at the polling sites. State law mandates all poll workers be trained and media literacy laws require instruction or standards on how to evaluate trustworthy media services in public education. New 2022 law protects election workers in performing their duties, keeps their personal information private, and expands their training; and expands who must be certified to conduct elections and maintain certification.

Colorado is one of 13 states that has a Democratic trifecta, as well as a triplex - the governor, attorney general, and secretary of state are from the same political party. Based on the last two presidential elections, Colorado, which used to be a swing state, is now a Democratic-leaning state, with an average Democratic voting margin of 9.2% compared to the national average Democratic voting margin of 3%. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the state’s population grew by 14.8% (6th fastest state) compared to the national average of 7.4%. Colorado is less racially diverse than the rest of the country. With the U.S. Census results, Colorado was one of five states to have gained one representative in Congress.