New Jersey

State Rank: 24
Overall Score: MEDIUM

Index 1: Voter Registration - Confidence level - HIGH
New Jersey closes voter registration 21 days before Election Day. The state offers automatic and online voter registration, but not same-day. Youth can preregister to vote beginning at age 17. Voting rights are automatically restored to those incarcerated for felonies upon release. 2021 state law expanded the state’s ban on prison gerrymandering. 2022 law requires purging voting lists after 4 consecutive years of nonvoting and notices sent to identified voters. There were zero total purges conducted in 2020. A moderate number of New Jersey voters contacted the 1-866-OUR-VOTE legal hotline in 2020 during the last week of the election with concerns about voter registration and the handling of provisional ballots. 2022 law increases voter list maintenance to track deceased voters.

Index 2: Voter Identification - Confidence level - HIGH
New Jersey requires no photo ID to vote. The state is a pending member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) which helps states improve accuracy of voter rolls. A moderate number of voters in 2020 reported concerns about voter ID or not being on the voting list/database.

Index 3: Early Voting - Confidence level - HIGH
New Jersey offers early in-person voting beginning 10 days before Election Day, ending the Sunday before; but also offers in-person no-excuse absentee voting 45 days before Election Day. Legislation enacted in 2021 improved voter access.
Index 4: Safe Voting - Confidence level - MEDIUM
New Jersey offers no-excuse absentee ballot voting. State law in 2022 increased access to drop boxes, including for municipal, school board, or special elections. The state offers the right for any voter apply to be added to the permanent absentee voter list. There are some limitations on who can return an absentee ballot for a voter in need. There is no proactive mailing of ballots applications to voters without request nor prepaid postage to return the ballot. 2022 law requires establishment of an online application absentee ballot or "vote by mail" portal by 2026.

Index 5: Ballot Acceptance - Confidence level - MEDIUM
New Jersey had a low percentage of mail-in ballots returned in 2020, with a moderate 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 within 96 hours after close of Election Day polls. The voter may correct a ballot by completing a cure form and returning it to the county board of election no later the 9th day after the election.
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Index 6: Logistical Barriers in Voting - Confidence level - MEDIUM
New Jersey has no law allowing employees to take any leave to vote. The state provides low quality accessible voting machine options and does not offer curbside voting. However, state law in 2021 increased access for voters with disability and mobility issues and expanded the voting rights of the incarcerated and detained. There was a high number of reports from voters in 2020 with concerns about long lines, inadequate signage, mishandling of polling site ballots, delayed openings and early closings of sites, and voting equipment. New Jersey had a low ratio of poll workers to polling sites in 2020, while ranking among the top third of states that invested in elections to improve processes. 2022 state law increases compensation and training for poll and election workers, allows college students to earn both and academic credit for poll worker service, and allows eligible teens to also serve as poll workers.

Index 7: Equipment, Security, and Auditing - Confidence level - LOW
New Jersey has a voter-verified paper audit trail for some counties. The state uses a combination of hand marked paper ballots, electronic voting machines, touch screen tabulators, and Ballot Marking Devices to meet voter accessibility needs. New Jersey does not require equipment testing according to federal standards. Its election security systems received somewhat low overall ratings in 2018. The state uses traditional audit methods to double-check for machine recording errors before certification and during the statutorily required post-election period.

Index 8: Independent Election Administration - Confidence level - HIGH
Although New Jersey has established the constitutional right to a secret ballot, it does not prohibit election interference by the legislature. No laws were passed in 2021 on this topic, but legislation introduced in 2022 sought to shift election authority.
Index 9: External Interference in Voting - Confidence Level - MEDIUM

Public opinion surveys showed that New Jersey voters had some trust in the 2020 election news coverage, while political scientists gave the state low media integrity ratings. There was a moderate number of reports by voters with concerns about political intimidation online and in-person, disinformation, election certification, electioneering, poll worker misconduct, police presence, and public safety. State law authorizes law enforcement to be present only by request or on official business, requires that all poll workers be trained, criminalizes voter intimidation and false election speech, and prohibits hindering or obstructing voters. There is no weapon ban at polling sites. 2022 law prohibits electioneering activity within 100 feet of a drop box.

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

New Jersey 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, New Jersey is a solidly Democratic-leaning state, with an average Democratic voting margin of 15.0% compared to the national average Democratic voting margin of 3%. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the state’s population grew by 5.7% compared to the national average of 7.4%. New Jersey is one of the nine most racially diverse states. During the past decade, the white population dropped from 59% to 52%. New Jersey is projected to be one of four states to have a majority minority population in the next 10 years (along with Arizona, Florida, and Georgia). With the U.S. Census results, the state will neither gain nor lose any representatives in Congress.