

2025 Election Year In Review



★ VIRGINIA ★
DEPARTMENT *of* ELECTIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following each November General Election since 2018, the Virginia Department of Elections (ELECT) has published a post-election report to create a historical record of the election. In producing the reports, ELECT's goal is to provide transparency in its efforts to continually improve the administration of elections in the Commonwealth and to demonstrate the necessary coordination and cooperation among the State Board of Elections (SBE), ELECT staff, general registrars and their staffs, local electoral boards, and officers of election to ensure accurate, fair, open, and secure elections in the Commonwealth.

This report includes general registrar community feedback on the 2025 General Election (also referred to as "2025 Election" or "Election" throughout this report) received through a post-election survey.

Other topics covered include law changes impacting the administration of elections, election participation statistics, and elections administration tasks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following are common themes and takeaways:

- Election administration in Virginia continues to operate as a year-round responsibility requiring significant coordination between state and local election officials to implement legislation, train election workers, and manage evolving operational demands.
- General registrars continue to face resource constraints, particularly related to limited staffing and limited physical space.
- Same-day registration (SDR) remains administratively challenging, though legislative changes to the voter registration deadline and other administrative improvements have reduced some operational challenges.
- Election night reporting (ENR) has improved since its implementation in 2023, though expanding reporting requirements have increased post-election data entry demands for general registrars.

INTRODUCTION

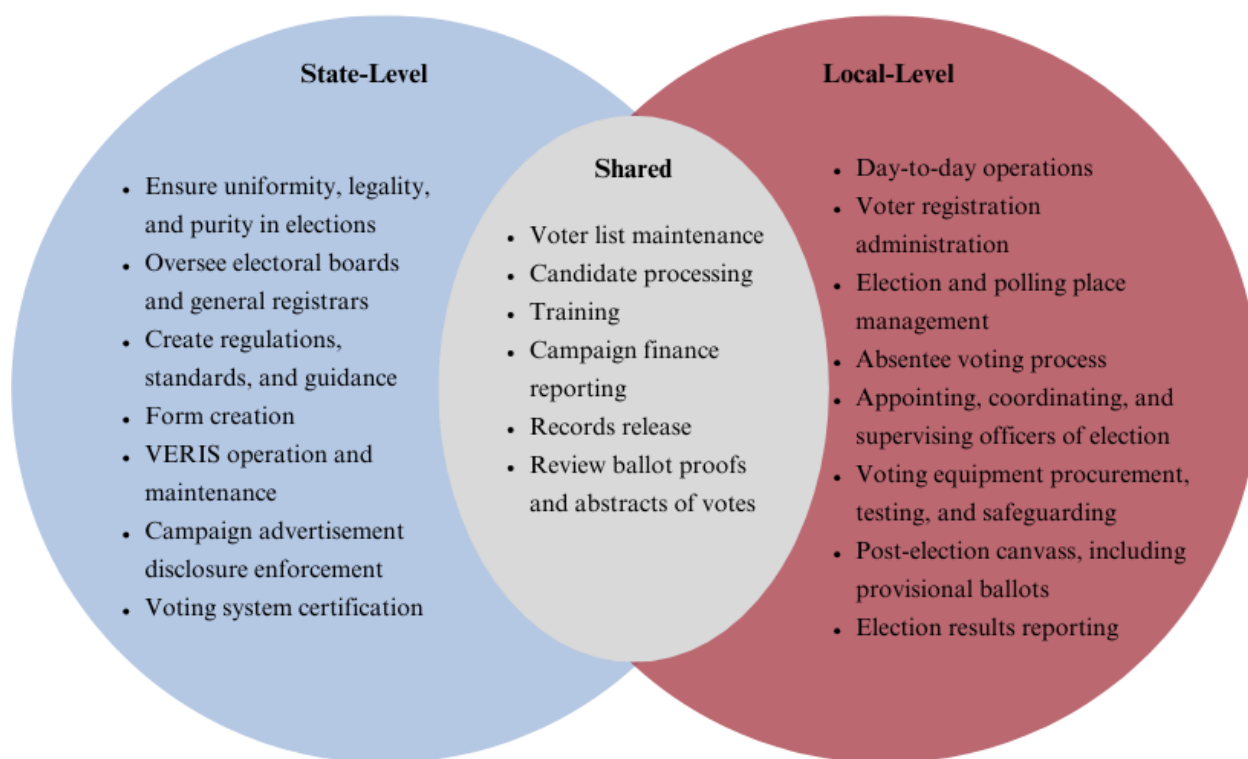
Conducting elections in the Commonwealth is a 365-day operation that requires individuals at both the state and local levels to plan, prepare, support, and deliver accurate, fair, open, and secure elections for the citizens of the Commonwealth. This report documents the evolving landscape of election administration and the efforts of ELECT and local election officials. Further, it identifies lessons learned that may help inform policy decisions about Virginia's elections in the future.

In 2025, Virginia administered special, primary, and general elections. The year included a gubernatorial election, which drew significant attention from both within the Commonwealth and nationally. In addition, Virginia conducted special elections for multiple offices, including a congressional seat.

STRUCTURE OF ELECTIONS IN THE COMMONWEALTH

Virginia's electoral system is built upon a framework of state and local cooperation. Localities are primarily responsible for the direct administration of elections; this local control is a feature of Virginia's electoral system maintaining the checks and balances that ensure free, fair, accurate, and secure elections in the Commonwealth. The state provides general oversight of local election officials to ensure legality and uniformity in each stage of elections, and provides a centralized systems for voter registration, campaign finance, and election night reporting.

Roles and Responsibilities



State-Level Administration

The SBE is the regulatory body that oversees elections in the Commonwealth. It consists of five members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. The SBE members represent both major political parties, with three members from the sitting governor's party and two members of the party that received the second most votes for governor.¹ SBE members have staggered four-year terms. Before the creation of ELECT, the SBE was responsible for state-level administrative duties required by the Code of Virginia (in addition to its responsibilities to promulgate regulations and procedures) including issuing instructions and guidance to electoral boards and general registrars to ensure uniformity in their practices and processes, overseeing campaign finance disclosure compliance, maintaining the centralized voter registration system, and creating standards and procedures for list maintenance processes.

In 2014, ELECT was created as an executive branch agency under the Secretary of Administration to carry out the administrative functions of the SBE. ELECT is led by a commissioner, who is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the General Assembly.² ELECT is both directly assigned duties under the Code of Virginia and delegated duties by the SBE. The administrative demands on ELECT have increased with the implementation of

¹ Va. Code § 24.2-102 (A).

² Va. Code § 24.2-102 (B).

significant legislation over several years and the general expansion of the use of technology and data in election administration.

Local Administration

The administration of elections is carried out by a general registrar and a three-member electoral board of each city and county.³ Under Virginia law, electoral boards are primarily responsible for conducting elections (including oversight of officers of election) and appointing the general registrar. The primary function of general registrars is to ensure the proper registration of qualified individuals and maintenance of the voter rolls.

The electoral board is comprised of two members representing the governor's party and one member representing the party receiving the second-highest vote total for governor in the previous gubernatorial election. Electoral board members are appointed by the circuit court for the locality, selected from a list of nominations provided by each party, and serve staggered three-year terms. Electoral board duties include appointing and overseeing the work of the general registrar, ensuring polling places meet all legal requirements, appointing and coordinating officers of election, conducting the canvass, and certifying locality results.

General registrars are appointed by the electoral board for a term of four years.⁴ Duties of general registrars include maintaining the office for voter registration, educating the public regarding registration, providing voter registration forms, processing voter registration applications, ensuring the list of registered voters is maintained, preparing pollbooks for precincts, receiving and reviewing campaign finance reports for local and constitutional offices, verifying candidate petitions, and administering the absentee ballot process. Beyond expressly enumerated duties in the Code, general registrars conduct the day-to-day operations of the elections office, including many election administration duties delegated by the electoral board. Electoral board members are paid a small stipend for their attendance at electoral board meetings and election-related activities, while general registrars are full-time employees.

Officers of election play an important role in staffing and operating polling places. Led by a chief officer of election, they are responsible for conducting elections at polling places, including checking in voters and providing ballots, ensuring all required voting processes and procedures are followed, assisting voters with questions, administering curbside voting, ensuring authorized representatives and observers comply with all requirements, maintaining a safe and orderly environment, and recording the machine-reported results on the Statement of Results.

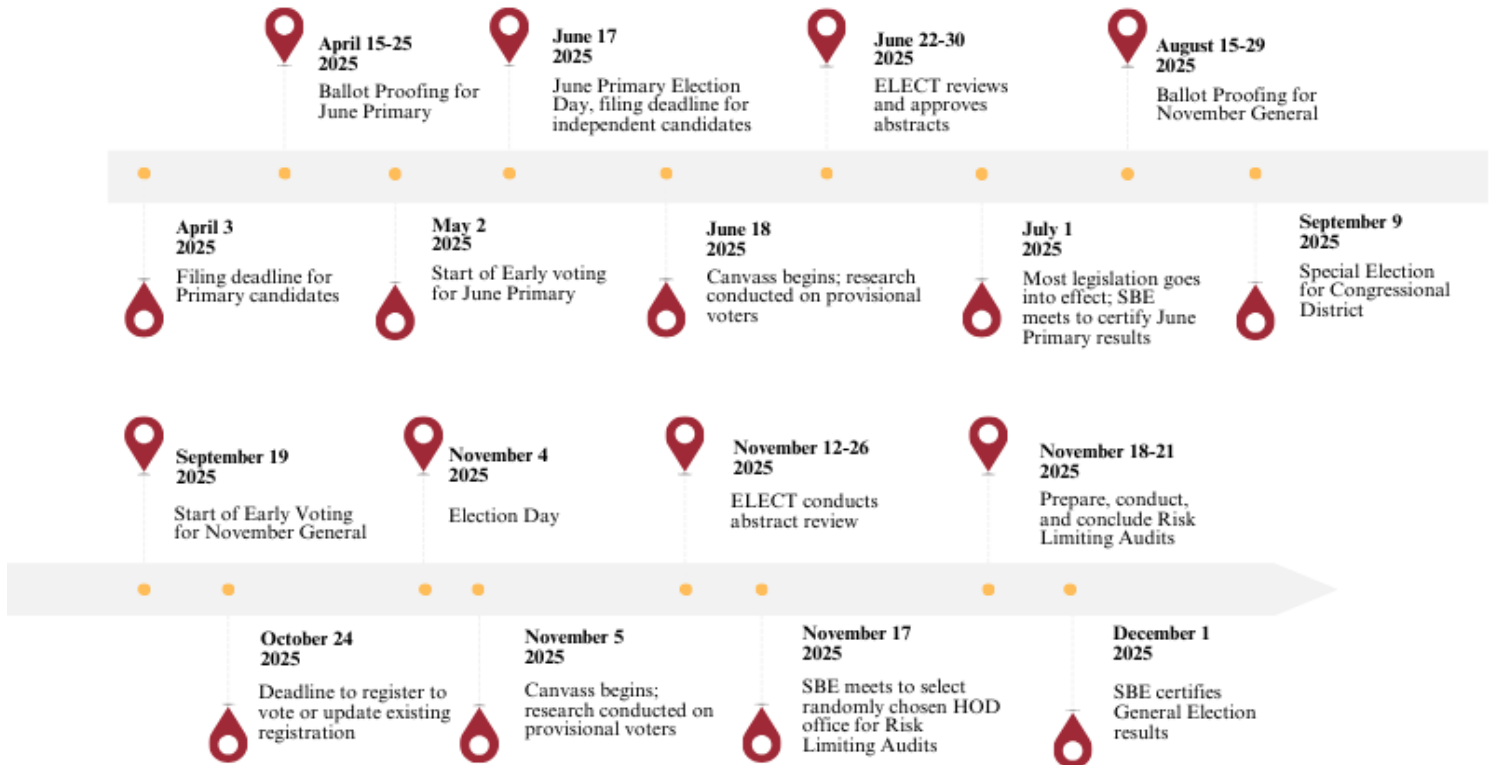
TIMELINE OF THE 2025 GENERAL ELECTION

The following graphic provides an overview of key dates in the 2025 General Election cycle.

³ Va. Code § 24.2-106 (A).

⁴ Va. Code § 24.2-110 (A).

2025 Election Timeline Overview



TRAINING AND PREPARATION

Throughout the year, the SBE, ELECT, general registrars, and electoral boards work to implement new legislation, refine and create new processes, educate voters, provide important technological updates, and train staff and officers of election on statutory requirements.

Implementation of Enacted Legislation

During the 2025 General Assembly Session, several pieces of legislation were enacted directly impacting voters and election administration. This report does not provide a comprehensive review of the election-related laws passed during the 2025 General Assembly Session but provides an overview of those with the most impact to the 2025 General Election. A summary of all 2025 election law changes can be found on ELECT's website.⁵

Precinct-Level Provisional Ballot Reporting

Chapter 577 of the 2025 Acts of Assembly required precinct-level reporting of provisional ballot information, including results. General registrars are required to report, for each precinct, the total number of provisional ballots cast, the number of those provisional ballots determined to be valid by the electoral board, and the results of such valid provisional ballots assigned to such precinct.

⁵ ELECT, Election Law, Election Law and Reference, <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/election-law/>.

Close of Books for Voter Registration

Chapters 548 and 559 of the 2025 Acts of Assembly reduced the number of days during which voter registration records are closed from 21 days to 10 days before all elections except special elections that are called by the Governor, Speaker of the House of Delegates, or President pro tempore of the Senate, which remain at 6 days.

Referendum Material Distribution Prohibited Within Certain Areas

Chapter 584 of the 2025 Acts of Assembly prohibited referendum material from being distributed within 40 feet of a polling place and inside any voter registration location. Prior to this enactment, §24.2-604 and §24.2-1003 prohibited the distribution of campaign materials within 40 feet of a polling place entrance, including absentee voting locations, and inside any voter registration location.

Election Worker Appreciation Day

Resolution HJ500, designated the Tuesday after November General Elections as Election Worker Appreciation Day in Virginia.

Joint Subcommittee to Study the Consolidation and Scheduling of General Elections

Joint Resolutions HJR443 and SJR253 established a two-year joint subcommittee to study the consolidation and scheduling of general elections in Virginia, primarily tasked with researching the possibility of moving Virginia's odd-year elections to even years to align with the federal election cycle. The subcommittee will meet and provide reports to the General Assembly and the Governor regarding its findings and recommendations.

ELECT Trainings

As the elections landscape in Virginia continues to change and expand, it is essential that all election officials, whether they are new or continuing their service, are prepared and informed to serve voters.

To prepare election officials for the 2025 elections, ELECT updated or developed nearly two dozen trainings, on topics including election security standards, same-day registration, Virginia legislative changes, officers of election requirements, election observer standards, and the Election Night Reporting (ENR) system. Trainings are provided online through ELECT's Learning Management System (LMS), virtually through webinars, or in person depending on the type of course.

ELECT also updated the general registrars' certification curriculum and the officers of election training. The courses as updated were approved by the State Board of Elections (SBE). The Third-Party Voter Registration and the Designated State Agency (DSA) trainings were also modified to reflect updated legislation and feedback received.

ELECT provides an annual Virginia Elections Workshop (VEW). The VEW event is held as part of the SBE's certification program for general registrars and hosts attendees from across the Commonwealth. The 2025 VEW event included the following topics:

- Legislative Changes and Updates
- Delegations of Authority

- Post-election Certification and Canvass
- Enhanced Results and Election Night Preparations
- Same Day Registration
- Information and Election Security; and,
- Virginia Elections Administration Bulletin (VEAB).

Based on feedback from multiple surveys of attendees, ELECT consistently reevaluates how trainings are provided to local election officials.

Local, State, and Federal Partnerships

The Virginia Election Day Operations (VEOP) team consisting of election administrators, law enforcement, emergency management, and representatives from other state, local, and federal agencies meets twice a year to discuss election resource preparedness and address issues that may impact election operations.

Other partners include:

- Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA),
- Virginia State Police (VSP),
- Virginia Capitol Police,
- Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM),
- Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (VDMV),
- Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT),
- Virginia National Guard,
- Virginia Department of General Services (VDGS),
- Virginia State Corporation Commission (VSCC),
- Office of the Attorney General (OAG),
- U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

These agencies are valuable partners in elections, including on Election Day, often working with ELECT staff from the opening to the closing of polls.

Many of Virginia's emergency management and law enforcement partners also participate in local and national tabletop exercises (TTX) with ELECT. A TTX was held on August 26th at the Virginia Emergency Operations Center and included VOEP team members and local election officers from across the state to evaluate interagency plans, test coordinated response protocols and identify potential gaps in communication, coordination, or operational readiness. The exercise also provided strategies for mitigating cyber and physical attacks on election operations and election infrastructure.

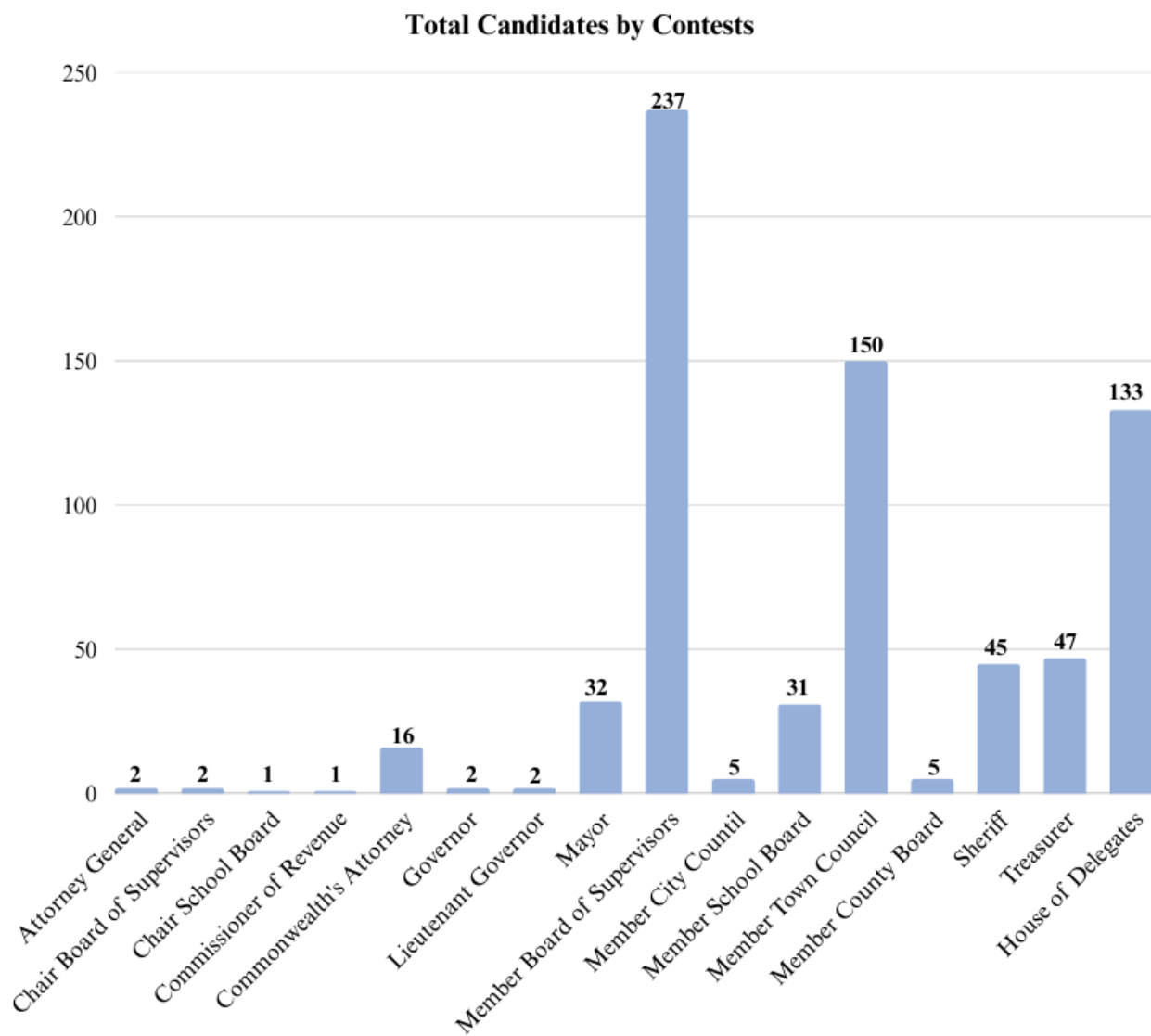
THE ELECTION

The 2025 General Election was held on Tuesday, November 4, 2025. Contests for gubernatorial, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and Virginia House of Delegates offices as well as local

offices were included. The following subsections provide metrics about voter participation and election administration activities.

Contest and Candidates

There were 964 contests and a constitutional referendum on the ballot across the Commonwealth with a total of 1,344 candidates.

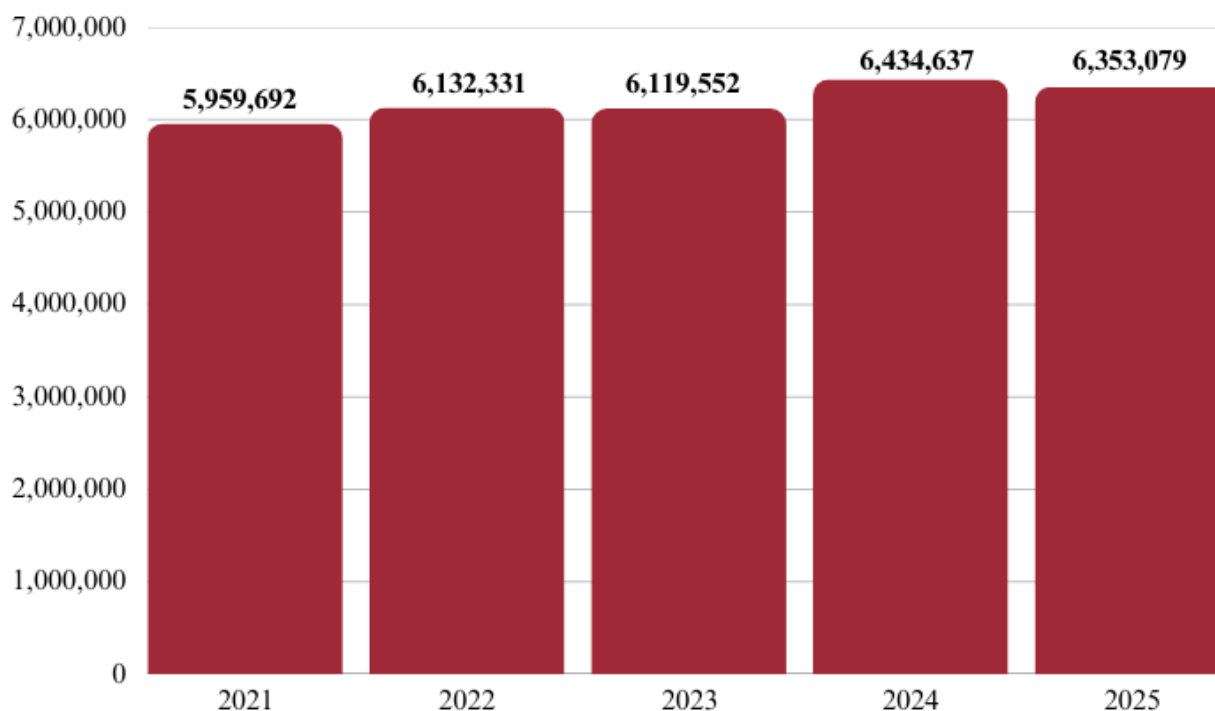


Voting Population

The chart below shows voter registration totals over the last five years. In 2025, out of 8.8 million Virginians, 6,353,079, or 72.2%, were registered to vote. The registration numbers include both active and inactive voters. Inactive voters are those who do not respond to a notice confirming their address within 30 days of being sent the notice following the federally

mandated National Change of Address (NCOA) confirmation mailings.⁶ Inactive voters are still fully registered and may change their status back to active with any voter-initiated action, such as updating their registration, voting, or requesting an absentee ballot. An inactive voter status does not affect a voter's ability to vote in any election. However, if an inactive voter remains inactive for two general federal elections, they may have their voter registrations cancelled. The cancellation process occurs the year following a federal general election resulting in a slightly lower number of registered voters in odd-numbered years, as shown in the graph below.

Number of Registered Voters (2021-2025)

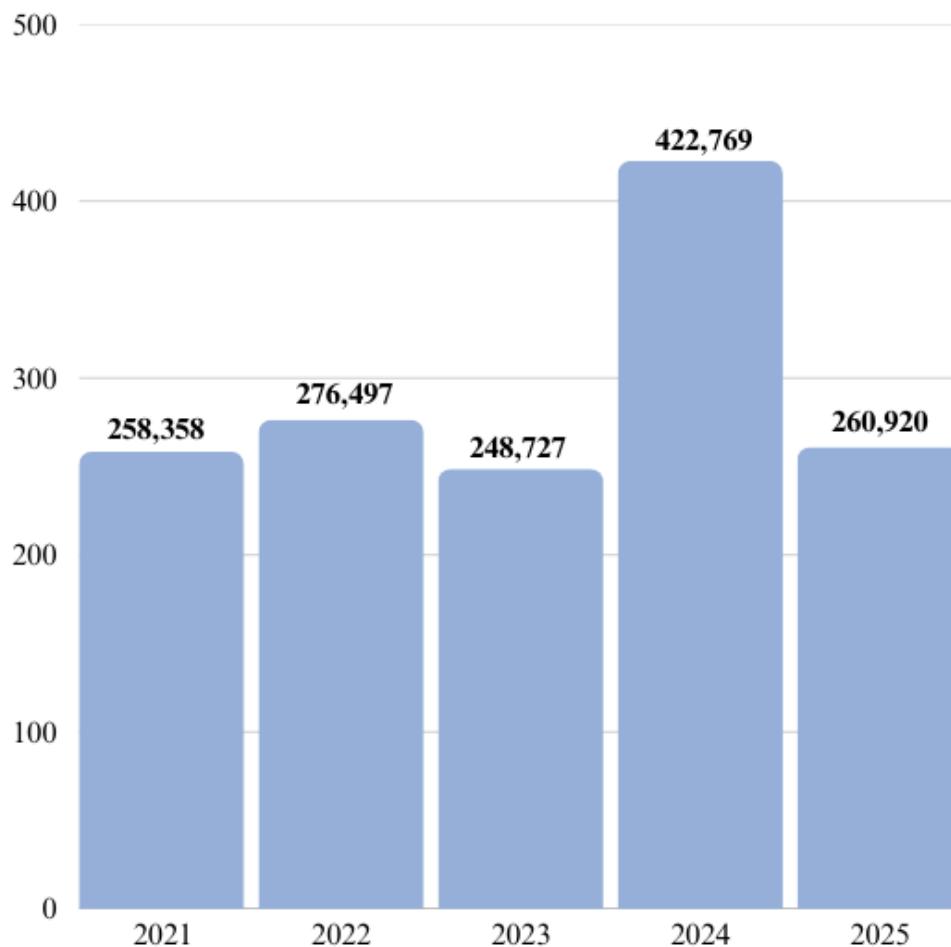


⁶ See National Voter Registration Act, 52 U.S.C. § 20507. See Va. Code § 24.2-428.

New Registrations

In 2025, Virginia had 260,920 new voter registrants. While this was a considerable decrease from 2024, a presidential election year, it represents a 0.9% increase compared to new registrant totals from the 2021 gubernatorial election. As of December 2025, 1,375 individuals are preregistered to vote, meaning they are at least 16 but will not be 18 before the next general election.⁷ Preregistered voters are not reflected in new registrant statistics until they become eligible to vote.

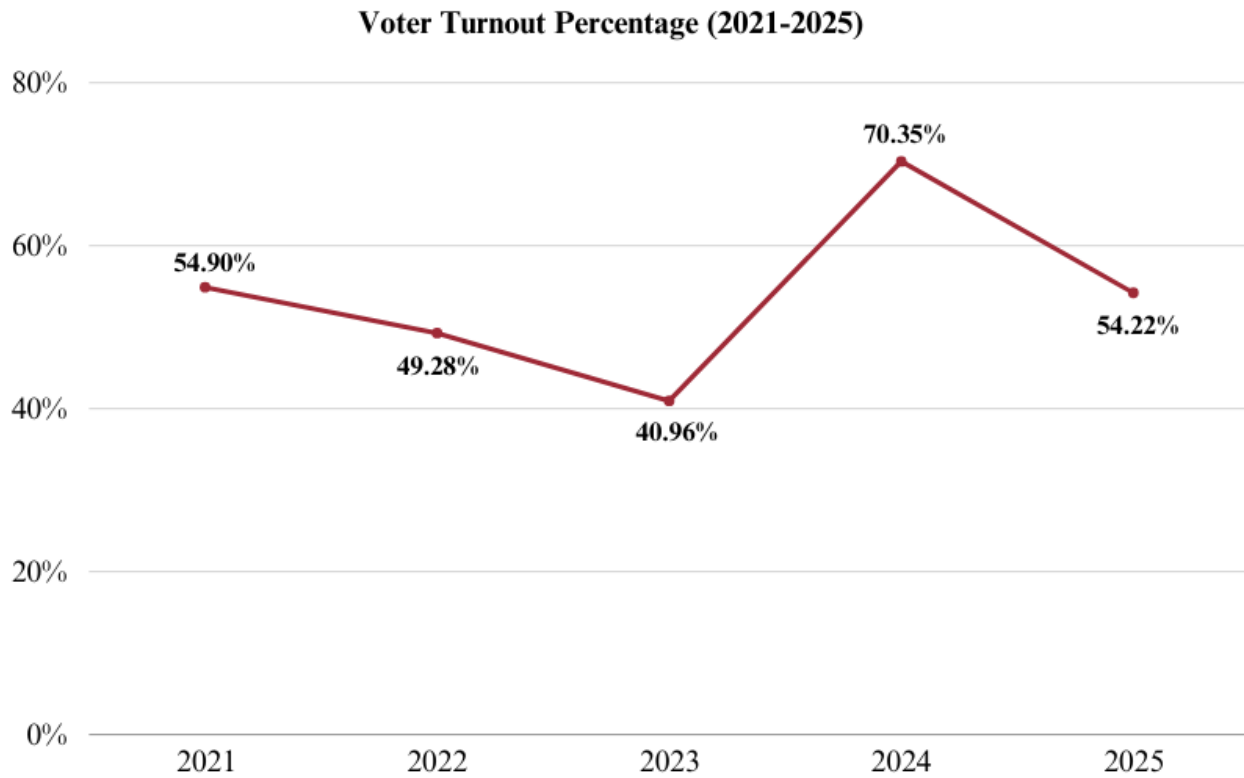
New Voter Registrants By Year



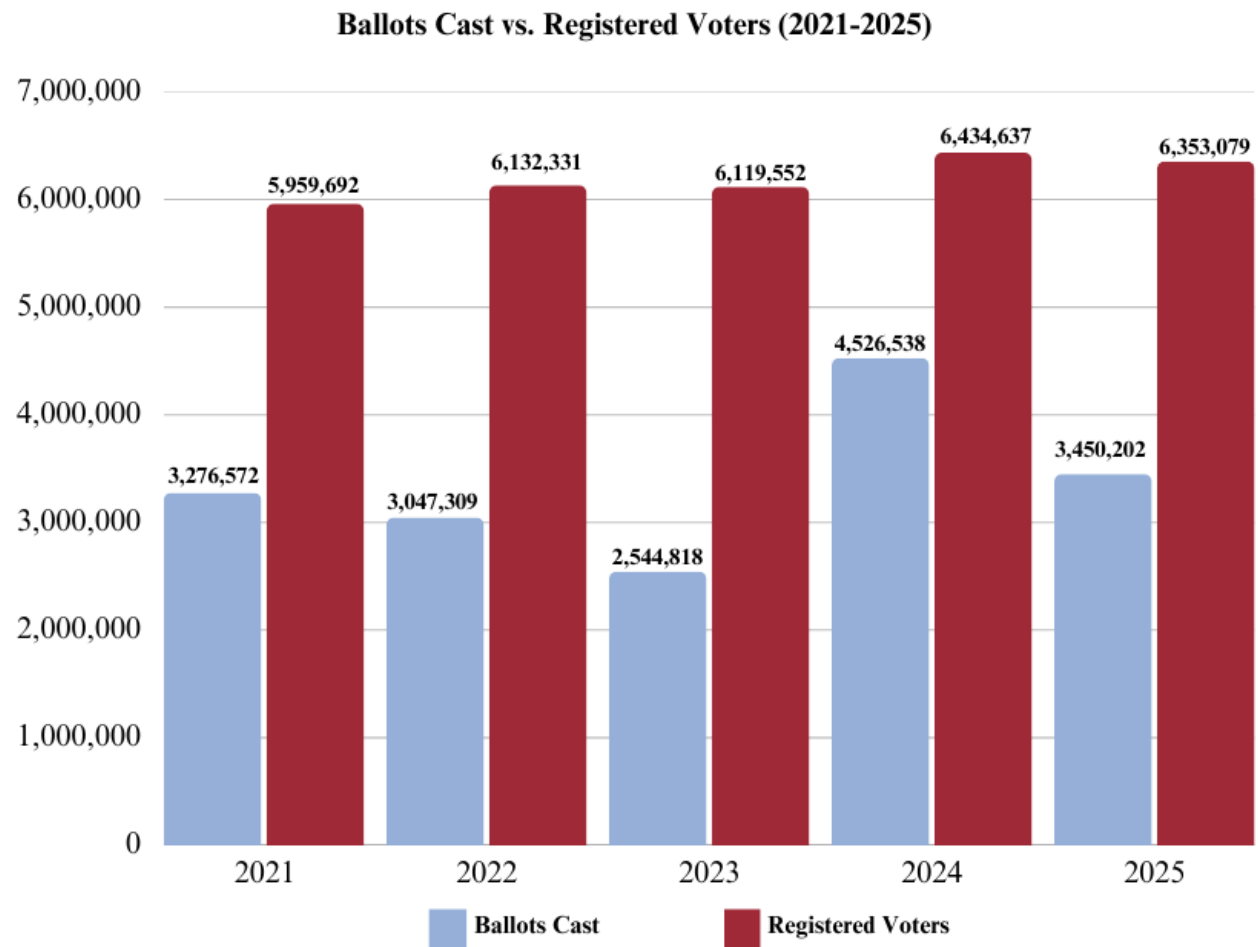
⁷ Va. Code § 24.2-403.1.

Voter Turnout Percentage

Voter turnout refers to the number of registered individuals who *attempted* to vote in an election. Historically, non-federal election years yield lower voter turnout. The exception is years with statewide office contests. The graphics below reflect that trend.

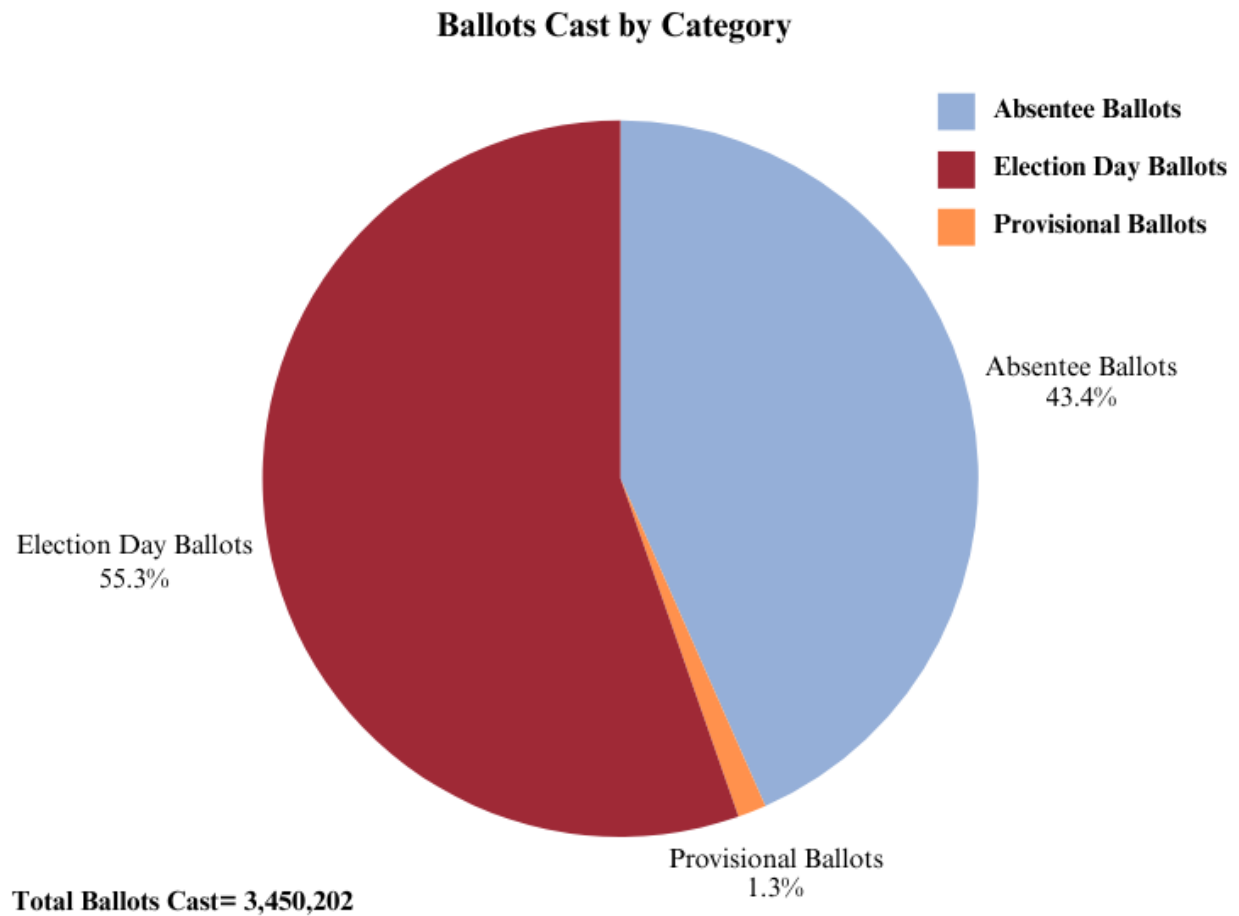


The graph below offers an alternative way to depict voter turnout data from 2021 to 2025. ELECT calculates voter turnout as the number of ballots cast by the number of registered voters. During 2025, 3,450,202 Virginians cast ballots out of 6,353,079 registered voters, resulting in a voter turnout of 54.22%.



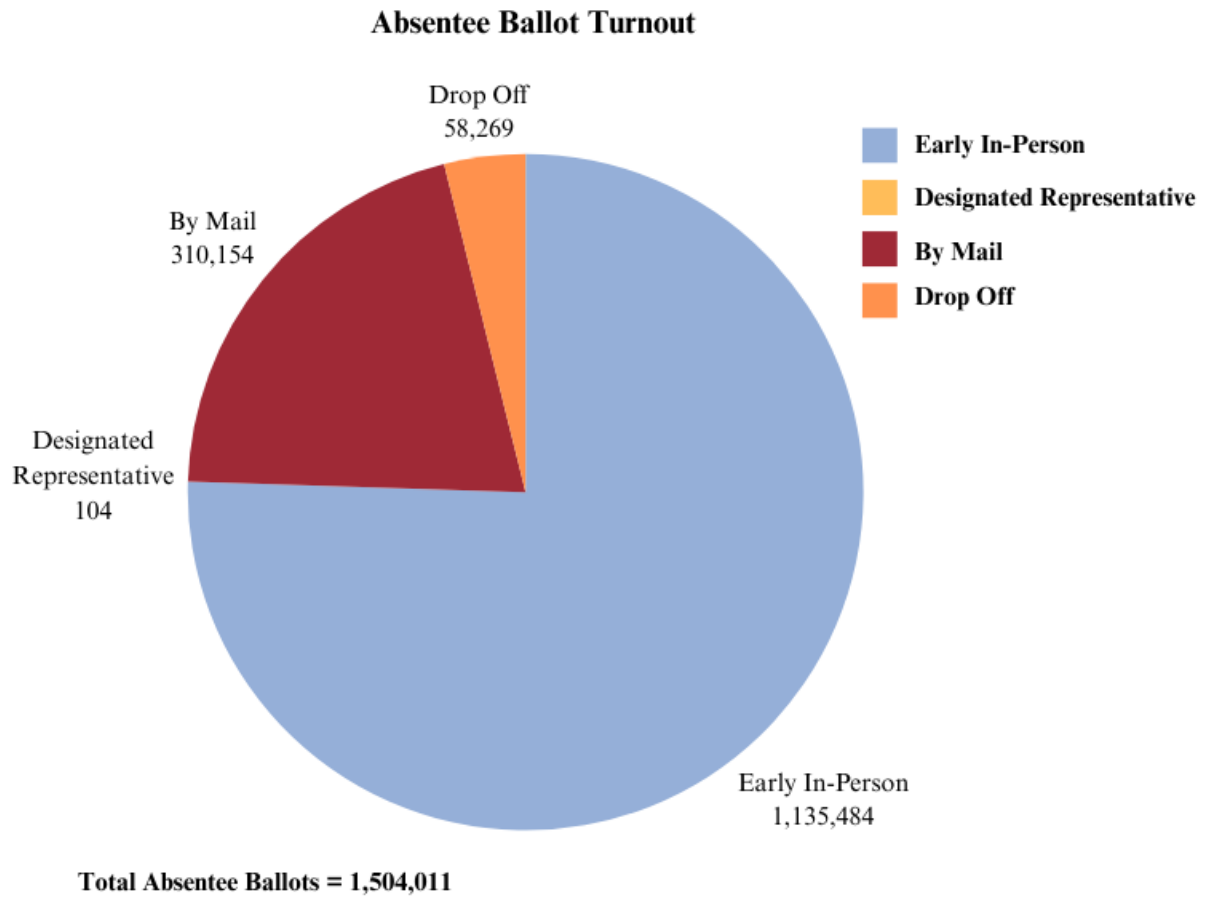
Ballots Cast by Category

The following chart displays the types of ballots cast, organized by category. “Ballots cast” refers to the total number of ballots counted toward the official election results. Categories of ballots cast include Election Day (in-person), Absentee (early in-person, by mail, or drop-off), and Provisional ballots.



Absentee Voting

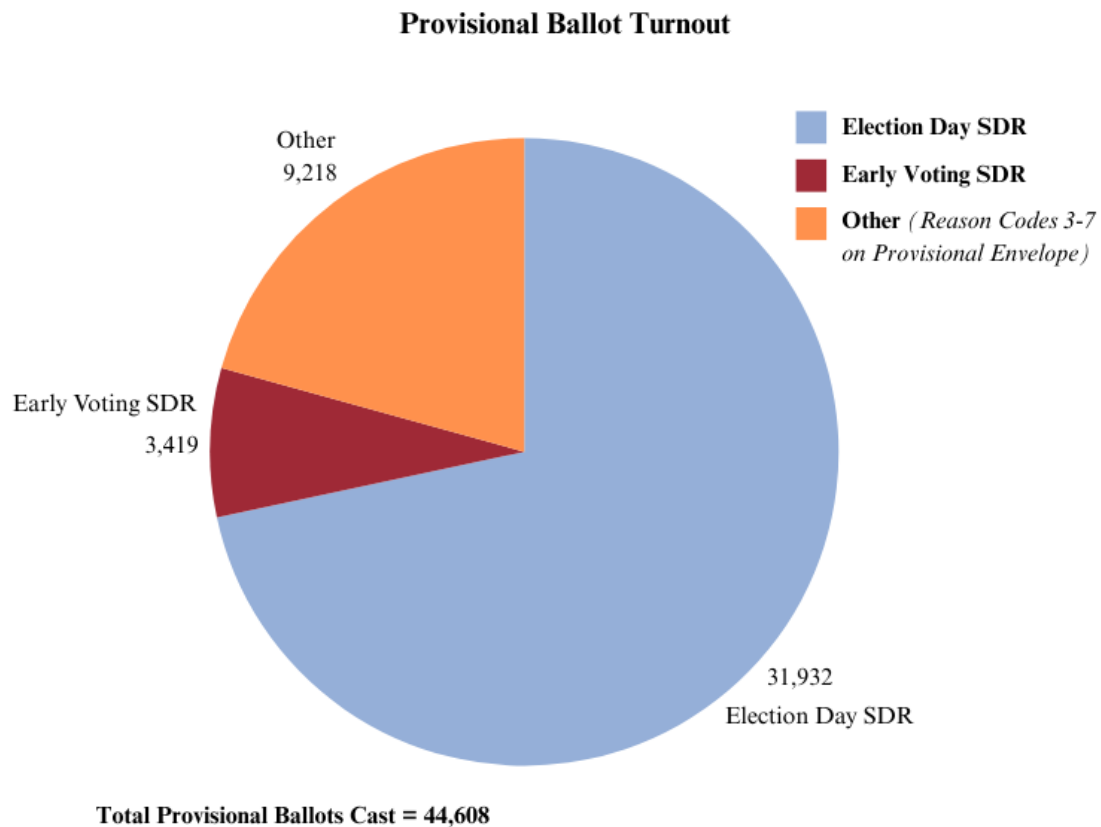
In 2025, 43.66% of all ballots were attributed to absentee voting. Among these, in-person early voting remained the most common method, followed by ballots returned by mail via the United States Postal Service (USPS) or other delivery services. The chart below illustrates the breakdown of absentee voter turnout by method.



Provisional Voting

The following chart illustrates provisional voter turnout, grouped by reason code on provisional ballot envelopes. A provisional ballot is used when a voter's eligibility cannot be confirmed at the polling place. These ballots are reviewed by local electoral boards during the post-election canvass to determine if the voter was eligible to vote, and if so, the vote will be counted. Provisional ballots are processed, tracked, and counted separately from other ballots. Election officers must select a reason code to indicate why a voter was issued a provisional ballot:

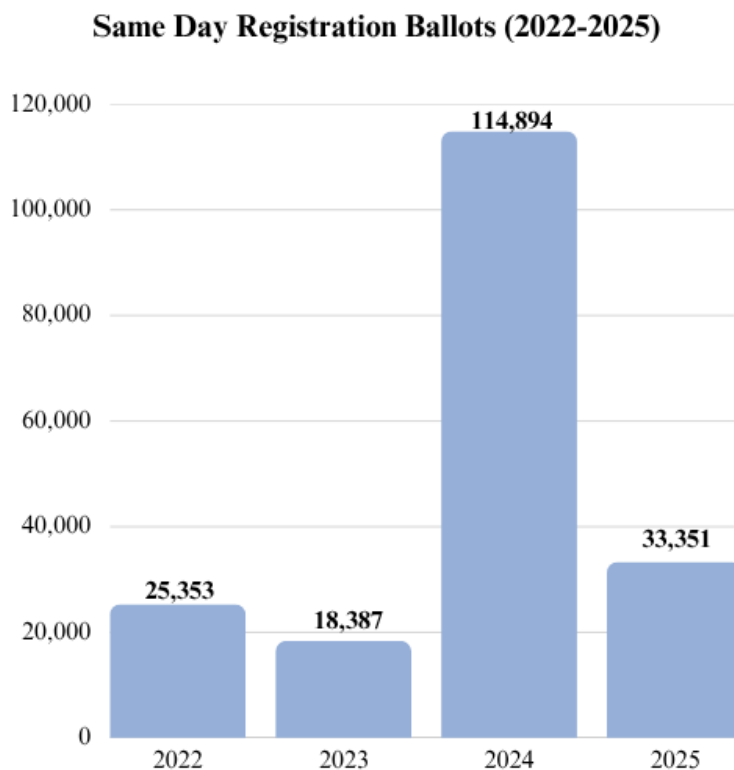
- Reason #1 – Same Day Registration (SDR) or voter's name does not appear in the pollbook.
- Reason #3 – Voter is voting after normal poll closing time due to a court order
- Reason #4 – Voter applied for an absentee ballot but does not have the ballot
- Reason #5 – Voter is shown in the pollbook as already having voted
- Reason #6 – Other
- Reason #7 – Voter did not show the required ID nor sign the ID confirmation statement



Same Day Registration (SDR)

SDR provides voters the right to register to vote up to and including on Election Day at the office of their general registrar or their polling place.⁸ The use of provisional ballots is necessary for the SDR process due to the administrative delay in entering registration information into VERIS, which necessitates post-election verification that an SDR voter was eligible to be registered and did not attempt to vote in multiple locations.

Previously, SDR was available beginning 21 days before Election Day when the registration records were closed. The legislative change in the voter registration period before a primary or general election from 21 days to 10 days was intended to decrease the number of SDR provisional ballots and provide voters more opportunity to register and vote a regular ballot. While there were fewer early voting SDRs in 2025 than in 2024 (3,419 versus 25,532), it is unclear how much of the decrease can be attributed to the legislative change, as the overall voter turnout and number of provisional ballots in 2025 were significantly less than in 2024. The graphic below provides the overall total number of SDR ballots from 2022 to 2025.



⁸ Va. Code § 24.2-420.1.

POST-ELECTION PERIOD

The period immediately following an election is crucial, as localities confirm election night results, adjudicate provisional ballots, conduct important equipment checks, and, most importantly, certify election results. Key tasks in this period include:

- Locality Data Entry
- Canvass and Local Certification
- State Abstract Review
- Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA)

Canvass Process - Triple Check of Results

All election results go through a multi-tiered reporting structure initiated in the precincts with the preparation of the statement of results by the chief officer of election, followed by a secondary review by electoral boards as part of their preparation of the abstracts of votes during the canvass process, followed by a review of the abstracts by ELECT staff. The purpose of the canvass is to compile and certify vote totals and voter turnout for each precinct within the locality. On the day immediately following the election, general registrars and electoral boards were required to start the canvass. To prepare and conduct the canvass, localities must review all voting system results tapes, pollbook data, and the statements of results from precincts to create the abstract of votes. Canvass meetings also include research and adjudication of provisional ballots, including SDR provisional ballots.

Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA)

While ELECT conducted data validation checks on the submitted abstracts of votes, localities prepared to conduct an RLA for a randomly selected House of Delegates race. RLAs are one part of the accuracy verification process. Voting machines are first certified by the SBE in accordance with Election Assistance Commission Voluntary Voting System Guidelines and Virginia specific requirements. For each election logic and accuracy testing is performed on every voting system. RLAs confirm voting systems accurately reported the results of the election.

For the 2025 General Election, the House of Delegates District 92 (HOD92) contest underwent an RLA utilizing the ballot polling method. The HOD92 contest had a margin of victory of 60.97% with a total of 24,339 ballots cast in the race and a sample size of 114 ballots. The risk limit of 10%, set by the SBE, was successfully met in the first round of the RLA, confirming the outcome of the race. More analysis of the RLA is provided in the RLA report found on ELECT's website.⁹

⁹ ELECT, "<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/election-security/rla/>"Risk-limiting Audits.

State Certification

After confirmation of the audited contest, data validation checks of local abstracts by ELECT, and certification of local results by electoral boards, ELECT presented the SBE with abstracts of votes for certification. All results were certified as presented.

2025 GENERAL REGISTRAR SURVEY & REFLECTIONS

ELECT provided its annual survey to the general registrar community to solicit feedback on election administration and general workplace topics. Survey responses provide ELECT and policymakers with information regarding administrative challenges faced by general registrars, potential areas for change or improvement in training and guidance, and general concerns about working environment, resources, and future election administration.

Methodology

The survey contained a mix of 26 multiple choice and short answer questions.

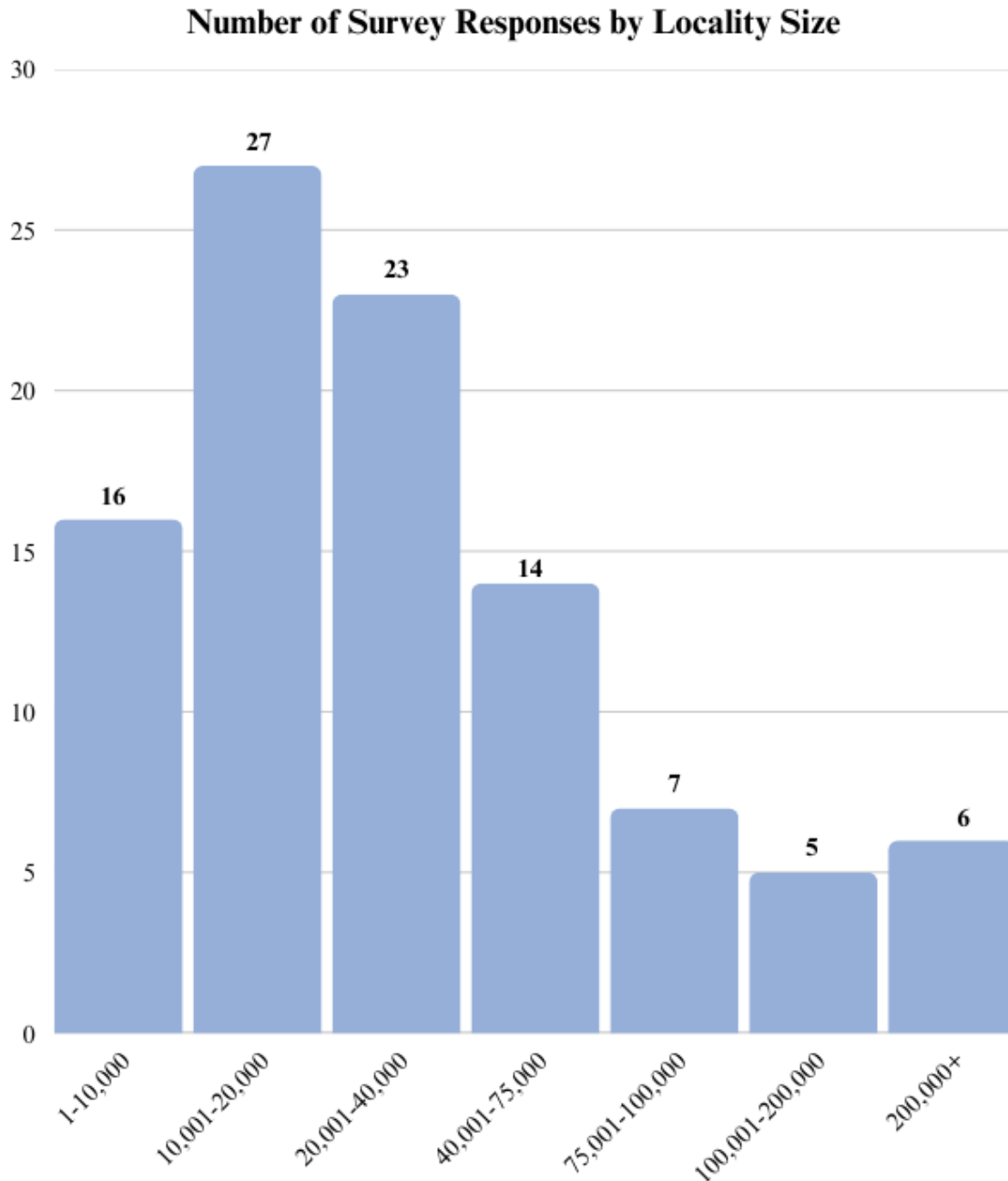
Participation

The survey was open for a 2-week period in December, during which 98 of 133 (or 73.6%) general registrars consented to participating in the survey. This is comparable to the response rate to the General Registrar Survey from 2024.

Demographics

Respondents reported election administration experience levels ranging from 0-3 years up to 12 or more years. They serve rural, suburban, and urban communities, with populations of less than 10,000 and over 200,000 residents.

Virginia continues to have a well-experienced and trained election official population, with 17% reporting 8-11 years and 19% reporting 4-7 years. Only 12% of respondents have been serving in election administration for 0-3 years. Based on this information newer general registrars have a broad network of experienced, qualified peers.



Topics Discussed in the 2025 General Registrar Survey

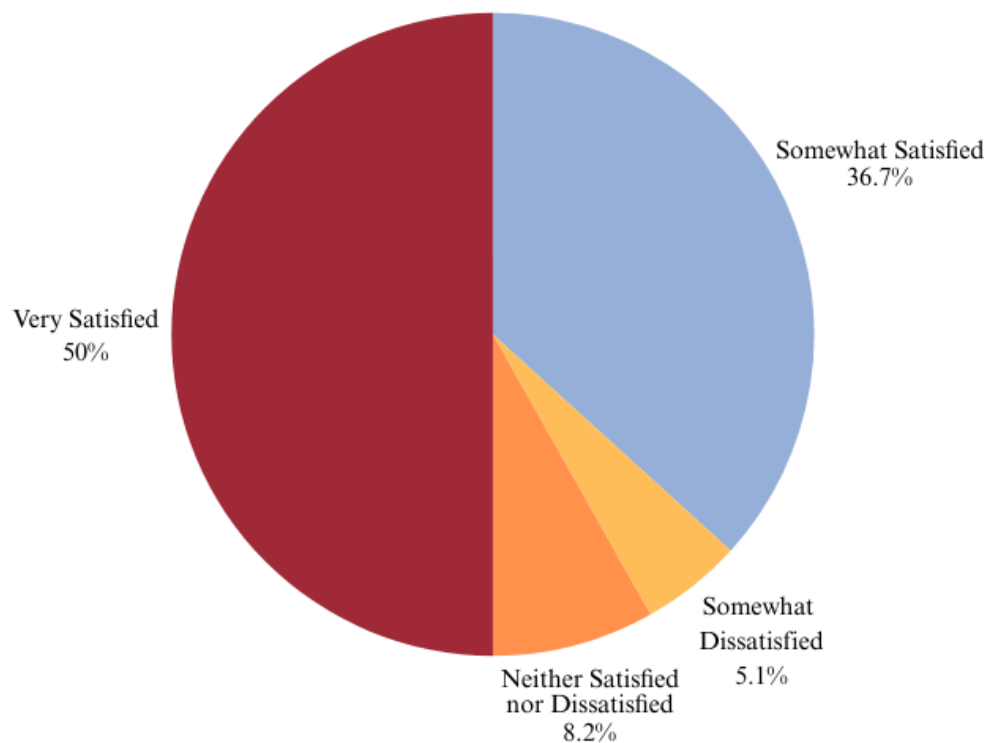
While there was a wide range of issues discussed by general registrars in their responses to the 2025 ELECT Survey, certain topics received repeated mention. This section provides an overview of these topics and direct feedback from general registrars.

General Registrar Job Satisfaction

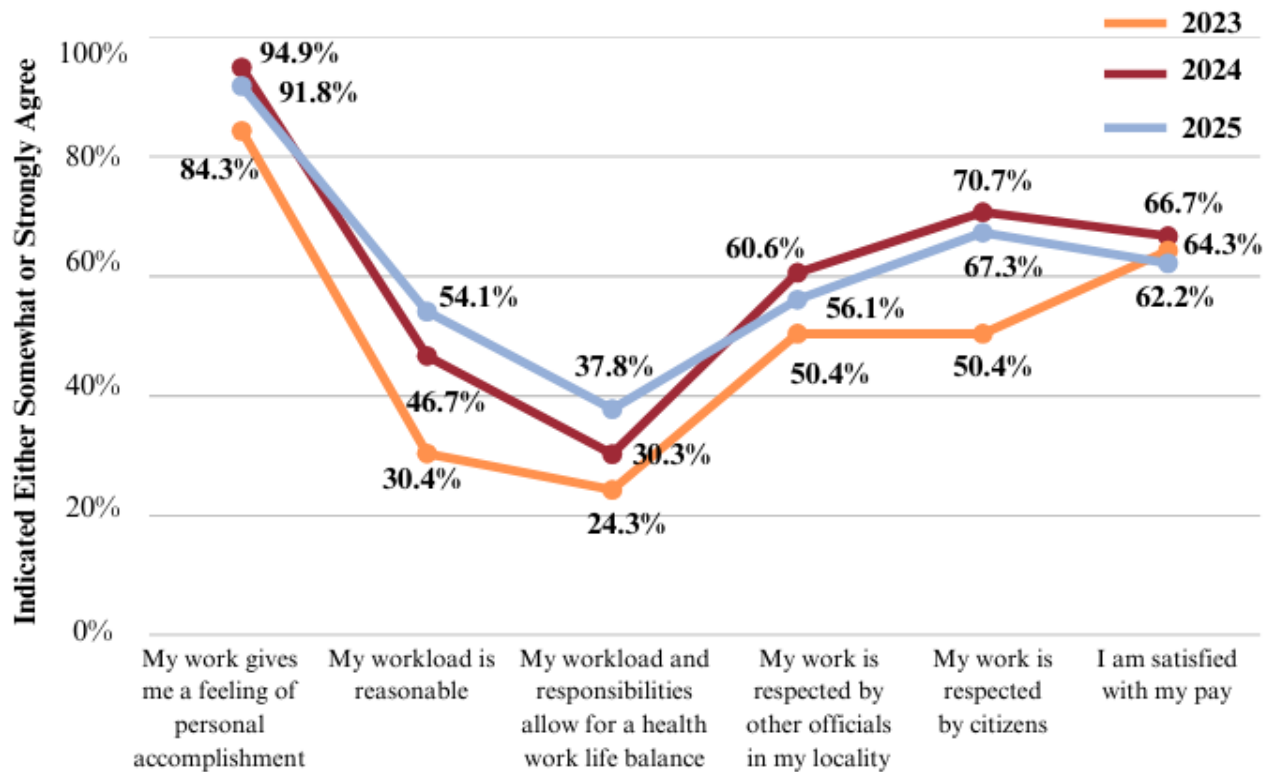
General registrars have experienced increases in their responsibilities over the past several years. In survey responses from year to year, many have shared that the expanding workload and

obligations have led to increased levels of stress, burnout, and even health concerns. Despite these pressures, general registrars continue to enjoy and value their work, whether it is helping Virginians register to vote or ensuring all elections across the Commonwealth are accurate, fair, open, and secure. As shown in the graph below, half of the registrars who responded to the survey reported feeling very satisfied with their jobs, demonstrating an 8% increase from last year. Another 36.7% indicated they were somewhat satisfied with their work. Only 5.1% of general registrars indicated dissatisfaction with their work, which is a 6% decrease compared to last year. Below, the graphs highlight general registrars' overall job satisfaction and their specific responses to employment-related questions.

General Registrar Job Satisfaction



General Registrar Role Overview



The graph above highlights the strong sense of pride, passion, and commitment among Virginia's general registrars. An overwhelming 91% of respondents said their work gives them a sense of personal accomplishment while 94% reported feeling proud to work in elections, which is a 3% increase from last year. There was a decline in perception amongst respondents that local partners and constituents recognize and respect their work. General registrars' relationships and coordination with key local stakeholders are examined in greater detail in the following *Locality Relationships* section.

Several respondents provided comments demonstrating their pride and enjoyment working in elections including:

"I truly love my job. I'm the type that thrives under the pressure of Election Day, but I also love the mundane tasks of organization and formatting documents for cohesiveness."

"I love my job. I've done it for 10 years and was appointed fresh out of college."

"I enjoy my job tremendously & believe in its importance."

"It's always a great experience in conducting elections and learning new things and challenges as they progress throughout the years."

Unlike states with “off years,” Virginia holds elections annually, often with additional special elections, creating a continuous workload. The 2025 election year included a gubernatorial election, which typically involves fewer major contests than a presidential year cycle, yet survey results reflect only marginal improvements in perceptions of workload and work-life balance. While 54% of respondents indicated their workload is reasonable (up 7.4% from last year), 34% still disagree. Similarly, respondents’ agreement that responsibilities allow for a healthy work-life balance rose by 7.5% compared to last year, but nearly half (49%) continue to struggle. Additionally, the majority (62%) of registrars disagree that they can leave work-related problems at the office, which directly impacts their work-life balance. Despite the shift in election year type and the corresponding changes in responsibilities, general registrars’ comments highlight that workload and work-life balance remain persistent challenges:

“I worked 10-20 hours over every single week during early voting.”

“Being recognized for working 18 days straight and putting in 82 hours of overtime during this election would be nice.”

“With tight turnaround times for proofing, approval, getting ballots printed, receiving from the printer, and getting mailed ballot packets ready by the deadline carries a tremendous amount of stress, even if all of that goes smoothly.”

“Elections are not a 9-to-5 job, there are many early mornings, late nights, and required weekend hours.”

Locality Resource Needs

Operations and storage space continues to be the top resource identified by local elections offices (named by 43% of general registrars). Analysis shows that this need ranked higher in localities with higher populations and more staff. Registrars note that their top space priorities are leasing or purchasing additional facilities (57%) and remodeling existing spaces (21%). Other space-related needs include improving current office conditions, additional parking, and creating more storage for equipment and operational tools. Adequate physical space is essential for conducting election administration tasks accurately and efficiently. As one general registrar explained:

“Anything that requires space (storage, larger operations, etc.) is a challenge for our locality. Stuffing absentee ballots requires space. Training requires space. Early voting requires space. Prepping supplies requires space. While we are given sufficient space for voters on Election Day and sometimes during large election Early Voting, anything else becomes a challenge. Our lack of space causes us to have to constantly flip our single open room (which is about 12'x10') for various purposes, which is time consuming. Even still, the space we have is so restricted that maintaining organization can also be challenging. Given long enough, the likelihood of mistakes will increase if this does not change.”

Staffing is the second biggest resource need for general registrars, as 60% of respondents operate with just 0-1 additional full-time staff member in their office. While staffing levels tend to increase with a locality’s population size, the majority of general registrars still function with

extremely limited personnel. The most common staff needs included raising staff wages (38%), hiring a full-time Deputy Registrar (28%), and employing more full-time (15%) and part-time (18%) staff. Limited staffing often requires general registrars to perform numerous duties across various essential election administration tasks with limited backups. The need for additional staffing is not solely about numbers, it is about the strain put on general registrars who often feel overwhelmed with responsibilities in their office. As noted in the *General Registrar Satisfaction* section, registrars consistently express concerns about staffing levels because it directly contributes to burnout, rushed timelines, and challenges with work-life balance. These constraints often leave general registrars as the sole fail-safe in elections, which creates significant risk.

“I think the biggest issue for smaller localities is that the General Registrar is the catch all....It’s no longer just a daily job you go to at 9 AM and turn it off at 5.”

“All the workload, worries, and tasks to be done fall completely on me. I feel the only way I could get a full time Deputy would be to let the election fail. That is not something I’m willing to do. Therefore, I’m far more stressed with each day making sure everything gets done.”

Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Local general registrars are the custodians of a wide variety of public records including, but not limited to, voter registration applications, absentee ballot applications, books, papers, and records of the electoral board, and certain candidate qualification documents. Most general registrars do not have staff to assist them with this responsibility (84% of respondents).

52% of respondents stated that they spend less than an hour each week working on FOIA requests, and 37% stated they spend between 1 and 3 hours. Localities that spent more hours on FOIA requests tended to be larger localities. The additional workload FOIA presents is generally manageable for general registrars. However, FOIA can be especially cumbersome in the weeks leading up to and following an election. One general registrar noted:

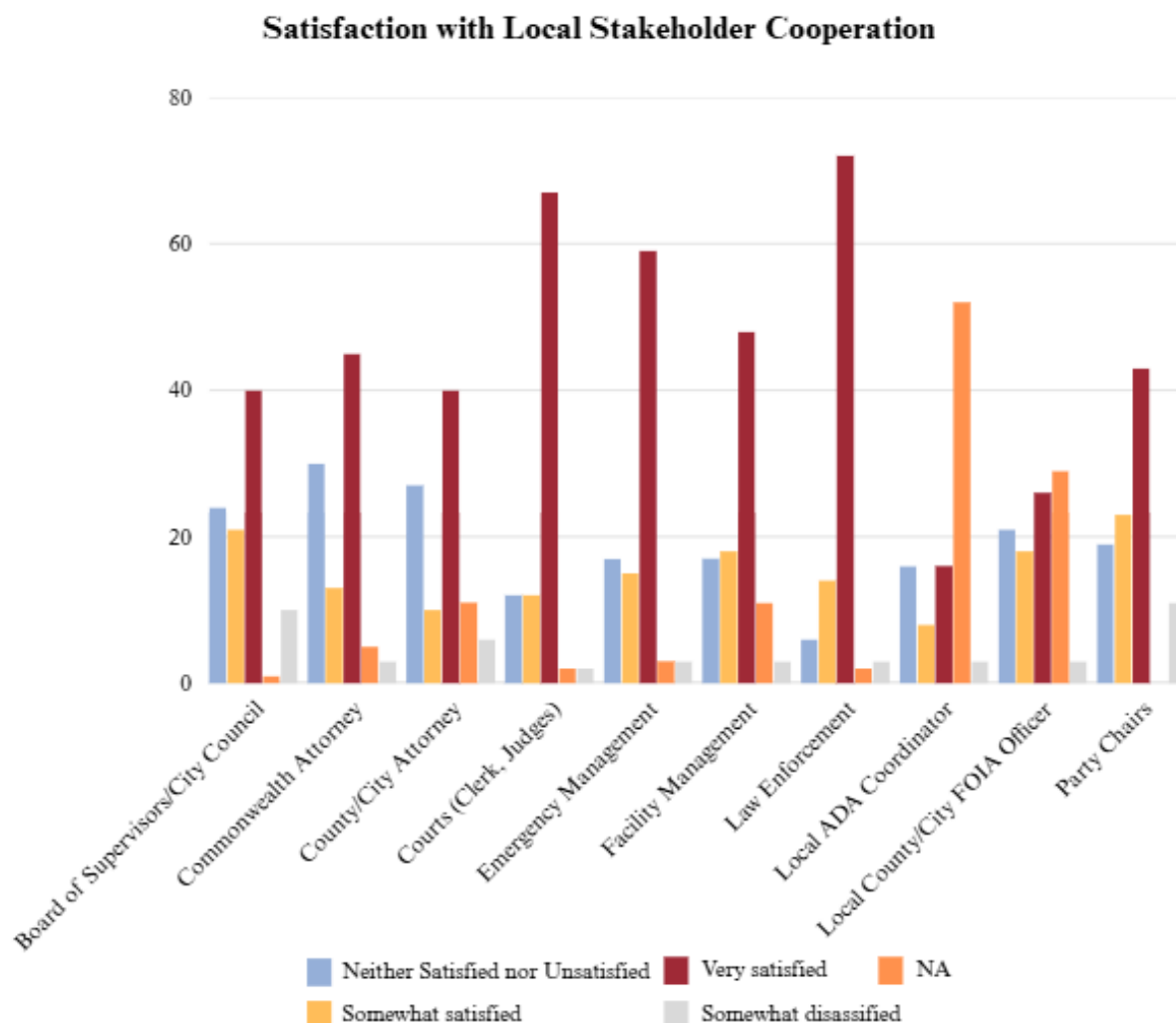
“Extraneous and time-consuming FOIA requests continue to be one of the largest challenges registrars face when administering elections.”

It has become more common for localities to receive FOIA requests for the same information, leading to questions on uniformity.

Locality Relationships

Collaboration with local stakeholders plays a significant role in the ability to successfully carry out election administration. Most general registrars reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the level of coordination among local stakeholders. As shown in the graph below, satisfaction was particularly high with courts (clerks/judges) (81%), emergency management (75%), and law enforcement (88%). This strong collaboration is especially important given registrars’ ongoing concerns about safety and threats to election workers. One registrar expressed this concern clearly:

“A lot of us are very, very, very concerned about the future of elections and our livelihoods. It is becoming more of a concern for our safety and that of our staff as well.”



Despite positive relationships, the survey revealed gaps in engagement with certain local roles, as 30% of respondents reported having no relationship with a FOIA officer and 53% reported no relationship with an ADA coordinator. Lack of access to these resources requires general registrars and electoral boards navigate these areas independently.

Among general registrars who expressed some dissatisfaction with certain stakeholders, such as the Boards of Supervisors/City Councils (12%), County/City Attorneys (10%), and Party Chairs (13%), much of this dissatisfaction stemmed from a limited understanding among these stakeholders about the scope of election administration, specifically the workload, responsibilities, and state requirements. One general registrar summarized this issue:

“The biggest challenge is that those outside of election administration often do not fully understand the responsibilities of our office, the scope of our workload, or what the state requires of us.”

This disconnect can result in elections being underfunded or deprioritized, which creates challenges in securing essential resources to fulfill statutory duties.

To overcome these challenges and facilitate improved collaboration with local stakeholders, several general registrars emphasize the importance of open, honest, and transparent communication. Their strategies include informing stakeholders about workloads, obligations, and key events occurring in the election world while actively cultivating relationships by hosting community events, attending meetings, and directly engaging in public outreach. General registrars shared suggestions on how to employ these strategies:

“You have to cultivate the relationships outside of election time by letting them know that you're there and willing to help them out when they need something.”

“I have it best to just actually go talk to the local stakeholders and pass along to them what we need. Being in a small locality enables me to have direct communication channels with department managers.”

“I make myself available to any and all groups or boards that wish to speak with me and go out of my way to be transparent and educate them on upcoming laws, legislation, and how we plan to incorporate whatever it is into my office, so everyone feels important and comfortable. From county officials to party officials, how I treat one person is how I treat everyone.”

“Being available for community events/town hall meetings to answer questions & be available to the public, recruitment of election workers and voters. Being a positive influence & representative for our locality. Participating in Media (TV & Radio) interviews about elections to inform others.”

Election Night Reporting (ENR)

ELECT has been using the current Election Night Reporting (ENR) software since 2023. At launch, many general registrars struggled with the new interface and processes. Through internal discussions, feedback from localities, and coordination with the third-party vendor, procedural and technical changes have been made each year to improve the user experience. ELECT has created additional guidance to localities regarding ENR, including advisories and checklists. Since then, general registrars have noted improvements with 67% of general registrars stating ENR was much improved or somewhat improved compared to 2024.

Despite improvements, general registrars still ranked ENR as something they struggle with. While some respondents expressed continued issues with the ENR software itself, more GR responses indicated frustration with the requirements of data entry. In 2025, the requirement of reporting provisional ballot results by precinct was introduced. While providing more transparency on where provisional ballots are being cast, this new requirement also increased the post-election workload for general registrars since they have more data fields to enter than

before, potentially leading to fatigue and errors occurring. Several general registrars noted the increased burden of reporting in ENR.

“ENR is getting easier to use the more we use it, the amount of reporting required is getting longer and longer each election with additional items added to the needs to be entered election night.”

“ENR is and has always been labor intensive. When the polls close, we are exhausted. We must input over 3,520 data points of results. That could be more or less depending on the ballot.”

“ENR is difficult, especially with all of the different ballot styles by precincts (now including provisionals by precinct).”

Virginia’s Election and Registration Information System (VERIS)

Virginia’s Election and Registration Information System (VERIS) is the statewide voter registration system for maintaining voter rolls and supporting other key aspects of the Commonwealth’s electoral process. ELECT is actively building a new system to replace VERIS but continues to also focus on efforts to maximize the current system’s existing functionality. In 2024 65% of survey respondents reported an improvement in the performance of VERIS. In 2025, that rose to 82% of respondents. As ELECT moves towards the release of the new statewide voter registration system, ensuring VERIS continues to support current locality administrative functions will remain a priority.

SDR Provisional Voting

SDR continues to be a challenge for general registrars, ranking it the second-highest challenge faced during the November 2025 General Election. However, 62% of respondents indicated that SDR has improved. General registrars noted this improvement was, in part, based on both legislative and technological changes, such as streamlining certain data entry processes, improving reporting, and increasing training.

Despite improvements, GRs still note issues overall with SDR:

“SDRs are a challenge for November General Elections...It takes hours to process entries and hours to verify each provisional ballot. We have a university in our locality, and we end up with over 200 in that one precinct.”

“Same-Day Registration improves access, but in its current form it places a disproportionate administrative burden on local election offices, increases provisional ballots, extends canvass timelines, and creates confusion for voters. With targeted statutory changes, clearer guidance, and appropriate support, SDR could be implemented in a way that serves both voters and election officials more effectively.”

After each election in which SDR has been used, ELECT solicits general registrar feedback and explores ways to streamline the SDR process for voters and election officials. ELECT is actively

exploring additional measures for process improvements, particularly in relation to data entry. ELECT reviews SDR training and make updates and additions as needed.

United States Postal Service (USPS) Issues Related to Absentee Ballots

ELECT worked closely with USPS to address past and present issues, but localities and voters still faced challenges when mailing and receiving absentee ballots. 51% of localities experienced mail challenges, regardless of population size. The mail challenges that localities experienced were widespread, and no one specific challenge was more prevalent than the others.

The types of issues, and percent of responding localities that experienced them include:

- Late returned absentee ballots (15%)
- Delays in ballots arriving to voters (18%)
- Mail returned to the general registrar's office or voter as "undeliverable" (15%)
- Absentee ballots without a postmark (17%)
- Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMB) was not scanned (14%)
- Ballots lost in the mail (14%)
- Mail delivered to the wrong locality (7%)

"We had many calls about voters not receiving their absentee ballots. As a result, we had a lot of upset voters, and we had to do a number of reissues."

The frustration reflected in the 2025 General Registrar Survey is mirrored by voter complaints received by ELECT, as shown in the Online Complaint section below. Through ELECT's voter education efforts and media outreach, voters were encouraged to return their mail-in ballots as soon as possible to avoid their ballots arriving too late to be counted. Voters also had the option to return their mail-in ballots in person to the general registrar's office, to a drop-off location, or to their polling place or Central Absentee Precinct on Election Day. ELECT will continue to work with the USPS to improve the reliability and prioritization of election-related mail.

VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the year and especially before an election, both ELECT and local election officials keep the public informed about election-related matters, such as election dates, registration deadlines, and various opportunities to vote early and on Election Day.

ELECT Voter Engagement Campaign Components

For the 2025 General Election, ELECT executed a five-week, statewide "We Count Virginia" voter education awareness campaign to educate Virginians about the timing of Election Day and the early voting period and to reinforce the fact that when a person votes in Virginia — whether early in person, by mail, or on Election Day — it counts. The campaign ran from September 29 through November 4. The media campaign leveraged online, radio, and print channels. Campaign materials were presented in Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese, where possible.

The following provides a summary of ELECT’s outreach efforts in the campaign. For the examples of the materials used, please see Appendix B.

Broadcast Media (Radio)

- The radio campaign delivered coverage across the state in English, Spanish, and Korean, with placements on a wide range of formats including news/talk, country, urban contemporary, and public radio.

Print Media

- Ads appeared in major daily newspapers and rural weekly publications, reaching English, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese communities with tailored messaging.
- Flyers in English, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese were developed for ELECT to distribute to its partners, localities, and advisory boards.

Social Media and Online Advertising

- ELECT issued 53 social graphics and post captions for Facebook and X, along with a social media posting schedule that started on September 15.
- The online campaign delivered targeted English, Spanish, and Korean ads across mobile, social media, and display platforms—including Facebook/Instagram and local news sites.
- Ads were also run on top streaming platforms such as Spotify, AudioGo, and Amazon.

Media Analytics

The campaign garnered over 69.8 million impressions across online, radio, and print. An impression is an individual view, and multiple impressions can be attributed to a single individual. A radio impression is calculated by multiplying listenership times the number of spots aired. A print impression is determined by the circulation times the number of print ads published.

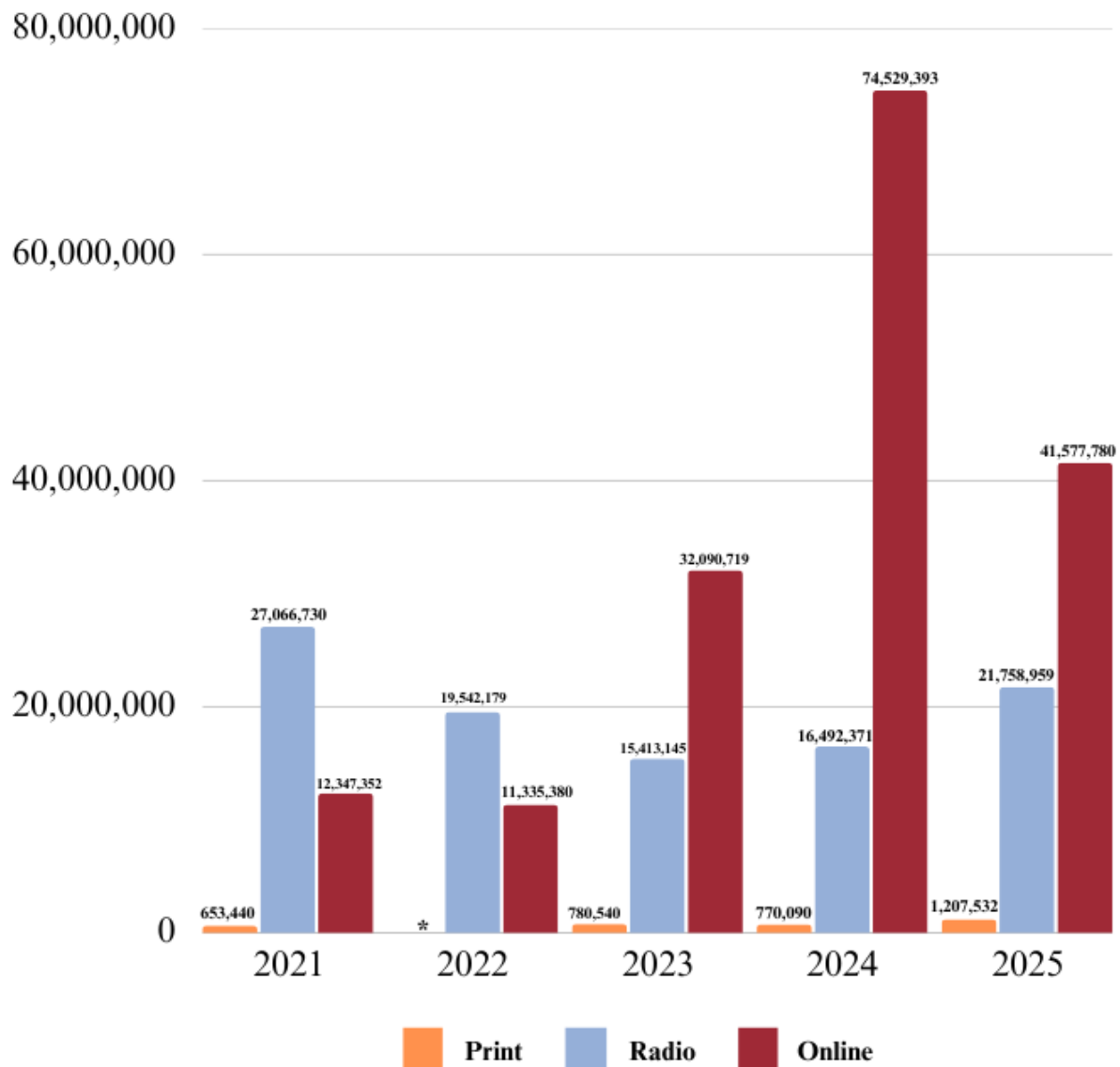
- Online advertisements received 41,577,780 impressions or 60% of overall impressions (this includes mobile, paid social, banner ads, and streaming audio).
- Radio advertisements received 21,758,959 impressions or 31% of overall impressions (of measured markets).
- Print advertisements received 1,207,532 impressions or 9% of overall impressions.

ELECT began reporting media analytics in 2021, the latest comparable year to 2025. Overall impressions were higher in 2021, with 79 million versus 69.8 million in 2025. However, most impressions that year were generated from TV ads, 38,971,115, which was the last time ELECT ran TV ads.¹⁰ Online impressions have tripled since 2021 with more voters are getting their information from online resources and interacting with ELECT virtually. Radio impressions appear to increase during gubernatorial years while declining in other years; it is unclear why

¹⁰ ELECT, November 2, 2021, Post-Election Report, p.39 (January 24, 2022).

there appears to be this trend. Print impressions have doubled since 2021, showing there continues to be a market for print advertising despite more voters getting information online.

Media Impressions by Year, by Type



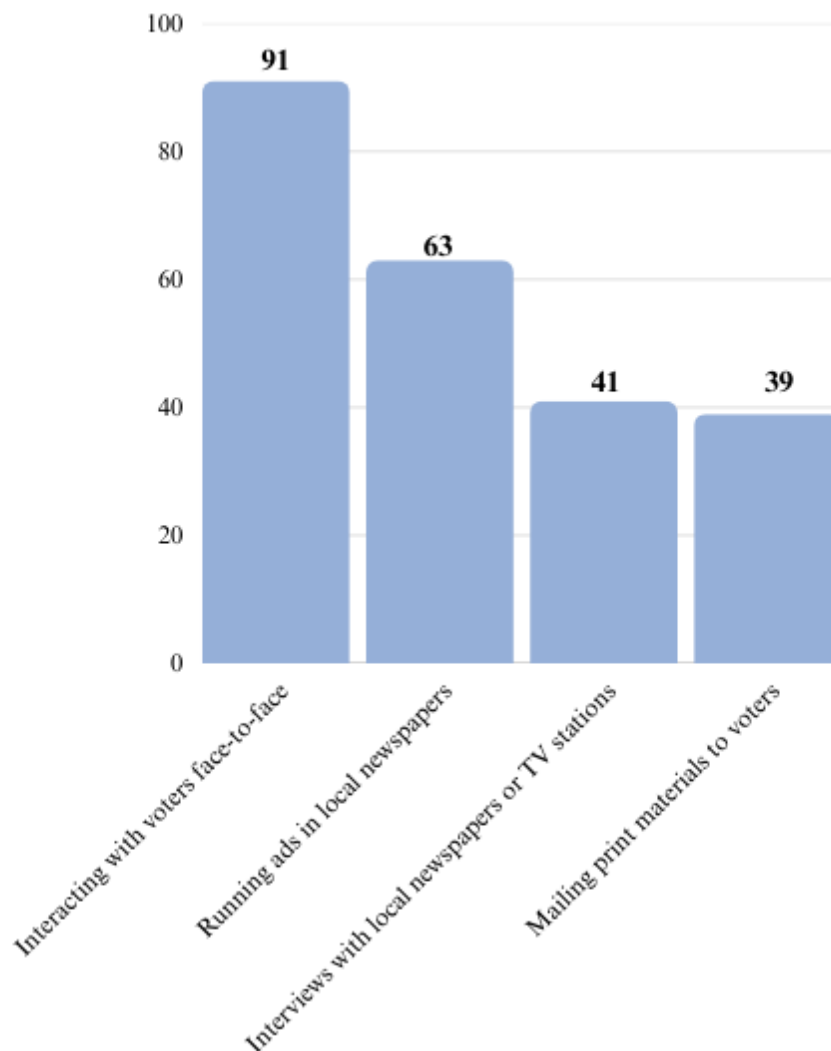
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¹¹ In 2022, ELECT did not report on the number of printed newspaper impressions, but ELECT did have ads placed on fifty-seven newspaper websites, four of which were in Spanish, generating 4,214,064 impressions. *See* ELECT, 2022 Gen. Election Retrospective, p. 31 (March 7, 2023).

Local Election Official Outreach

Local election officials have employed a variety of methods to ensure voters received accurate and timely information about the 2025 General Election. As shown in the graphic below, 92% of respondents reported direct interaction with voters, whether in their offices, by phone, or through email. Additionally, 64.2% run ads in local newspapers, 41.8% conduct interviews with local newspapers or TV stations, and 39.7% mail printed materials, such as pamphlets or voter guides, to voters. Beyond these standard outreach efforts, 42% of localities also leverage social media, city or county websites, and community events at central locations, such as schools or colleges, to engage and inform voters about upcoming elections and essential details. These outreach efforts demonstrate that Virginia's local election officials use multiple communication channels to make election information accessible to all Virginian voters.

Most Frequently Used Methods of Voter Outreach



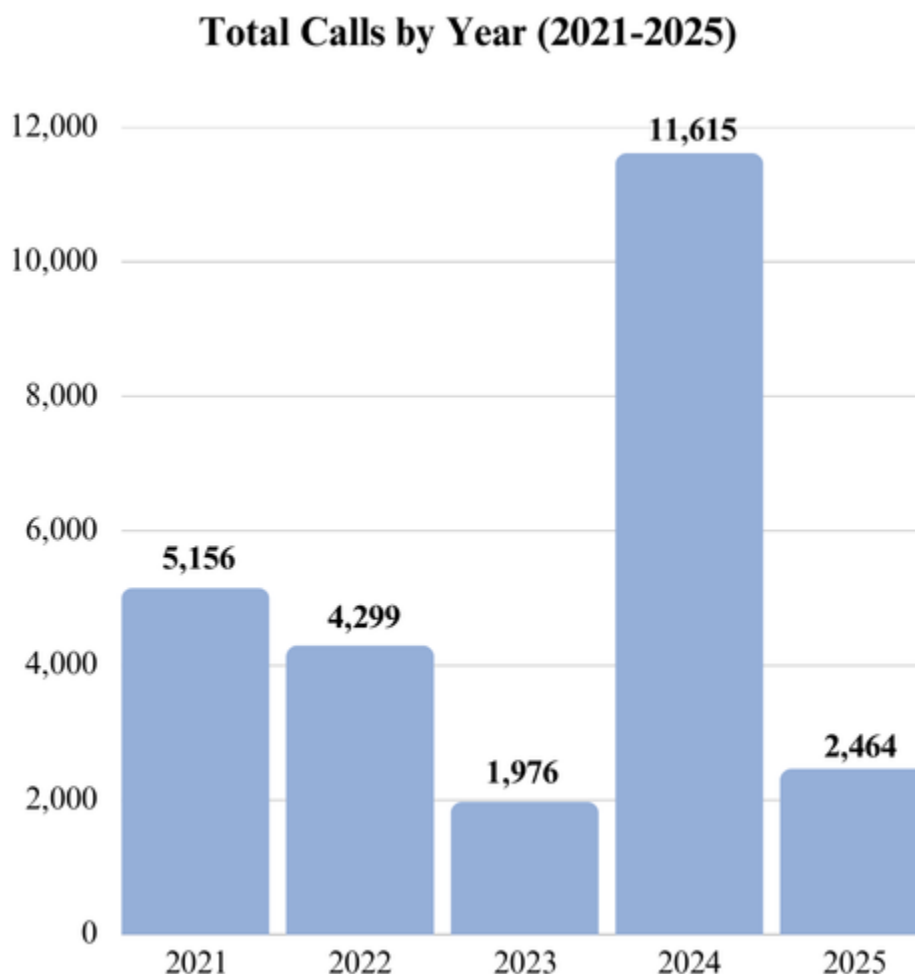
CONSTITUENT SERVICES

As part of its post-election reporting, ELECT provides data regarding inquiries and complaints fielded during the election cycle. ELECT has three avenues for the submission of inquiries and complaints: a call center, an online complaint tool, and a voter complaint form.

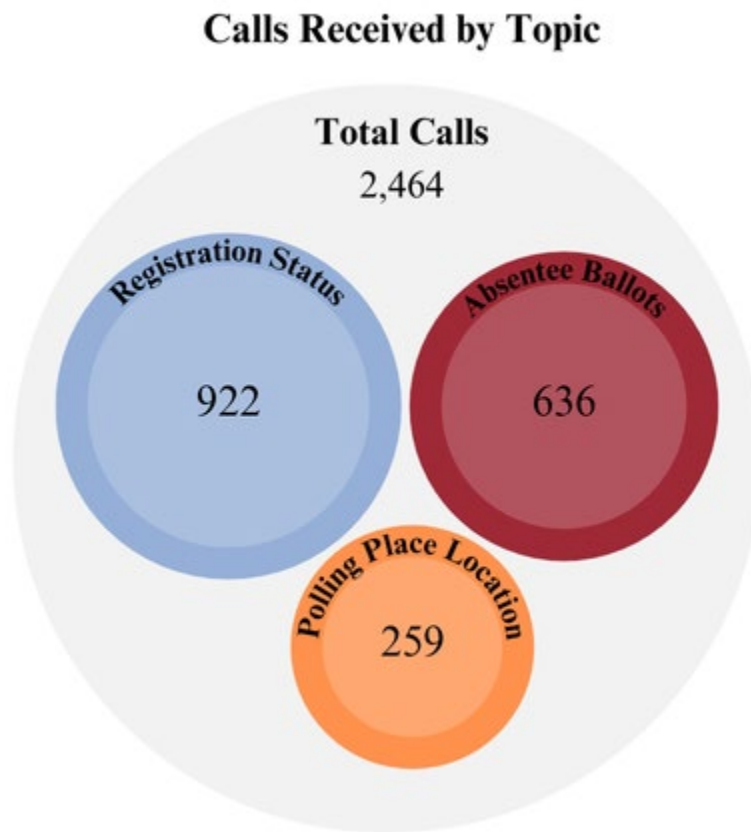
Call Center

To manage the influx of calls and provide a high level of customer service, ELECT contracted with a third-party vendor to operate a call center from August 25 through November 14 to field constituent inquiries. The call center received 2,464 calls in that time period. While the call center was operational, voters who called ELECT's phone numbers were redirected to the call center. Most calls were addressed by the call center, with only 23 calls transferred to ELECT for staff review. The average wait time for callers was two minutes, and the average talk time was four and a half minutes.

The following graph shows the total number of calls received by the call center in each of the last five elections. There was a 52% reduction in the number of calls received in 2025 compared to 2021.



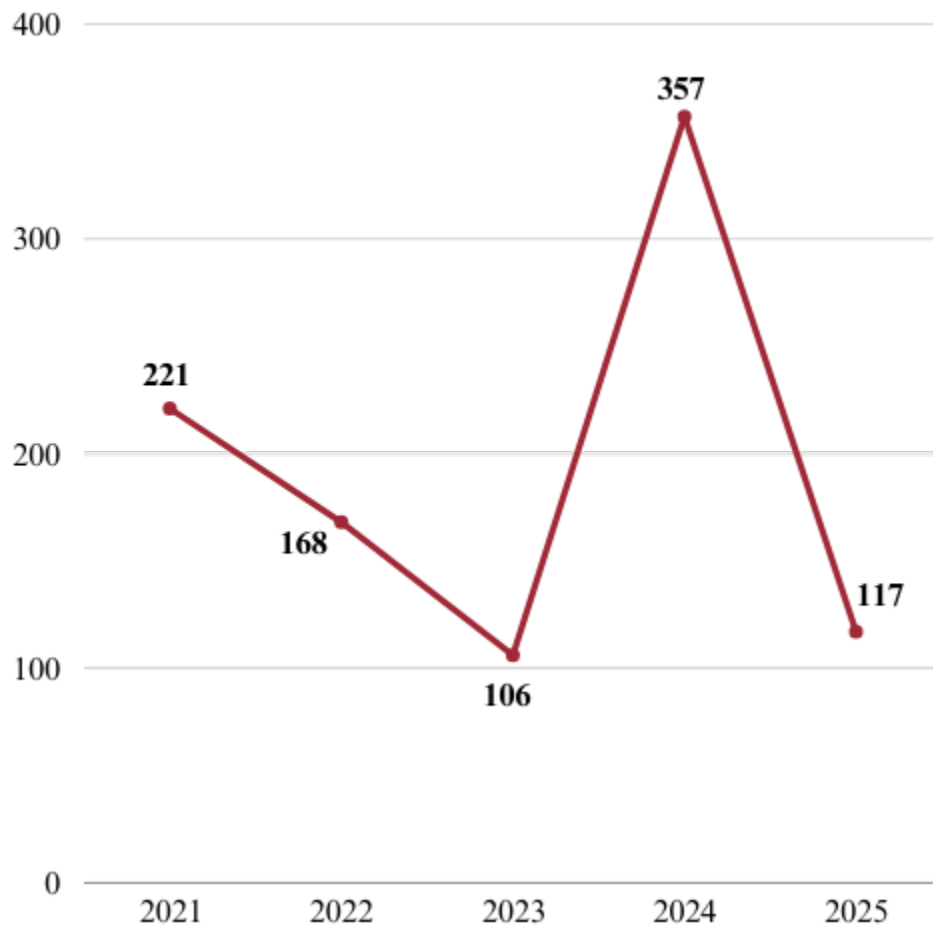
Out of the 2,464 calls received while the call center was open, the most common question topics remained consistent with prior years including registration statuses, absentee ballots, and polling locations, as shown in the graphic below.



Online Complaints

ELECT provides an online tool for voters to raise issues during an election cycle and have them resolved quickly. Typically, ELECT forwards these issues to general registrars to address. In many cases, the general registrar or officers of election are already aware of a particular situation and working on a response. In 2025, 38 complaints were filed before Election Day, 56 were filed on Election Day, and 23 were filed after Election Day, for a total of 117. This total represents a reduction by nearly half compared with the number of complaints in 2021.

Number of Online Voter Complaints (2021-2025)



The chart below provides a breakdown of online complaints, by issue, over the last five years.

Complaint Type	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Absentee Ballots	24	18	12	51	14
Accessibility	6	8	2	13	10
Ballots	21	20	13	43	7
Candidates	0	0	8	5	7
General Comments	16	15	12	26	12
Identification	11	11	6	22	9
Law Enforcement	2	0	0	0	2
Long Lines	0	0	0	4	0
Other	38	33	22	60	22
Vandalism	0	0	0	5	0
Voter Fraud	137	18	8	30	6
Voter Intimidation	53	21	17	66	19
Voter Registration	16	16	4	21	5
Voting Equipment	15	8	2	11	4
Total	221	168	106	357	117

Voter intimidation was the most common categorized complaint in 2025. Most complaints were related to the experience while approaching a polling place, citing the aggressive nature of campaigning outside of the polling place. However, the number of voter intimidation complaints in 2025 is significantly less than in 2021 and follows the trend of other non-presidential years, which may be attributed to lower voter turnout. Additionally, ELECT noted last year that most voter intimidation complaints were also due to the behavior of campaigns outside a polling place. Therefore, some campaigns and candidates may have also addressed this issue with their staff and volunteers, as recommended in ELECT’s 2024 Post Election Report. While ELECT works to address complaints once received, it is often the case that the general registrar has already resolved the matter.

Absentee ballots were the second-highest complaint category. Most complaints concerned the voter’s ballot not being received by mail. As previously noted, general registrars often field voter complaints related to the USPS delays in delivery or loss of mail-in absentee ballots. Local election officials feel frustrated regarding USPS mistakes that lead to process issues and having to reissue mail-in ballots. This can cause additional stress and uncertainty for voters and election officials. Voters who do not receive their requested mail-in ballot may still vote a provisional ballot on Election Day. This ensures that the voter still has the opportunity to vote while allowing the local electoral board and general registrar to validate that the absentee ballot was not returned by the voter.

Accessibility and ADA compliance received the third-highest number of complaints from voters. Most of these complaints were related to accessing a polling place or a drop-off location for absentee ballots. Some complainants reported they arrived in the minutes before 7:00 P.M., when

polling places close, and were turned away by the officers of election. Others were concerned about crowded walkways due to campaign volunteers. As with the voter intimidation complaints noted above, campaigns and candidates should advise their staff and volunteers not to obstruct walkways and sidewalks, hindering the ability of voters to enter and exit a polling place.

CONCLUSION

The successful administration of two safe and secure statewide elections in the Commonwealth in 2025 was a collective effort of dedicated officials and staff at the local, state, and federal levels. Virginia continues to be a model of well-run elections for states across the country. ELECT will continue to work with its partners to identify opportunities to improve the experience of voters and local election officials. The feedback from general registrars and other information gathered in this report is intended to share insights into the successes and ongoing challenges in the administration of elections in Virginia.

Appendix A: Terminology

Many terms are used to describe different aspects of an election and its results. For purposes of the data included in this report, please keep the following definitions in mind:

Absentee Voting is the process of casting ballots other than in-person at the polling place on Election Day, including in-person voting in the early voting period and by mailed/dropped off ballots.

Authorized Representatives are qualified voters of any jurisdiction in the Commonwealth tasked with seeing and hearing what is occurring at the voter check-in table on behalf of a political party or an independent candidate.

Ballots Cast refers to the total number of ballots counted towards the total results of an election. For example, one paper ballot may have three elections on it. No matter how many bubbles are filled in for each race - all three races, one race, or none at all - the one paper ballot is considered one ballot cast.

Department of Elections (ELECT) is the Virginia state agency that is tasked with the administrative and programmatic operations assigned by law and, further, discharges duties as delegated by the State Board of Elections.

General Registrars are election administrators appointed by the electoral board of a county or city. They are responsible for all aspects of voter registration and election administration duties as assigned by law and delegated by the electoral board. Some have the additional title of “director of elections.”

General Registrar and Electoral Board Handbook (GREB Handbook) is a guidance document created by ELECT to provide an overview of election-related tasks, processes, procedures, and statutory and regulatory requirements for local election officials.

Electoral Boards are local three-member boards appointed by the chief judge of a judicial circuit to administer elections for a county or city. They are composed of (i) two members from the political party that received the highest number of votes at the preceding gubernatorial election and (ii) one member from the party that received the next highest number of votes at the preceding gubernatorial election. For a list of full duties, please see Chapter 2 of the GREB Handbook found on ELECT’s website.¹²

Officers of Election local election officials appointed by the electoral board to administer elections at polling places in all elections.

¹² ELECT, GREB Handbook, Chapter 2, Local Electoral Boards, (Aug. 2025).

Virginia Election Registration Information System (VERIS) is the centralized election administration and voter registration system currently in use in Virginia that is operated and maintained by the Department of Elections.

Voter Turnout refers to the number of registered individuals that attempted to vote in an election. ELECT calculates turnout as the number of ballots cast by the amount of active and inactive voters and is commonly expressed as a percentage.

Votes Cast refers to the number of votes cast that go towards a particular election, meaning a particular candidate, referendum, etc. Referring to the example above, one paper ballot may have three races on it. If a voter makes one selection in each of the three races, a total of three votes have been cast on the one ballot.

Appendix B: Voter Education Campaign Materials

Radio

:15 PUBLIC RADIO

This year, on Tuesday, November fourth, Virginians will vote for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and all 100 delegates. Register to vote and make a voting plan at Vote dot Virginia dot gov.

:30 RADIO

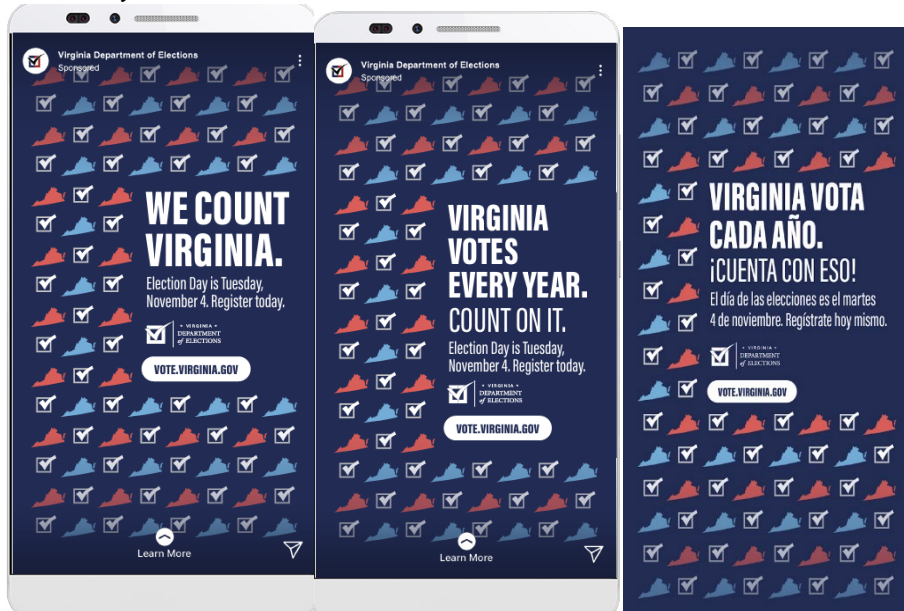
Virginia is just one of a few states that votes every year. Which is one reason we like to remind you, We Count Virginia. This year, on Tuesday, November fourth, get ready to vote for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and all 100 delegates. You vote. It counts. Every year. Or, in just three words. We Count Virginia. Election Day is Tuesday, November fourth. Register to vote and make a voting plan at Vote dot Virginia dot gov

Social Media

Paid Social Media Ads



Paid Story



Static Digital

300 x 250



Social Graphics



Social Sharables



