

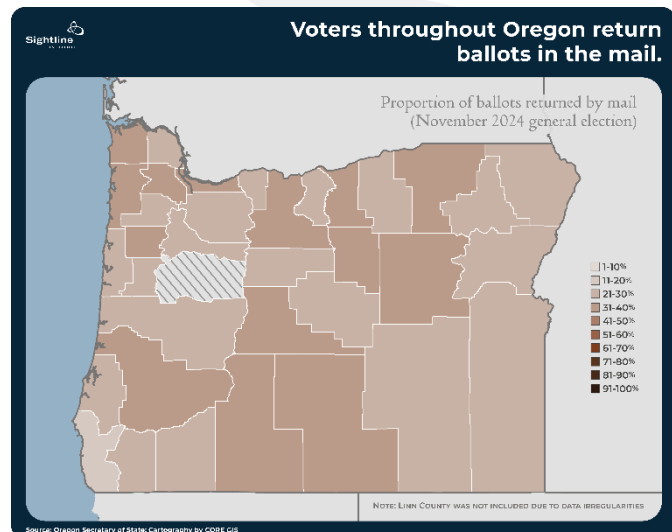
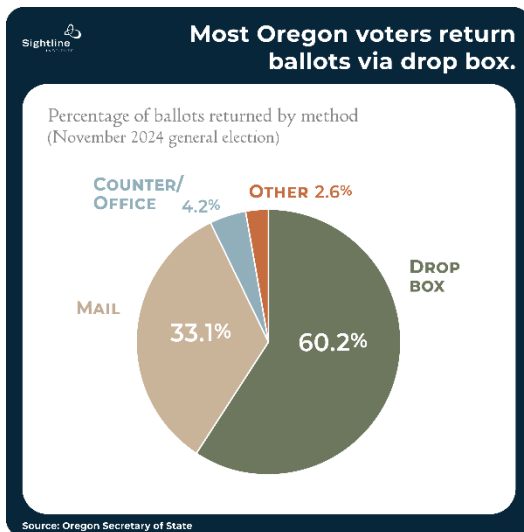
Voting by mail, where voters receive and can return ballots through the postal service, is popular throughout the US: close to one-third of American voters take advantage of it. Eight states including Oregon conduct all-mail elections, and all states offer absentee options for at least some voters. Oregon was the first in the US to enact vote-by-mail statewide in 2000.

Recent changes to USPS processing and the pending US Supreme Court case *Watson v. RNC*, which could mandate all ballots to be in by Election Day, may require voters to mail in ballots earlier than in past elections or use other return methods such as drop boxes to ensure their votes can count.

<h1>1 in 3</h1> <p>Oregon voters return their ballots by mail</p>	<h1>7</h1> <p>Days after election that a ballot will be accepted</p>
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All Oregon voters receive ballots in the mail. Most (60 percent) return them to ballot drop boxes; 33 percent return ballots by mail.

As of 2022, Oregon allows ballots received up to seven days after Election Day to count if they are postmarked by that date, but because it was a recent shift, 94 to 99 percent of voters have returned ballots by Election Day in the past four elections.



Northwest at a glance

Eighty-four percent of voters living in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington combined received a ballot by mail for the most recent federal election in 2024. Read more about vote-by-mail elections impacts from [Sightline Institute](#) or see fact sheets for other Northwest states:

- [Alaska](#) mostly votes in person, but mailed ballots (14 percent) are particularly prevalent in remote areas
- Rural and urban [Idaho](#) voters use the mail-in option (20 percent)
- Most [Montana](#) voters (70 percent) rely on mailed ballots
- All [Washington](#) voters also receive ballots in the mail, and late postmark rejections are already rising statewide

How to mitigate the impact of impending challenges

Elections officials, voters, and lawmakers can help make sure votes count in upcoming elections.

✓ **Election administrators can encourage early mail returns and use of drop boxes**

Voters who return ballots by mail will need to send them earlier than in past years to ensure they will be counted. Amid postal delays, drop boxes are a more reliable and assured method of return. Election administrators can plan comprehensive education efforts to encourage using drop boxes where available and to send mailed ballots as soon as possible, and [many already are](#).

✓ **Voters can request a manual postmark at a local post office in states that accept postmarks**

In Alaska, Oregon, and Washington, voters who get delayed sending their ballots by mail and can't use a drop box can request a manual postmark at a local post office (if they have one) before Election Day, acknowledging custody of the mail before it travels to a central processing facility. This method will not be effective, however, if SCOTUS changes the ballot receipt deadline.

✓ **Voters can track their ballots**

In most states, and in some places at the county level, election administrators have set up ballot tracking services. Voters can confirm when their ballot is accepted by Election Day and request a substitute ballot at an election office if not.

✓ **Lawmakers can provide additional funding to elections offices**

Elections offices are often strapped for resources even when managing normal operations. These shifts add more needs, such as staffing for press outreach, printing inserts, adding drop boxes or voting locations, and collecting ballots from post offices. During legislative sessions, lawmakers can ensure that elections offices have adequate funding to address and respond to these and other issues.