Index 1: Voter Registration - Confidence level - LOW
Montana closes voter registration one day before Election Day. It does not allow automated, same-day, nor online voter registration. Voting rights are automatically restored to those incarcerated for felonies upon release. The state purges voters from lists after six years of nonvoting. There was a high number of purges conducted in 2020. Very few Montana voters contacted the 1-866-OUR-VOTE legal hotline in 2020 during the last week of the election with concerns about voter registration.

Index 2: Voter Identification - Confidence level - LOW
Montana has a non-strict photo voter ID law. The state is NOT a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) which helps states improve accuracy of voter rolls. In 2021, the state enacted harsher voter ID laws by requiring a photo ID, and removed college IDs from the approved list, while adding concealed carry permits, military IDs, and tribal IDs as eligible forms.

Index 3: Early Voting - Confidence level - MEDIUM
Montana offers early in-person voting beginning 30 days before Election Day, ending the day before. No-excuse required absentee voting is available.

Index 4: Safe Voting - Confidence level - MEDIUM
In 2021, Montana codified no-excuse absentee ballot voting and limited access to drop boxes, while placing restrictions on who can return an absentee ballot for a voter in need. The state offers the right for any voter to apply to be added to the permanent absentee voter list. Montana provides accessible electronic absentee ballots to voters with disabilities. There is no proactive mailing of ballots applications to voters without request nor prepaid postage to return the ballot.
Index 5: Ballot Acceptance - Confidence level - MEDIUM
Montana had a moderate percentage of mail-in ballots returned in 2020, with a low rejection rate. There is a statewide ballot tracking program, but it is not strong nor statutorily required. The state allows election administrators to preprocess returned ballots, has a signature verification program, and provides a codified process for voters to correct for ballot discrepancies. All ballots must be received by close of polls on Election Day. Voters have until 8 p.m. on Election Day to cure their ballot.

Index 6: Logistical Barriers in Voting - Confidence level - MEDIUM
Although Election Day in Montana is a state holiday, there is no specific law allowing employees to take paid or unpaid leave to vote. The state provides high quality accessible voting machine options, and requires that each polling site have such technology. Montana allows curbside voting and has passed legislation in 2021 to expand the definition of disability in the election code. However, recent state law also created barriers for voters in need of assistance including criminalizing volunteers for helping voters with access issues, such as Native Americans on tribal land. Montana rated first among all states for its high ratio of poll workers to polling sites in 2020 and ranked among the top third of states that invested in the 2020 election to improve processes while being cost effective.

Index 7: Equipment, Security, and Auditing - Confidence level - MEDIUM
Montana 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. Montana does not require equipment testing according to federal standards. Its election security systems received fair overall ratings in 2018. The state uses traditional audit methods to double-check for machine recording errors before ballots are counted and during the statutorily required post-election period.
Index 8: Independent Election Administration - Confidence level - MEDIUM

Although Montana has established the constitutional right to a secret ballot, it does not prohibit election interference by the legislature. Laws passed in 2021 allows the state to shift election authority and emergency powers. The state legislature did not meet in 2022.

Index 9: External Interference in Voting - Confidence Level - MEDIUM

Public opinion surveys showed that Montana voters had no trust in the 2020 election news coverage, while political scientists gave the state very low media integrity ratings. There were a few reports by voters with concerns about disinformation, election certification, and in-person intimidation at polling sites. State law mandates that all poll workers be trained, but does not criminalize voter intimidation and false election speech.

Index 10: The Role of Government and Politics – No rating given, informational only

EnMontana is one of 19 states that has a Republican 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, Montana is a solid Republican state, with an average GOP voting margin of 18.4% compared to the national average Democratic voting margin of 3%. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the state’s population grew by 9.6% compared to the national average of 7.4%. Montana is among the least racially diverse states in the country. Montana saw its white population drop from 88% in 2010 to 83% in 2020. The state has the lowest black population at 0.5%. With the U.S. Census results, Montana was one of five states to have gained a representative in Congress.