



Reporting Mail Voting in EAVS

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many states, territories, and jurisdictions expanded their use of mail balloting to provide voters with safer options to cast their ballots in the November 2020 General Election. When you complete the 2020 Election Administration and Voting Survey (EAVS), there are several places where you will report the different types of mail voting. As described below, these ballots fall into three general categories: military and overseas ballots; domestic absentee or mail ballots; and ballots in states, territories, and jurisdictions where all voting is done by mail.

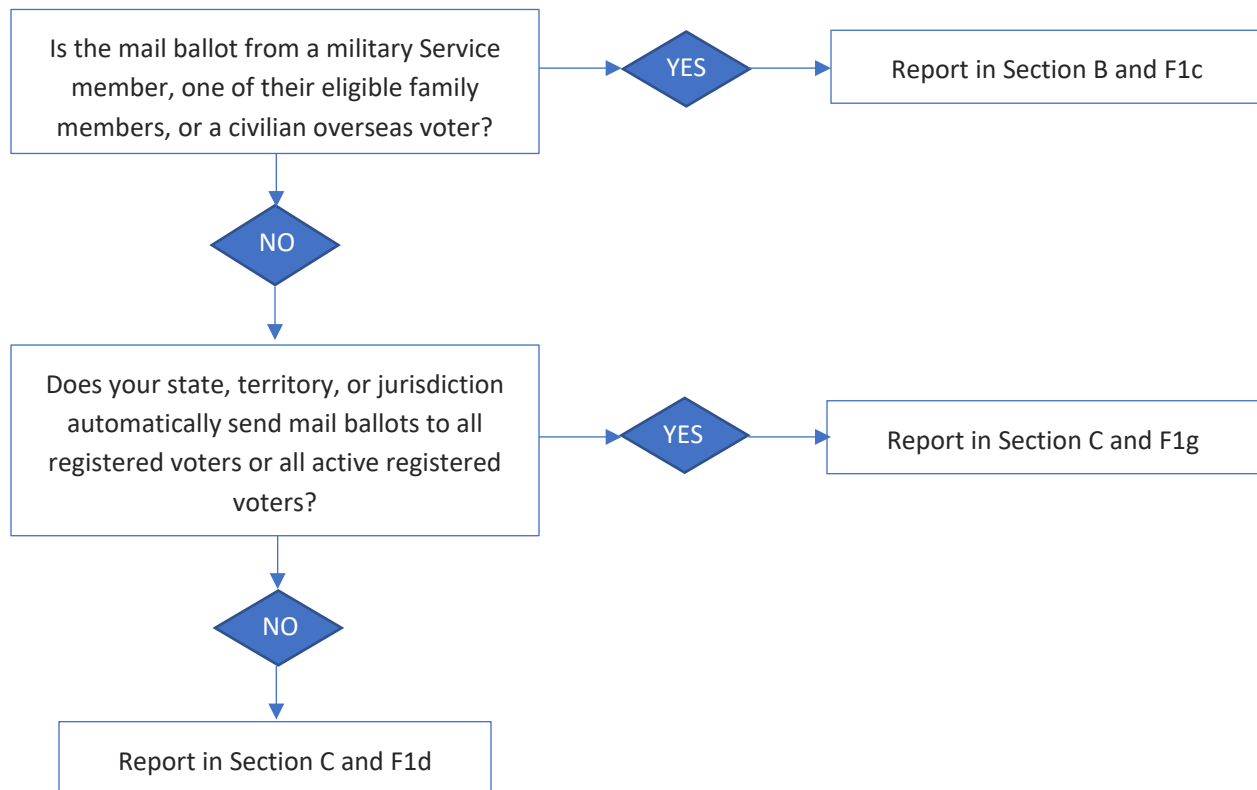


Figure 1: Flow chart describing how to report mail ballots in the 2020 EAVS

Military and Overseas Ballots

Mail ballots sent to voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)—which covers military Service members and Service members’ eligible family members, as well as non-military



civilians living overseas—will be reported primarily in Section B of EAVS. State, territory, and local officials will report the following information about these ballots:

- The number of UOCAVA ballots that were transmitted to voters, including information on the mode by which they were transmitted and the type of UOCAVA voter they were transmitted to (B5–B8).
- The number of transmitted UOCAVA ballots that were returned by voters, including information on the mode by which they were returned and the type of UOCAVA voter they were transmitted to (B9–B12).
- The number of transmitted UOCAVA ballots that were returned as undeliverable, including information on the mode by which they were transmitted (B13).
- The number of transmitted UOCAVA ballots that were returned by voters and counted, including information on the mode by which they were returned and the type of UOCAVA voter they were returned by (B14–B17).
- The number of transmitted UOCAVA ballots that were returned by voters and rejected, including information on the reason for rejection and the type of UOCAVA voter they were returned by (B18–B22).
- The number of Federal Write-In Absentee Ballots (FWAB) that were returned, counted, and rejected, including information on the reason for rejection and the type of UOCAVA voter they were returned by (B23–B27).
- The total number of UOCAVA voters who cast a ballot via regular absentee ballot or FWAB and whose ballots were counted (F1c).

Domestic Absentee or Mail Ballots

Mail ballots (which are called absentee ballots in some states and territories) sent to domestic civilian voters will be reported primarily in Section C of EAVS. State, territory, and local officials will report the following information about these ballots:

- The total number of these ballots transmitted to voters as well as their outcome, including the number of ballots returned by voters; the number of ballots returned as undeliverable; the number of ballots that were surrendered, spoiled, or replaced; the number of mail voters who instead voted in person at the polling place with a provisional ballot; the number of mail ballots with an unknown status; and the number of mail ballots that reached another outcome (C1).
- The number of mail ballots sent to permanent by-mail voters, if your state or territory uses this distinction (C2).
- The number of mail ballots returned by voters and counted (C3).
- The number of mail ballots returned by voters and rejected, including the reasons behind those rejections (C4).
- The number of voters who cast a domestic civilian by-mail ballot and whose ballots were counted (F1d).

All-Vote-By-Mail States or Jurisdictions

If your state or jurisdiction conducted its general election entirely by mail, then you will report data on those mail ballots in Section C, as outlined above. You will also enter the number of voters who cast a domestic civilian by-mail ballot and whose ballots were counted in F1g. Please note that the subcategories in F1b–F1h are mutually exclusive, and voters who are reported in F1g should not also be reported in F1d.



What Constitutes an All-Mail Election?

The EAC defines all-mail elections as elections in which every registered voter, or every active registered voter, was automatically sent a mail ballot. Voters who cast a ballot in an all-mail election and whose votes were counted should be reported in F1g. In addition, data on the number of mail ballots transmitted, returned, counted, and rejected should be reported in Section C of EAVS. However, voters in all-vote-by-mail states, territories, or jurisdictions should not be considered permanent by-mail voters and should not be reported in C2.

If your state, territory, or jurisdiction required voters to request an absentee or mail ballot, then you will report “does not apply” in F1g, and will instead report domestic civilian mail voters who cast a ballot that was counted in F1d (or, if in-person absentee ballots cannot be distinguished from other ballots cast at in-person voting locations, in F1f). In addition, you will report data on the number of mail ballots transmitted, returned, counted, and rejected in Section C of EAVS. States, territories, and jurisdictions that automatically mailed absentee or mail ballot applications to all registered voters (or to all active registered voters) are likewise not considered to have conducted an all-vote-by-mail election and should not report data in F1g.

How Do I Report In-Person Absentee Voting?

Some states offer in-person absentee voting, which allows voters to receive, fill out, and cast their absentee ballot in person at an election office or a satellite location rather than returning it through the mail (your state may use another term to describe this process). Because these ballots are cast or returned at a physical polling place, the EAC classifies in-person absentee voting as in-person early voting for the purposes of EAVS. If possible, in-person absentee ballots should be reported in questions D1b (total in-person voting) and F1f (voters who cast a ballot at an in-person early voting location and whose ballots were counted), election offices or satellite locations where in-person absentee voting took place should be counted in D4 (number of in-person physical polling places used for early voting), and the total number of poll workers who worked in-person early voting in D6 (counting each poll worker only once, regardless of the number of early voting shifts the poll worker worked).

If you cannot distinguish between in-person absentee ballots and other types of mail ballots, then please report your data on mail ballots in Section C and question F1d, and note when your data include these in-person absentee ballots in the question’s comments. You should also complete questions D4 and D6 as described in the previous paragraph.

How Do I Report the Use of Drop Boxes?

Currently, EAVS does not have a dedicated question to report data on mail ballots returned via drop boxes. Instead, mail ballots that were placed in a drop box by voters or were dropped off at an election office or voting site should be reported with other mail ballots in Section C, and in the appropriate item in F1 (F1g for mail ballots in an all-vote-by-mail election, or F1d for all other domestic civilian by-mail ballots).

If you have additional questions about how to report your mail ballots in EAVS, or anything else related to the EAVS project, then please reach out to our survey help desk at eavs@forsmarshgroup.com.



Reminder of EAVS Deadlines

The first draft of your state's or territory's EAVS data submission is due on **February 1, 2021**. Once these draft submissions are received, the EAVS project team at Fors Marsh Group (FMG) will review them for completeness, accuracy, and data quality. The results of that review will be communicated to the state's or territory's point(s) of contact (POC) in mid-February, and the POC should then begin addressing data quality issues and finalizing the submission.

The final EAVS data submission is due on **March 1, 2021**. At that time, the project team will ask the state's or territory's chief election official to sign a certification form attesting that, to the best of their knowledge, the data are complete and correct. On **March 30, 2021**, the 2020 EAVS data set will be locked, and no further changes will be accepted. This will allow the project team to analyze the data and write the report that will be publicly released in June 2021. Once the 2020 EAVS data have been made public, states and territories will have an opportunity to make data corrections through the process outlined in [A Guide to the Election Administration and Voting Survey](#).