



July 2022

2020 ELECTIONS

State and Local Perspectives on Election

Administration during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-104731](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Election officials faced unprecedented challenges in conducting the 2020 elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act provided \$400 million in grants for states to use to prevent, prepare for, and respond to issues related to the pandemic for the 2020 federal election cycle. The EAC was responsible for administering the grants. In addition, the EAC serves as a national clearinghouse and resource for the compilation of information and review of procedures with respect to the administration of federal elections.

The CARES Act includes a provision for GAO to report on its ongoing monitoring and oversight efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report describes (1) the steps states and local jurisdictions took to prepare for and conduct elections in 2020 during the pandemic and the challenges they reported facing, (2) how states and local jurisdictions reported using CARES Act grant funding, and the challenges they reported facing, and (3) what EAC resources and guidance states and local jurisdictions used and their perspectives on such assistance.

To address all three objectives, GAO conducted two web-based surveys of election officials. One survey was administered to election offices in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and achieved a response rate of 84 percent. The other survey was administered to a sample of 829 local election jurisdictions. The survey achieved a weighted response rate of 47 percent, and the design and analysis allows GAO to provide national estimates of the perspectives of local election officials.

View [GAO-22-104731](#). For more information, contact Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-8777 or gablerr@gao.gov.

July 2022

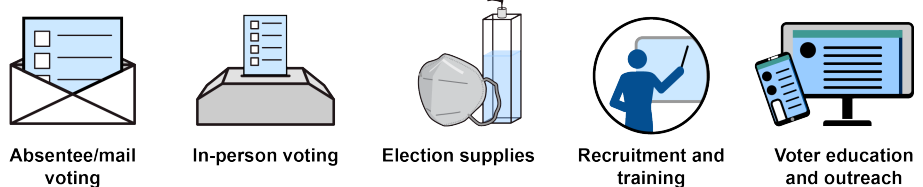
2020 ELECTIONS

State and Local Perspectives on Election Administration during the COVID-19 Pandemic

What GAO Found

GAO surveyed state election offices and local election jurisdictions about steps they took to prepare for and conduct the 2020 elections during the pandemic. The surveys asked questions on steps and challenges in five areas: absentee/mail voting, in-person voting, election supplies, election worker recruitment and training, and voter education and outreach. GAO received survey responses from 43 states and 407 local jurisdictions.

Election Administration Areas about which GAO Surveyed States and Local Jurisdictions



Source: GAO analysis based on information reported by state and local election officials. | [GAO-22-104731](#)

Within the area of in-person voting, for example, nearly all states reported taking steps to coordinate with public health agencies, and most coordinated with emergency management agencies, consulted with vendors and experts, and helped local election offices add new polling locations. Nearly all local jurisdictions reported taking steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as by providing protective equipment to election workers. States and local jurisdictions most commonly reported that various issues related to in-person voting—such as funding and understanding guidance—were not challenging. For voter education and outreach, all states reported that they provided information on their elections websites about voting policies and procedures. Nearly all local jurisdictions reported that they answered questions about voting policies and procedures. Additionally, nearly all states and most local jurisdictions reported that false or misleading information about absentee/mail voting was challenging.

Over half of states reported spending CARES Act grants on supplies and equipment, voter education, facilitating absentee/mail voting, and recruiting and training election workers. Most states reported that issues related to grant funding and reporting requirements were challenging, such as submitting required progress reports within 20 days of an election. More than half of local jurisdictions reported spending CARES Act grants on various in-person voting activities, including purchasing protective supplies and cleaning voting locations.

Nearly all states and some local jurisdictions reported that they used U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) information resources and guidance during the pandemic. Nearly all states used information about CARES Act grants; fewer used information on other election administration topics. Most states reported finding EAC's information helpful during the 2020 elections. Most local jurisdictions reported that they did not use EAC information on any of the topics GAO asked about, such as in-person voting. The most common reasons cited were that they were not aware of or did not need the information.

Contents

GAO Highlights	ii
Why GAO Did This Study	ii
What GAO Found	ii
Letter	1
Background	3
States and Local Jurisdictions Took Steps and Encountered Challenges in Preparing for and Conducting the 2020 Elections during the Pandemic	8
States and Local Jurisdictions Spent CARES Grants on Various Activities; States Found Grant Requirements Challenging and Local Jurisdictions Did Not	74
Nearly All States Used EAC Information Resources and Guidance; Local Jurisdictions Commonly Reported They Were Not Aware of or Did Not Need the Information	82
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	92
Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	96
Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey	106
Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey	136
Appendix IV: Additional Sources for Images	170
Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	172
Tables	
Table 1: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to Absentee/Mail Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	9
Table 2: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to Absentee/Mail Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	15
Table 3: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to In-Person Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	22
Table 4: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to In-Person Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	28

Table 5: Election Supplies That State Election Offices Assisted Local Election Offices With Obtaining for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	36
Table 6: Election Supplies That Local Election Jurisdictions Obtained for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	40
Table 7: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	47
Table 8: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	53
Table 9: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to Voter Education and Outreach for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	62
Table 10: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to Voter Education and Outreach for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	68
Table 11: Activities on Which State Election Offices Reported Spending CARES Act Grant Funds	74
Table 12: Activities on Which Local Election Jurisdictions Reported Spending CARES Act Grant Funds	78
Table 13: Reasons State Election Offices Reported for Not Using U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources or Guidance	86
Table 14: Reasons Local Election Jurisdictions Reported for Not Using U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources or Guidance	92
Table 15: Stratification of Local Election Jurisdictions for Sample	99
Table 16: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 1	106
Table 17: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 2	107
Table 18: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 2 Part II	107
Table 19: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 3	108
Table 20: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 4	109
Table 21: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 5	111

Table 22: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 6	112
Table 23: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 7	114
Table 24: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 8	115
Table 25: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 9	116
Table 26: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 10	117
Table 27: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 11	118
Table 28: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 12	119
Table 29: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 13	120
Table 30: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 14	122
Table 31: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 15	123
Table 32: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 16	125
Table 33: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 17	127
Table 34: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 19	128
Table 35: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 20	130
Table 36: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 21	131
Table 37: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 22	131
Table 38: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 23	132
Table 39: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 24	133
Table 40: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 25	133
Table 41: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 26	134
Table 42: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 27	134

Table 43: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 27 Part II	134
Table 44: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 1	136
Table 45: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 2	137
Table 46: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 3	137
Table 47: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 4	139
Table 48: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 5	141
Table 49: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 6	142
Table 50: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 7	144
Table 51: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 8	146
Table 52: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 9	147
Table 53: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 10	149
Table 54: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 11	150
Table 55: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 12	151
Table 56: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 13	152
Table 57: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 14	153
Table 58: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 15	154
Table 59: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 16	156
Table 60: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 17	157
Table 61: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 18	158
Table 62: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 19	159
Table 63: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 20	161

Table 64: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 22	162
Table 65: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 23	164
Table 66: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 24	165
Table 67: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 25	166
Table 68: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 26	166
Table 69: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 27	167
Table 70: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 28	168
Table 71: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 29	168
Table 72: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 29 Part II	169

Figures

Figure 1: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	10
Accessible Data for Figure 1: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)	11
Figure 2: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	13
Accessible Data for Figure 2: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)	14
Figure 3: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	17
Accessible Data for Figure 3: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	18

Figure 4: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	20
Accessible Data for Figure 4: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	21
Figure 5: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	24
Accessible Data for Figure 5: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)	25
Figure 6: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	26
Accessible Data for Figure 6: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)	27
Figure 7: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	30
Accessible Data for Figure 7: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	31
Figure 8: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	33
Accessible Data for Figure 8: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	34
Figure 9: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Assisting Local Election Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	37
Accessible Data for Figure 9: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Assisting Local Election	

Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)	38
Figure 10: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Issues Related to Assisting Local Election Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies during the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	39
Accessible Data for Figure 10: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Issues Related to Assisting Local Election Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies during the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)	40
Figure 11: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	42
Accessible Data for Figure 11: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	43
Figure 12: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	45
Accessible Data for Figure 12: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	46
Figure 13: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	49
Accessible Data for Figure 13: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)	50
Figure 14: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	51
Accessible Data for Figure 14: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and	

Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)	52
Figure 15: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	55
Accessible Data for Figure 15: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	56
Figure 16: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	59
Accessible Data for Figure 16: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	60
Figure 17: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	64
Accessible Data for Figure 17: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)	65
Figure 18: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	66
Accessible Data for Figure 18: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)	67
Figure 19: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic	69
Accessible Data for Figure 19: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	70

Figure 20: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections	72
Accessible Data for Figure 20: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	73
Figure 21: State Election Offices' Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements	76
Accessible Data for Figure 21: State Election Offices' Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements (Number of state election offices)	77
Figure 22: Local Election Jurisdictions' Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements	80
Accessible Data for Figure 22: Local Election Jurisdictions' Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	81
Figure 23: State Election Offices' Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance by Topic and Number of Resources Used	83
Accessible Data for Figure 23: State Election Offices' Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance by Topic and Number of Resources Used	83
Figure 24: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to State Election Offices	85
Accessible Data for Figure 24: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to State Election Offices (Number of state election offices)	86
Figure 25: Local Election Jurisdictions' Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance and Use by Topic	88
Accessible Data for Figure 25: Local Election Jurisdictions' Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance and Use by Topic	88

Figure 26: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to Local Election Jurisdictions	90
Accessible Data for Figure 26: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to Local Election Jurisdictions (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)	91

Abbreviations

EAC	U.S. Election Assistance Commission
HAVA	Help America Vote Act of 2002
MCD	Minor Civil Division

This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. The published product may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.



July 11, 2022

Congressional Committees

Amid increasing COVID-19 case levels across the country, election officials faced unprecedented challenges in planning for and conducting elections in 2020 during the pandemic. The CARES Act provided \$400 million in grant funds for states to use to prevent, prepare for, and respond to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic for the 2020 federal election cycle.¹ The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was responsible for distributing CARES Act grant funds to states and overseeing their use in accordance with requirements under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA).²

The CARES Act also included a provision for us to monitor and oversee the use of funds made available to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.³ This report is a part of our body of work related to the CARES Act and focuses on election officials' perspectives on administering the 2020 elections.⁴ This report addresses the following three questions.

1. What steps did states and local jurisdictions take to prepare for and conduct elections in 2020 during the pandemic, and what challenges did officials report?
2. How did states and local jurisdictions report using CARES Act grant funding, and what challenges did officials report?

¹See Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281, 530 (2020).

²The CARES Act provided these funds as HAVA grant funds, supplementing the \$380 million and \$425 million in HAVA grant funds in the Consolidated Appropriation Acts of 2018 and 2020 to help states improve the administration of federal elections, including enhancing election technology and improving election security. See Pub. L. No. 116-93, 133 Stat. 2317, 2461 (2019); Pub. L. No. 115-141, 132 Stat. 348, 561-62 (2018).

³See Pub. L. No. 116-136, § 19010, 134 Stat. at 579-81.

⁴We have issued government-wide reports on the federal response to COVID-19. For the latest report, see GAO, *COVID-19: Current and Future Federal Preparedness Requires Fixes to Improve Health Data and Address Improper Payments*, [GAO-22-105397](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 27, 2022).

3. What EAC resources and guidance did states and local jurisdictions use during the pandemic, and what were their perspectives on such assistance?

To address all three objectives, we conducted two web-based surveys of election officials: one administered to state election offices and one administered to local election jurisdictions. For the state election office survey, we sent our questionnaire to state election offices in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Forty-three states responded to our survey for a response rate of 84 percent.⁵ For the local election jurisdiction survey, we used a stratified random sample of 829 local election jurisdictions nationwide; 407 local jurisdictions responded to our survey for a weighted response rate of 47 percent.⁶ We surveyed state and local election officials about steps they took regarding absentee/mail voting and in-person voting, obtaining election supplies, recruiting election workers, training election officials and election workers, and conducting voter education and outreach efforts. We also asked respondents whether issues related to each of these various election activities were challenging to them.⁷

When presenting survey results regarding how challenging respondents found these issues, we combined “extremely challenging” and “very challenging” responses, and “moderately challenging” and “somewhat challenging” responses. Additionally, when we report that states or local jurisdictions found selected issues “challenging,” we are referring to the

⁵In this report, we use the term “states” in reference to the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

⁶We conducted our surveys from May 2021 through August 2021. For the local election jurisdiction survey, we used a weighted response rate because our survey sample incorporates strata with different probabilities of selection. A weighted response rate more accurately reflects the statistical effect of differing probabilities of selection. To calculate our weighted response rate, we used a standard definition, known as RR2, from the American Association for Public Opinion Research. See American Association for Public Opinion Research, *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*, 9th edition (2016). All survey results presented in the body of this report are generalizable to the population of local election jurisdictions, except where otherwise noted. For more information on our sampling methodology for the local election jurisdiction survey, please see appendix I. Appendix II contains all survey questions and results of responses to the closed-ended questions from our state election office survey, and appendix III contains all survey questions and results of responses to the closed-ended questions from our local election jurisdiction survey.

⁷We asked survey respondents to answer a set of closed-ended questions in each topic area. In this report, we present responses to all questions in each topic area, and use the exact question wording that appeared in the surveys.

aggregated total of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses.

For both surveys, for all the questions on reported challenges, we compared responses to survey questions about challenges in the 2020 general election to similar questions about the 2020 primary elections. When reporting results for the state election office survey, we highlight those issues for which the difference is 5 or greater in the number of states that found the 2020 general election more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and the number that found the general election less challenging than the primary elections. When reporting similar results for the local election jurisdiction survey, we highlight those issues for which the difference in the estimated percentage of respondents that found the 2020 general election more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and the estimated percentage that found the general election less challenging than the primary elections was statistically significant.

In our surveys, we also asked respondents for their perspectives on aspects of the 2020 elections that went particularly well, their use of grant funding provided by the CARES Act, and information and assistance from the EAC, among other topics.

For more information about our scope and methodology, see appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2020 to July 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Overview of Election Administration

The administration of federal and state elections involves various roles, responsibilities, and processes divided between different levels of government. In the United States, federal, state, and local officials share authority to regulate elections. At the federal level, Congress may pass legislation in major areas of the voting process. For example, HAVA established the EAC, a federal agency that serves as a national

clearinghouse and resource for the compilation of information and review of procedures with respect to the administration of federal elections.⁸ Under HAVA, the EAC also administers grant funding for states to improve election administration.⁹

Responsibility for administering and overseeing federal and state elections resides at the state and local levels. State and local election offices are organized in different ways; in some cases, offices with primary responsibility for elections may have responsibility for other areas of government as well. States regulate various election activities, such as absentee and early voting requirements and Election Day procedures, but they generally delegate election administration responsibilities to local jurisdictions.¹⁰

Within each state, responsibility for managing, planning, and conducting elections is largely a local process, residing with about 10,300 local jurisdictions nationwide. Among other things, local election officials register eligible voters; design ballots; educate voters on how to use voting technology; provide information on the candidates and ballot measures; arrange for polling places; recruit, train, organize, and mobilize election workers; prepare and test voting equipment for use; and count

⁸See generally Pub. L. No. 107-252, 116 Stat. 1666 (codified as amended at 52 U.S.C. §§ 20901-21145).

⁹See 52 U.S.C. § 20901. The EAC administers grant funding to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the 5 U.S. territories—American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

¹⁰In June 2021, we reported on the steps taken by selected states and local jurisdictions to make voting prior to Election Day accessible to voters with disabilities and to make voting information available and accessible, and the challenges in doing so. We also reported on efforts undertaken by the U.S. Department of Justice and the EAC to assist states and localities with voting accessibility. With regard to the EAC, we found that the agency does not have a mechanism for collecting and using feedback from state and local election officials about the usefulness of its existing accessibility resources or additional resource needs. We recommended that the EAC develop and implement a mechanism or mechanisms for collecting and incorporating feedback from election officials on its accessibility resources. EAC identified ongoing and planned steps to improve the feedback process, such as establishing an advisory committee of local election officials whose members will be relevant and comprehensive sources of expert, unbiased analysis and recommendations to the EAC on local election administration topics, including serving voters with disabilities. GAO, *Voters with Disabilities: State and Local Actions and Federal Resources to Address Accessibility of Early Voting*, [GAO-21-352](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jun. 21, 2021).

ballots.¹¹ The characteristics of local jurisdictions also vary, including by population size and population density, among other factors.

The Voting Process

Voting before Election Day

All states have established alternatives for eligible voters to cast a ballot other than at the polls on Election Day, including absentee/mail voting and early in-person voting. Absentee/mail voting is a method of voting that enables registered voters to cast a ballot by mail, by using a ballot drop box, or by returning a completed absentee/mail ballot to a local election office before or on Election Day. Absentee/mail voting is sometimes also called “mail-in voting” or “vote-by-mail.” All states have provisions allowing voters to cast their ballots in this manner, with variations on who may vote absentee/mail, whether the voter needs to provide an excuse for requesting an absentee/mail ballot, and the time frames for applying for and submitting absentee/mail ballots. Further, eight states conduct their elections entirely by mail, wherein ballots are automatically sent to every registered voter.¹²

In addition to absentee/mail voting, states vary in the extent to which they allow early in-person voting. In general, early voting allows registered voters from any precinct in the election jurisdiction to cast their vote in person before Election Day without providing an excuse, either at one specific location or at one of several locations.

In-Person Voting on Election Day

For in-person voting on Election Day, election authorities subdivide local jurisdictions into precincts. Voters generally cast their ballots at the polling places for the precincts to which election authorities assign them. In

¹¹Jurisdictions call their election workers by different titles, including poll workers, election judges, inspectors, clerks, wardens, captains, and precinct officers.

¹²These states are California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont and Washington. States that mail ballots to all registered voters may also provide options for in-person voting, both prior to and on Election Day. Among the states that do not routinely conduct their federal elections by mail, several conduct statewide elections by mail in certain circumstances, such as for special elections, or allow counties to decide whether to conduct elections by mail. Additionally, states that do not routinely conduct their elections by mail allow at least some registered voters to cast absentee ballots by mail, but qualification requirements for absentee voting vary.

addition, various states provide election jurisdictions the discretion to allow voters to cast their ballots at vote centers, which are polling places at which any registered voter in the local jurisdiction, regardless of the precinct in which the voter resides, may vote on Election Day.

Within the polling place, poll workers check in voters and determine their eligibility to vote by verifying their registration using voter lists or poll books—a list of individuals registered to vote within the voting precinct or local jurisdiction. After checking in the voters, poll workers direct them to a voting booth to mark their electronic or paper ballots. The voters then submit the ballots for counting.¹³ The manner in which votes are cast and counted can vary depending on the voting method and technology employed by the jurisdiction.

Postelection Activities

After the polls close on Election Day, election officials and poll workers secure equipment and ballots, transfer paper ballots or electronic records of vote counts to a central location for counting, and determine the outcome of the election. Votes counted include those cast on Election Day, absentee/mail ballots, early votes (where applicable), and valid provisional ballots.¹⁴ Although preliminary results may be available on election night, typically it takes several days or weeks to finalize election results and certify a winner.¹⁵ Additionally, after an election, many states conduct postelection audits of voting systems as well as recounts that may occur in close races.

CARES Act and EAC Pandemic Assistance

The CARES Act provided \$400 million in grant funds to states.¹⁶ These funds were to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic for the 2020 federal election cycle. As previously stated, the EAC was responsible for distributing the CARES

¹³Electronic ballots are submitted in the voting booth and stored on a memory device using a form of electronic voting equipment.

¹⁴Provisional ballots are those cast at the polls by voters whose eligibility to vote is unclear and to be determined later.

¹⁵According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, in many states, election officials may not begin counting mail and absentee ballots until Election Day by state law, even if those ballots are received prior to Election Day.

¹⁶See Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. at 530.

Act grant funds to states and overseeing their use in accordance with requirements under HAVA. The CARES Act also included requirements for states on how to spend and report on grant funding. For example, states were required to submit a report to the EAC within 20 days of each election in the 2020 election cycle, including each state's primary elections with a full accounting of the state's uses of the funding and an explanation of how such uses allowed the state to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus. Examples of other CARES Act grant funding requirements for states included submitting an annual progress report to the EAC and meeting a 20 percent match of federal grant funds. States could provide CARES Act grant funds as subgrants to local jurisdictions to use during the 2020 elections, and/or use CARES Act grant funds to reimburse local election jurisdictions for certain eligible expenses incurred during the 2020 elections.¹⁷

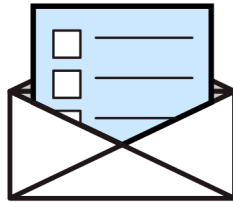
As we reported in November 2021, the EAC provided various information resources and guidance to state and local election officials to assist with planning and conducting elections in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁸ For example, the EAC provided information on its website in the form of documents, recorded videos, and webpages. This information covered topics such as in-person voting, absentee/mail voting, poll worker recruitment and training, and contingency planning.¹⁹ EAC officials were also available to respond individually to questions they received from state and local election officials.

¹⁷A subgrant is a grant made under an agency grant by the original award recipient to a subrecipient. A reimbursement is a payment received after an agreed upon expense has already been incurred.

¹⁸GAO, *Election Assistance Commission: Assessment of Lessons Learned Could Improve Grants Administration*, [GAO-22-104313](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 8, 2021).

¹⁹The EAC developed some of the information on its website in response to the pandemic and also collaborated with other entities to create and share pertinent information on its website. Specifically, the EAC served as the chair of the Joint COVID Working Group, which included members from the election infrastructure subsector's Government Coordinating Council—consisting of federal, state, and local government partners, such as the EAC and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency—and its Sector Coordinating Council—consisting of private sector companies, such as voting equipment vendors. The working group developed, for example, information on in-person voting, absentee/mail voting, and poll worker recruitment and training.

States and Local Jurisdictions Took Steps and Encountered Challenges in Preparing for and Conducting the 2020 Elections during the Pandemic



Absentee/Mail Voting

Steps and Challenges Identified by States

Nearly all states that responded to our survey²⁰ reported that they coordinated with the United States Postal Service and developed and distributed guidance on absentee/mail voting to local election offices in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹ Most states set up systems for voters to track the status of their ballots and consulted vendors and experts regarding absentee/mail voting. Some states distributed guidance on absentee/mail voting developed by outside organizations to local jurisdictions. See Table 1.

²⁰For the state election office survey, we sent our questionnaire to state election offices in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Forty-three states responded to our survey for a response rate of 84 percent. For the purpose of reporting results of the state election office survey, “nearly all” refers to responses given by 35 to 43 states, “most” to responses given by 26 to 34 states, “many” to responses given by 18 to 25 states, “some” to responses given by 9 to 17 states, and “few” to responses given by 1 to 8 states.

²¹In our surveys, we defined absentee/mail voting as “a method of voting that enables registered voters to cast a ballot by mail, by using a ballot drop box, or by returning a completed absentee/mail ballot to a local election office before or on Election Day. Absentee/mail voting is sometimes called “mail-in voting” or “vote-by-mail.” In some states, voters are required to provide an excuse to cast an absentee/mail ballot, and, in some others, all registered or active registered voters automatically receive an absentee mail/ballot.” We also apply this definition throughout this report.

Table 1: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to Absentee/Mail Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Number of state election offices
Coordinated with the United States Postal Service	39
Developed and distributed guidance on absentee/mail voting to local election offices	39
Set up a system to allow voters to track the status of their absentee/mail ballots	33
Consulted with vendors regarding absentee/mail voting	33
Consulted with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other states—regarding absentee/mail voting	28
Worked with the Governor’s office or other executives to make changes to absentee/mail voting requirements	25
Worked with state legislators to make changes to absentee/mail voting requirements	20
Distributed guidance on absentee/mail voting developed by other organizations or agencies to local elections offices	16

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The table is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about steps taken related to absentee/mail voting.

Examples of Absentee/Mail Voting Successes Cited by State Election Offices

One state election official reported that the mailing of ballots to all active registered voters for the 2020 general election was very successful. The state saw a record turnout.

Another state election official reported that the state was able to conduct its first ever all-absentee/mail primary election during the pandemic. This election had very high turnout. Absentee/mail voting was also common during the general election.

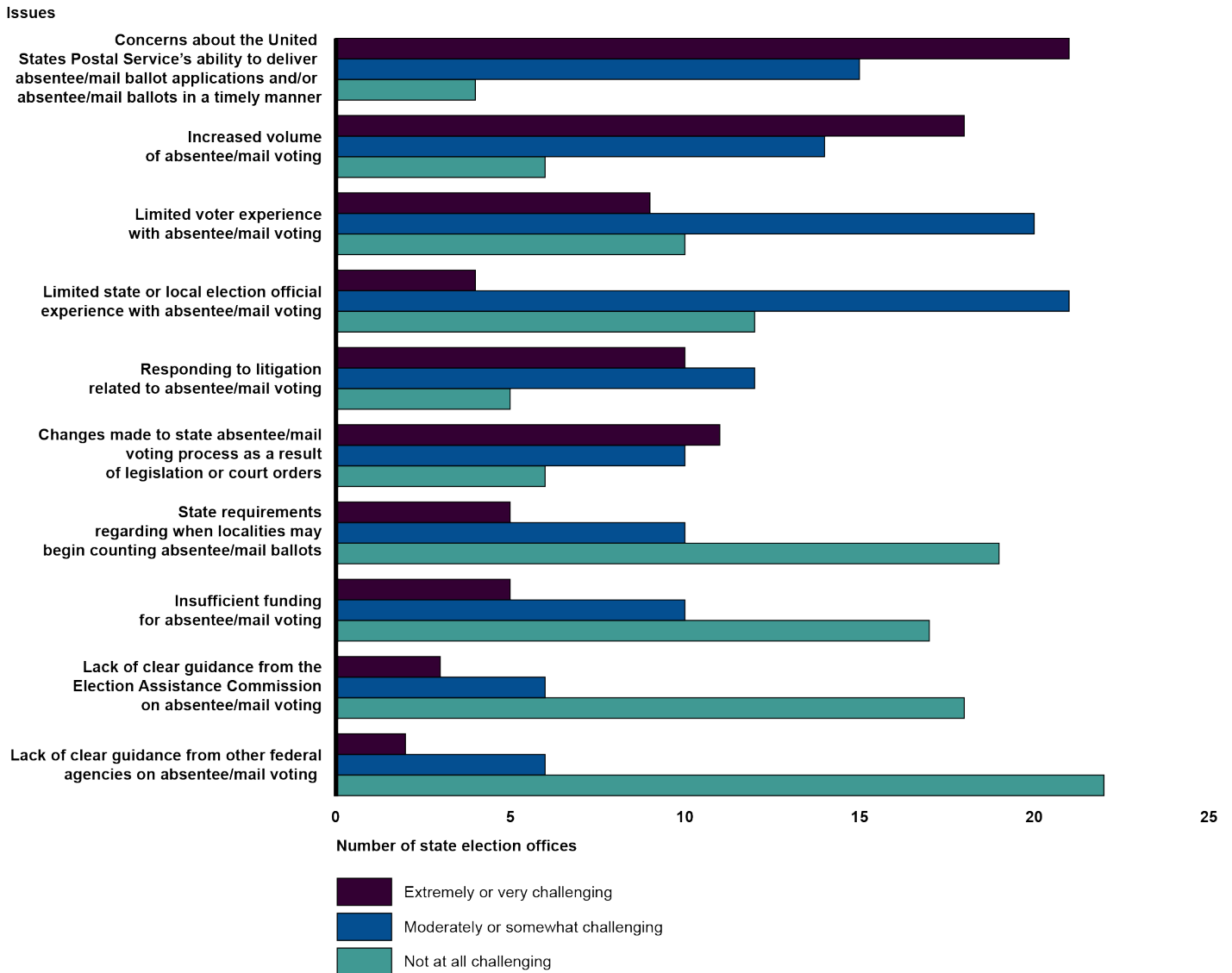
Source: 2021 state election office survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Nearly all states reported that concerns about the United States Postal Service’s ability to deliver absentee/mail ballot applications or ballots in a timely manner were challenging during the 2020 general election.²² Most states reported that an increased volume of absentee/mail voting and voters’ limited experience with absentee/mail voting during the general

²²In our surveys, we defined the 2020 general election as “encompassing in-person voting, early in-person voting, and absentee/mail voting (in those states that offer early in-person and/or absentee/mail voting) in the period leading up to and on Election Day on November 3, 2020. The 2020 general election process included tabulating votes cast before and on Election Day in accordance with the applicable state laws.” We also apply this definition throughout this report. Additionally, for the purposes of this report, we aggregated survey responses of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” to note when states found issues “challenging.”

election were also challenging. By contrast, few states reported that understanding guidance on voting from federal agencies other than the EAC was challenging in the general election. See figure 1.

Figure 1: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 1: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	Moderately or somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging
Concerns about the United States Postal Service's ability to deliver absentee/mail ballot applications and/or absentee/mail ballots in a timely manner	21	15	4
Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	18	14	6
Limited voter experience with absentee/mail voting	9	20	10
Limited state or local election official experience with absentee/mail voting	4	21	12
Responding to litigation related to absentee/mail voting	10	12	5
Changes made to state absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	11	10	6
State requirements regarding when localities may begin counting absentee/mail ballots	5	10	19
Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	5	10	17
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission on absentee/mail voting	3	6	18
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies on absentee/mail voting	2	6	22

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of "extremely or very challenging" and "moderately or somewhat challenging" responses for each issue.

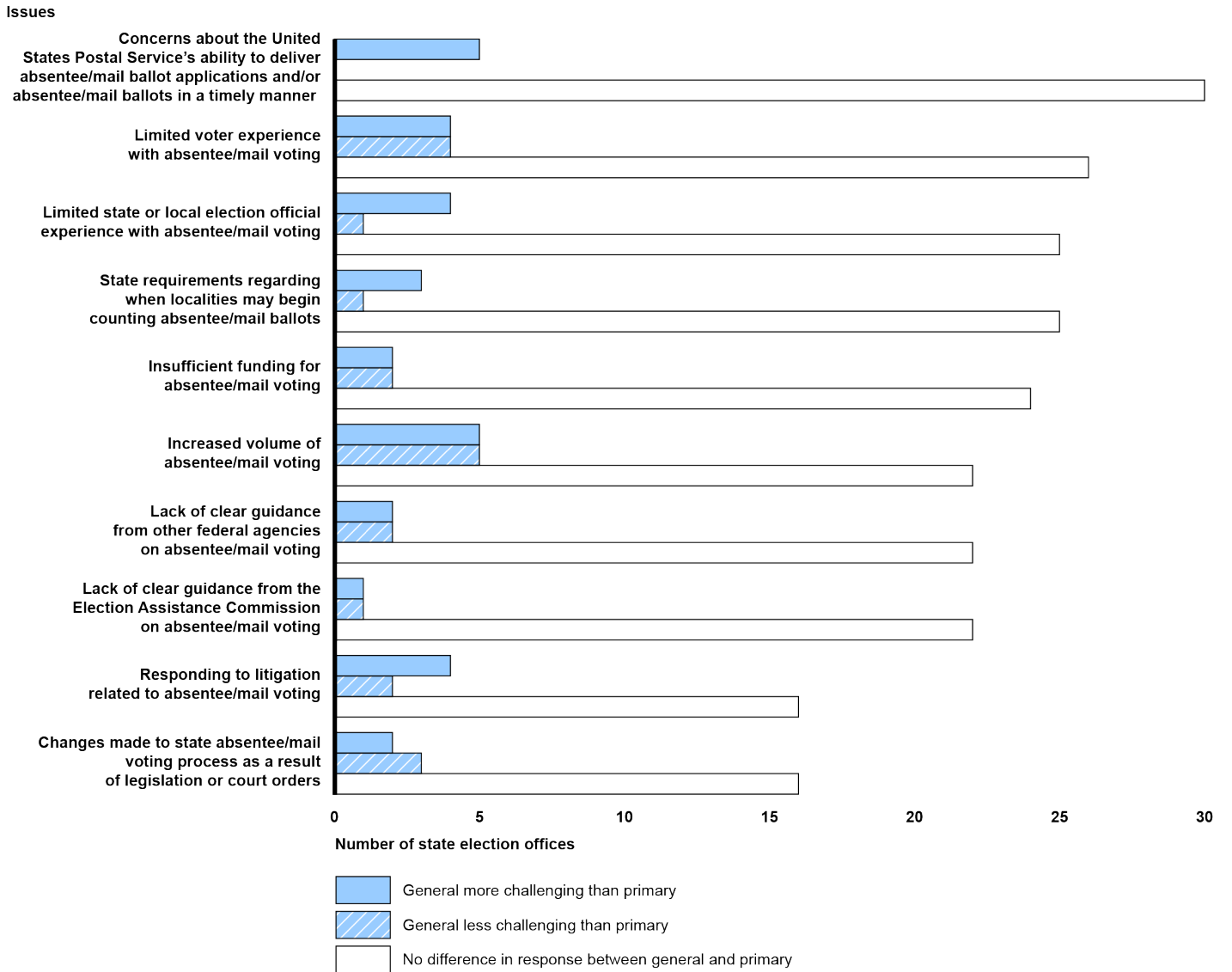
The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to absentee/mail voting. The figure does not include the number of state election offices that selected "not applicable" or "don't know" or did not respond to these survey questions.

We compared state responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections.²³ For each issue, for the largest number of states, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, absentee/mail voting issues were during the general election and during the primary

²³In our surveys, we defined the 2020 primary election as "any election held prior to the general election for the purpose of selecting candidates to run for federal office during the general election. For the purposes of this survey, we are only asking about primaries that occurred on or after March 13, 2020—the day the President issued a national emergency declaration regarding the pandemic. The 2020 primary election process included tabulating all votes cast before and on the date of the 2020 primary elections in accordance with the applicable state laws." We also apply this definition throughout this report.

elections. However, five states reported that concerns about the United States Postal Service's ability to deliver absentee/mail ballot applications and/or absentee/mail ballots in a timely manner were more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. No states reported that this issue was less challenging during the general election than during the primary elections. See figure 2.

Figure 2: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 2: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)

Issues	General more challenging than primary	General less challenging than primary	No difference in response between general and primary
Concerns about the United States Postal Service's ability to deliver absentee/mail ballot applications and/or absentee/mail ballots in a timely manner	5	0	30
Limited voter experience with absentee/mail voting	4	4	26
Limited state or local election official experience with absentee/mail voting	4	1	25
State requirements regarding when localities may begin counting absentee/mail ballots	3	1	25
Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	2	2	24
Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	5	5	22
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies on absentee/mail voting	2	2	22
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission on absentee/mail voting	1	1	22
Responding to litigation related to absentee/mail voting	4	2	16
Changes made to state absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	2	3	16

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to absentee/mail voting. The figure does not include responses from states that selected "not applicable" or "don't know" or did not respond to these survey questions.

Steps and Challenges Identified by Local Jurisdictions

We estimate²⁴ that most local jurisdictions reconfigured space or arranged for additional space to facilitate social distancing while processing absentee/mail ballots in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁵ Further, many local jurisdictions used United States Postal Service election mail guidance or resources, assigned staff to review voter registration rolls, and installed ballot drop boxes. By comparison, a small percentage of local jurisdictions worked with experts to revise their absentee/mail ballot or envelope designs. See table 2.²⁶

Table 2: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to Absentee/Mail Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that took this step
Reconfigured space or arranged for additional space to facilitate social distancing while processing absentee/mail ballots	72 (66, 77)
Used United States Postal Service election mail guidance or resources	57 (51, 63)
Installed ballot drop boxes	50 (44, 56)
Assigned staff to review voter registration rolls prior to sending absentee/mail ballots	46 (40, 52)

²⁴For the local election jurisdiction survey, we used a stratified random sample of 829 local election jurisdictions nationwide; 407 local jurisdictions responded to our survey for a weighted response rate of 47 percent. Because we followed a probability procedure based on random selections, our sample is only one of a large number of samples that we might have drawn. As each sample could have provided different estimates, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular sample’s results as a 95 percent confidence interval. This is the interval that would contain the actual population value for 95 percent of the samples we could have drawn. As a result, we are 95 percent confident that each of the confidence intervals based on our web-based survey includes the true values in the sample population. The local jurisdiction estimates we report are national-level estimates representing the experiences, views, and opinions of all local election jurisdictions nationwide.

²⁵For the purpose of reporting results of the local election jurisdiction survey, “nearly all” refers to responses given by an estimated 81 to 100 percent of local jurisdictions, “most” to responses given by 61 to 80 percent of local jurisdictions, “many” to responses given 41 to 60 percent of local jurisdictions, “some” to responses given by 21 to 40 percent of local jurisdictions, and “a small percentage” to responses given by 1 to 20 percent of local jurisdictions.

²⁶Appendix III contains all survey questions and results of responses to the closed-ended questions from our local election jurisdiction survey.

Letter

Steps taken	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that took this step
Purchased prepaid postage for voters to return completed absentee/mail ballots	39 (33, 45)
Assigned staff to review voter registration rolls prior to sending absentee/mail ballot request forms	37 (32, 43)
Consulted with experts about absentee/mail voting processes, procedures, strategies, and policies	34 (28, 39)
Set up a system to allow voters to track the status of their absentee/mail ballots	33 (27, 38)
Purchased equipment to process or tabulate absentee/mail ballots, such as automatic letter openers	26 (21, 32)
Installed cameras or other security mechanisms to protect ballot drop boxes	23 (19, 28)
Consulted with vendors regarding absentee/mail voting	21 (17, 26)
Worked with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other election jurisdictions—to revise absentee/mail ballot or envelope designs	17 (13, 22)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Parentheses contain both the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

The table is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about steps taken related to absentee/mail voting.

Examples of Absentee/Mail Voting Successes Cited by Local Election Jurisdictions

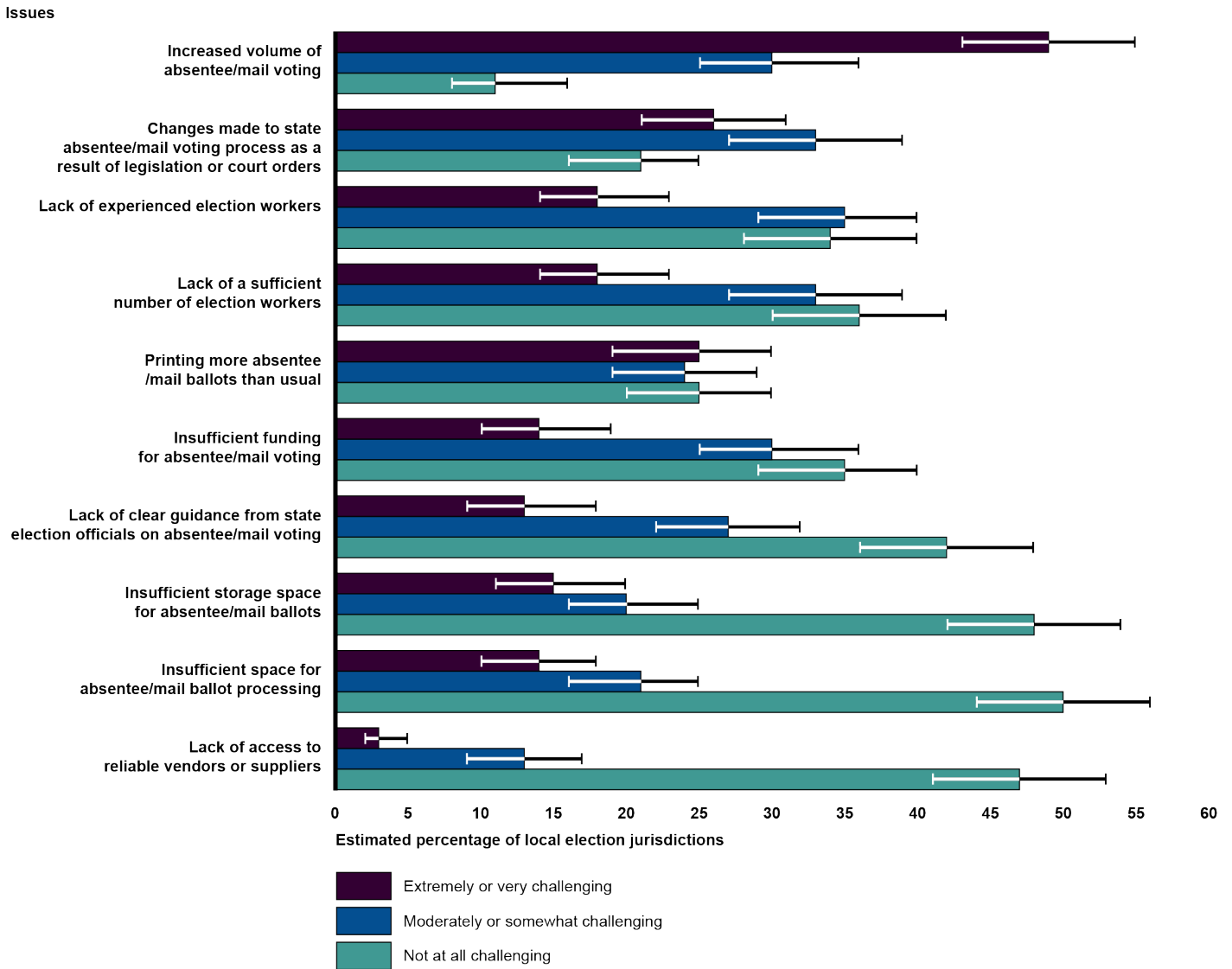
One local election official reported that during the 2020 elections, the return rate on absentee/mail ballots was the highest it had ever been. They attributed this success to the provision of prepaid postage for voters to return ballots and the installation of additional drop boxes.

Another local election official noted that increased rates of absentee/mail voting substantially reduced the number of voters that cast their ballots in person, which allowed the jurisdiction to more quickly and easily tally votes on Election Day.

Source: 2021 local election jurisdiction survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Most local jurisdictions found that an increased volume of absentee/mail voting was challenging during the general election, and many found that changes made to state absentee/mail voting processes were challenging. By contrast, a small percentage of local jurisdictions reported that a lack of access to vendors was challenging in the general election. See figure 3.

Figure 3: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 3: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Absentee/Mail Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Moderately or somewhat challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Not at all challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	49	43	55	30	25	36	11	8	16
Changes made to state absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	26	21	31	33	27	39	21	16	25
Lack of experienced election workers	18	14	23	35	29	40	34	28	40
Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	18	14	23	33	27	39	36	30	42
Printing more absentee/mail ballots than usual	25	19	30	24	19	29	25	20	30
Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	14	10	19	30	25	36	35	29	40
Lack of clear guidance from state election officials on absentee/mail voting	13	9	18	27	22	32	42	36	48
Insufficient storage space for absentee/mail ballots	15	11	20	20	16	25	48	42	54
Insufficient space for absentee/mail ballot processing	14	10	18	21	16	25	50	44	56
Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	3	2	5	13	9	17	47	41	53

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

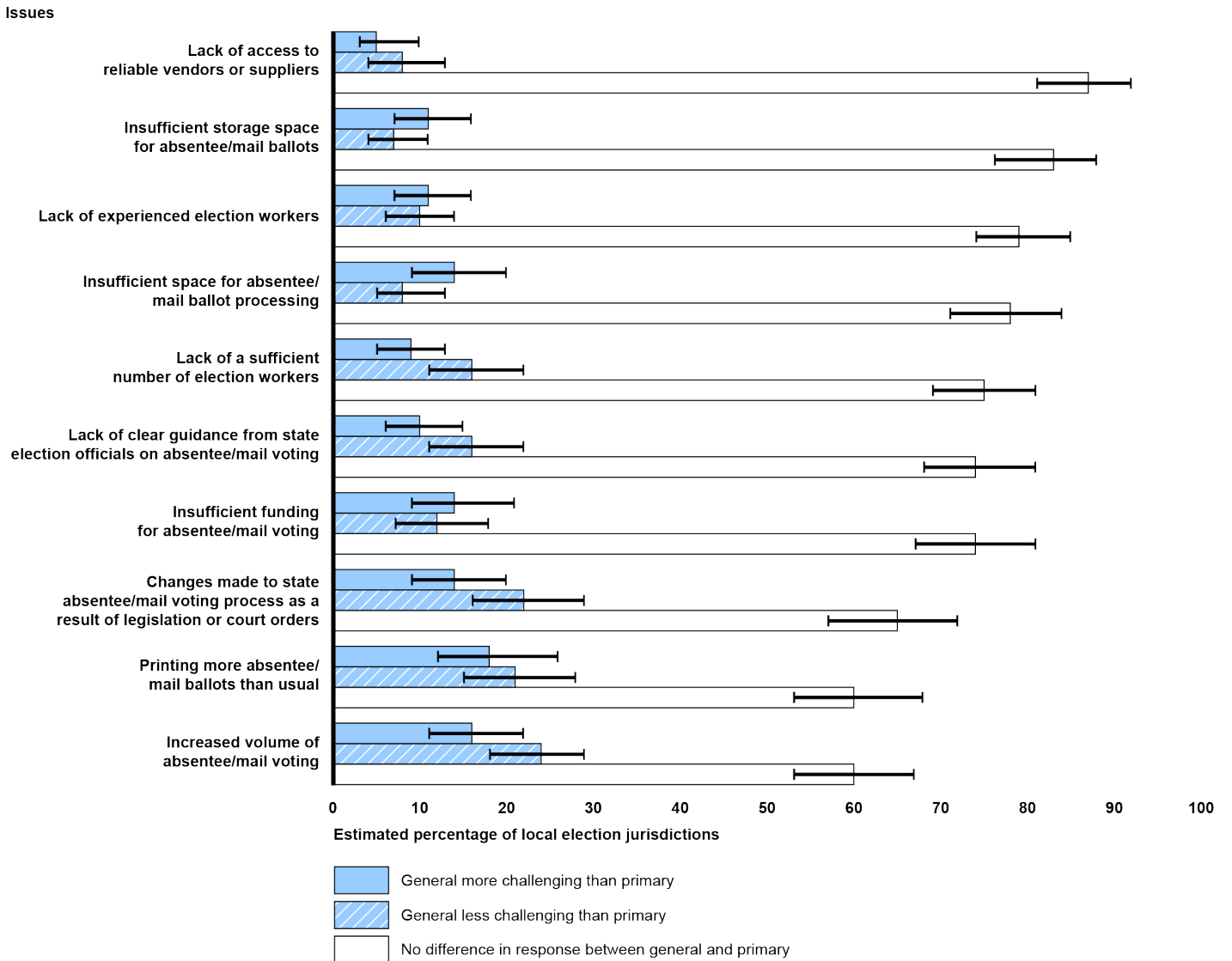
Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to absentee/mail voting. The figure does not include the percentage of local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond.

Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

We compared local jurisdiction responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. For each issue, for the largest percentage of local jurisdictions, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, absentee/mail voting issues were during the general election and during the primary elections. See figure 4.

Figure 4: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 4: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Absentee/Mail Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

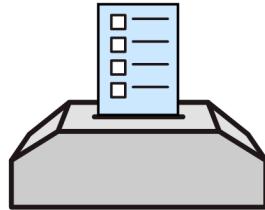
Issues	General more challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	General less challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	No difference in response between general and primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	5	3	10	8	4	13	87	81	92
Insufficient storage space for absentee/mail ballots	11	7	16	7	4	11	83	76	88
Lack of experienced election workers	11	7	16	10	6	14	79	74	85
Insufficient space for absentee/mail ballot processing	14	9	20	8	5	13	78	71	84
Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	9	5	13	16	11	22	75	69	81
Lack of clear guidance from state election officials on absentee/mail voting	10	6	15	16	11	22	74	68	81
Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	14	9	21	12	7	18	74	67	81
Changes made to state absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	14	9	20	22	16	29	65	57	72
Printing more absentee/mail ballots than usual	18	12	26	21	15	28	60	53	68
Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	16	11	22	24	18	29	60	53	67

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

The differences between (1) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting that the 2020 general election was more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and (2) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting that the 2020 general election was less challenging than the 2020 primary elections were not statistically significant for any of the issues in the figure.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to absentee/mail voting. The figure does not include responses from local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.



In-Person Voting

Steps and Challenges Identified by States

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all states coordinated with public health agencies about in-person voting, and most states coordinated with emergency management agencies, consulted with vendors and experts about in-person voting, and helped local election offices to add new polling locations.²⁷ See table 3.

Table 3: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to In-Person Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Number of states
Coordinated with state, regional, or local public health agencies about in-person voting	35
Coordinated with state, regional, or local emergency management agencies about in-person voting	34
Consulted with vendors regarding in-person voting	26
Consulted with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other states—regarding in-person voting	26
Assisted local election offices in adding new polling locations or voting centers, such as at sports arenas or other large venues	26
Worked with the Governor’s office or other executives to make changes to in-person voting requirements during the pandemic	24
Worked with state legislators to make changes to in-person voting requirements during the pandemic	16
Used National Guard personnel to assist with in-person voting	8

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The table is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about steps taken related to in-person voting.

²⁷In our surveys, we defined in-person voting as “a method of voting that includes any type of voting in which a registered voter casts a ballot while physically present at a voting location. In-person voting also includes instances where voters cast their ballots in person before Election Day. Your state may refer to voting that occurs in person before Election Day as early voting, in-person absentee voting, advanced voting, or another similar term.” We also apply this definition throughout this report.

Examples of In-Person Voting Successes Cited by State Election Offices

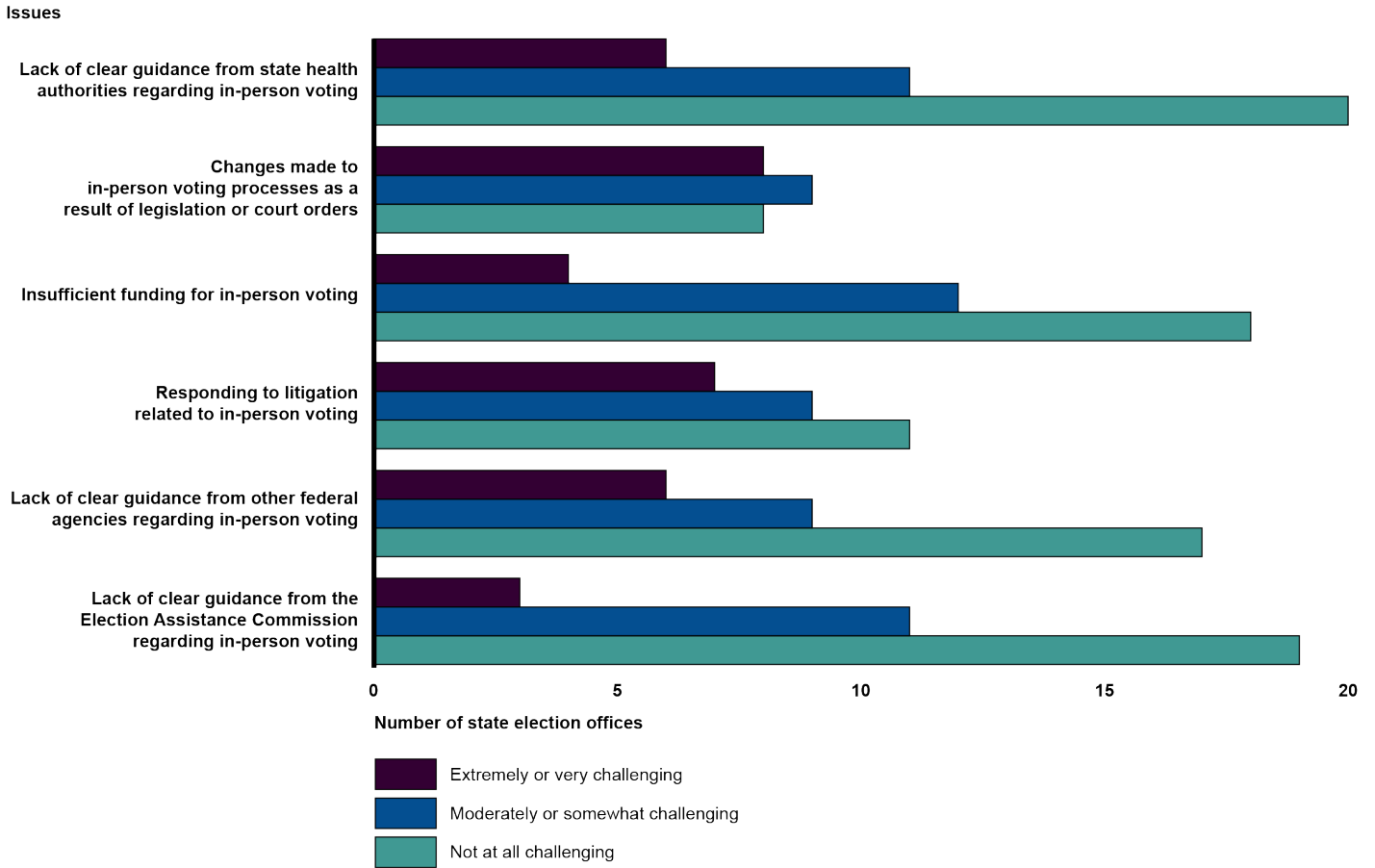
One state election official stated that in-person voting went well in their state because all polling locations were kept open and people were able to social distance.

Another state election official stated that everyone worked hard to ensure the safety of voters, poll workers, and staff. This official noted that there were no reported cases of COVID-19 attributed to either the 2020 primary or 2020 general elections in their state.

Source: 2021 state election office survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

The most common response from states to almost all of our survey questions about in-person voting issues during the 2020 general election was that these issues were not challenging. However, for each in-person voting issue asked about in our survey—for example, understanding guidance from state health authorities—some states identified the issue as challenging. See figure 5.

Figure 5: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 5: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	Moderately or somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging
Lack of clear guidance from state health authorities regarding in-person voting	6	11	20
Changes made to in-person voting processes as a result of legislation or court orders	8	9	8
Insufficient funding for in-person voting	4	12	18
Responding to litigation related to in-person voting	7	9	11
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding in-person voting	6	9	17
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission regarding in-person voting	3	11	19

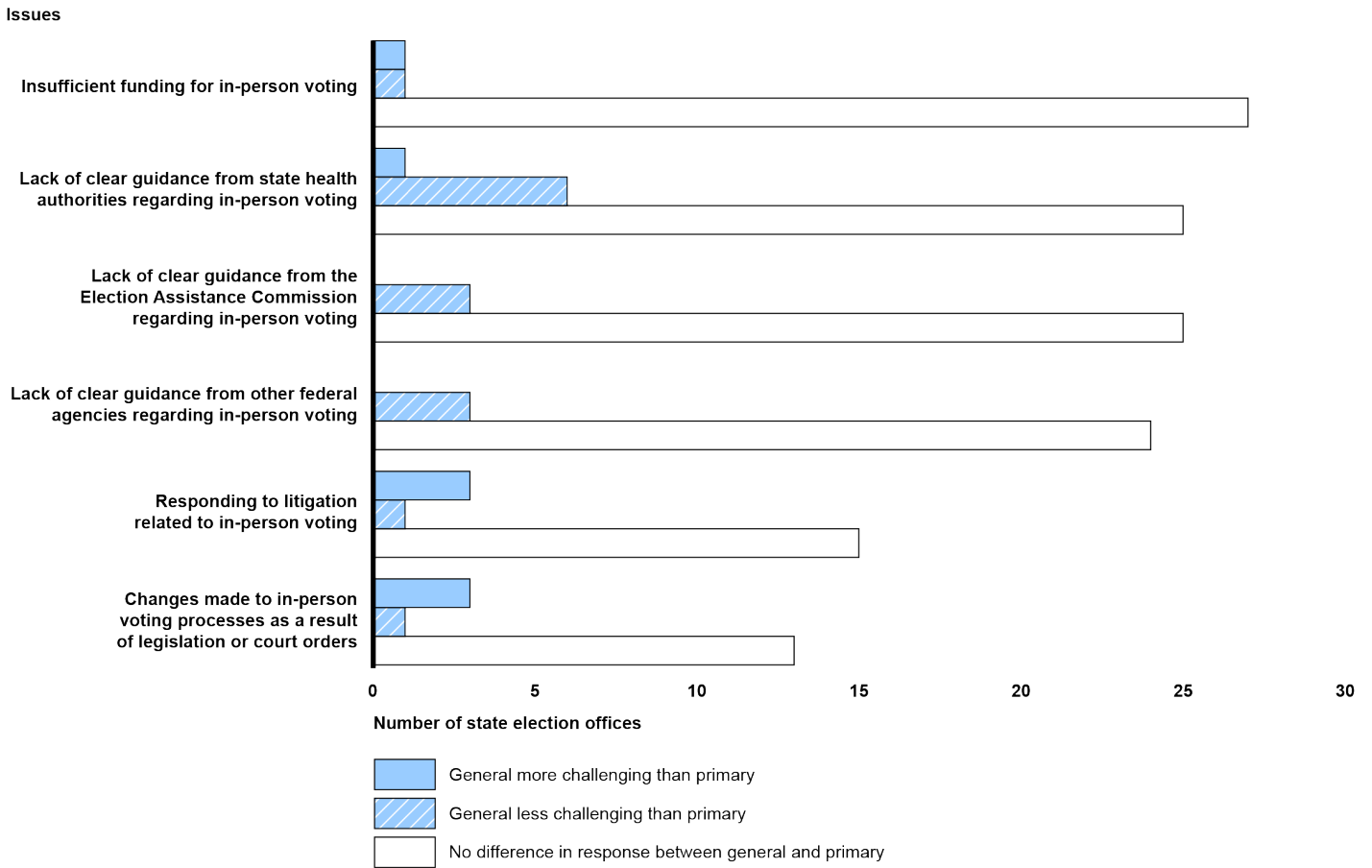
Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to in-person voting. The figure does not include the number of state election offices that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or that did not respond to these survey questions.

We compared state responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. For each issue, for the largest number of states, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, in-person voting issues were during the general election and during the primary elections. However, six states reported that understanding guidance from state health authorities regarding in-person voting was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. One state reported that this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections. See figure 6.

Figure 6: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 6: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)

Issues	General more challenging than primary	General less challenging than primary	No difference in response between general and primary
Insufficient funding for in-person voting	1	1	27
Lack of clear guidance from state health authorities regarding in-person voting	1	6	25
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission regarding in-person voting	0	3	25
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding in-person voting	0	3	24
Responding to litigation related to in-person voting	3	1	15
Changes made to in-person voting processes as a result of legislation or court orders	3	1	13

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to in-person voting. The figure does not include responses from states that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

Steps and Challenges Identified by Local Jurisdictions

Nearly all local jurisdictions took steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when preparing for and conducting in-person voting during the pandemic, for example, by providing personal protective equipment to voters and/or election workers or modifying voting locations to facilitate social distancing.²⁸ By contrast, a small percentage of local jurisdictions held in-person voting at sports arenas or other large venues or used a ticketing system to manage lines at voting locations. See table 4.

²⁸In our surveys, we defined a voting location as “any location where a voter appears in person to cast a ballot. Voting locations include staffed polling precinct/polling places, vote centers, election officials’ offices, or other locations sanctioned by the state, county, or local office responsible for conducting elections.” Additionally, we defined election workers as “any temporary employee or volunteer working on election-related tasks before or during the election, including, for example, setting up voting locations, closing polling locations, helping voters cast their ballots, tabulating ballots, processing absentee/mail ballots, and/or supervising other election workers. Your state might refer to election workers as election judges, election clerks, election officers, poll workers, or Election Day workers.” We also apply these definitions throughout this report.

Table 4: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to In-Person Voting for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that took this step
Provided personal protective equipment, such as masks or face shields, for voters and/or election workers	94 (90, 97)
Cleaned and disinfected voting locations following the primary election(s) or general election	94 (90, 96)
Installed signs or other reminders for voters and election workers to socially distance	92 (88, 95)
Modified or reconfigured voting locations to facilitate social distancing	88 (83, 91)
Installed physical barriers between voters and/or election workers	79 (74, 84)
Restricted the number of people allowed inside voting locations at any one time	71 (66, 77)
Coordinated with state, regional, or local public health agencies about in-person voting	56 (50, 62)
Coordinated with state, regional, or local emergency management agencies about in-person voting	55 (49, 61)
Prepared alternative in-person voting options for voters with COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms	52 (46, 58)
Provided voters with more opportunities for curbside or drive-thru voting	49 (43, 56)
Estimated the number of voting machines needed for in-person voting	46 (40, 52)
Gave voters more opportunities for early in-person voting	38 (33, 44)
Consulted with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other election jurisdictions—about in-person voting	37 (31, 43)
Improved ventilation or air quality at voting locations	28 (22, 33)
Consulted with vendors regarding in-person voting	18 (14, 23)
Added new polling locations or vote centers	14 (11, 18)
Held in-person voting at sports arenas or other large venues	8 (5, 11)
Used a ticketing or reservation system to manage lines at voting locations	2 (1, 5)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Parentheses contain both the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval. The table is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about steps taken related to in-person voting.

Examples of In-Person Voting Successes Cited by Local Election Jurisdictions

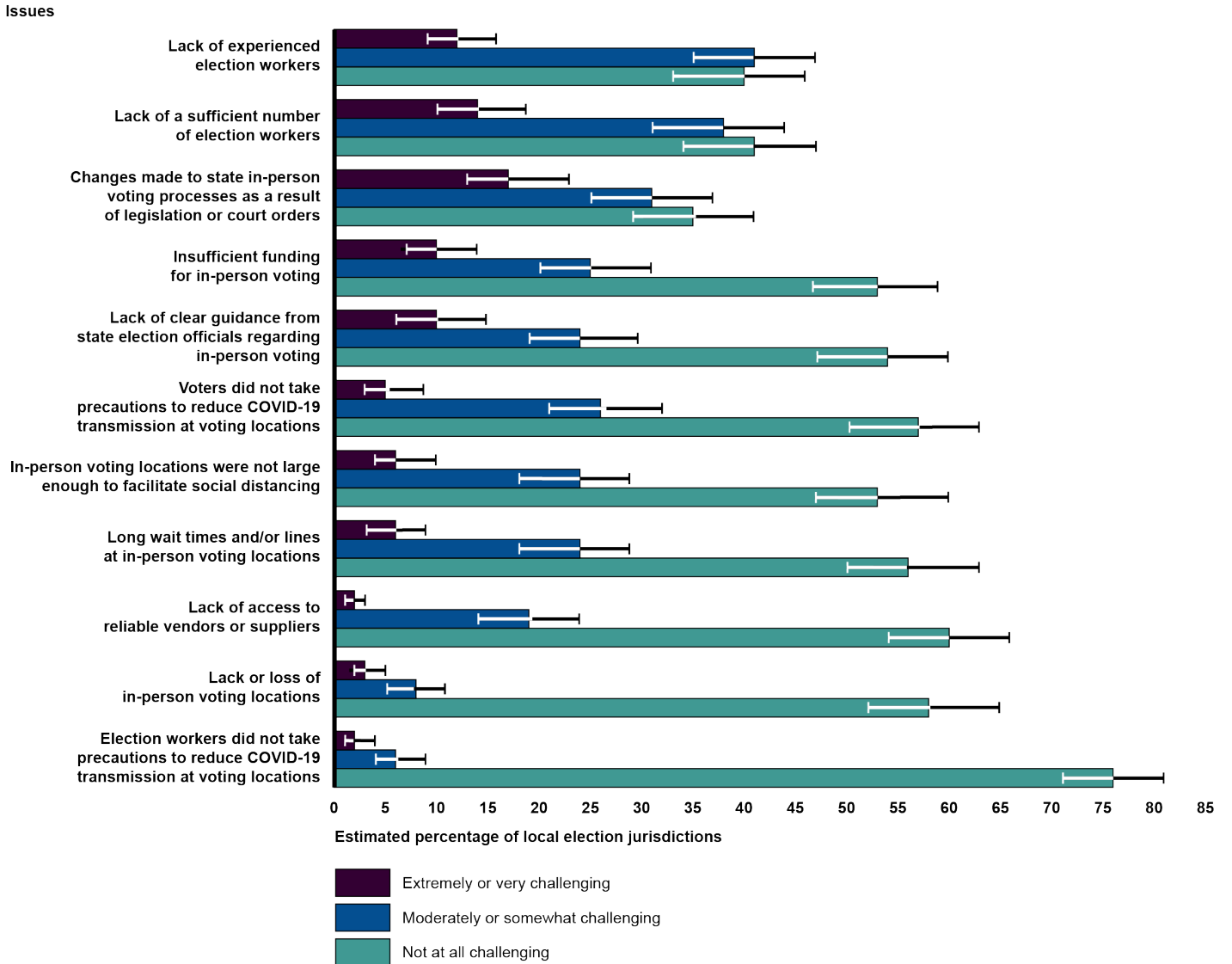
One local election official stated that the jurisdiction’s commitment to having safety measures in place at polling places, to ensure election judges and voters were safe, was a success for the locality. There was an increase in the number of people voting in-person, and the official felt that the jurisdiction was successful in accurately processing the high volume of in-person ballots.

Another local election official stated that the jurisdiction utilized an old bank building as an early vote center for the general election. The official reported that it made social distancing and people management so much better.

Source: 2021 local election jurisdiction survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

The most common response from local jurisdictions to almost all of our survey questions about in-person voting issues during the 2020 general election was that these issues were not challenging. However, many local jurisdictions identified the following issues we asked about as challenging: a lack of experienced election workers, a lack of a sufficient number of election workers, and changes made to states’ in-person voting processes. See figure 7.

Figure 7: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 7: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to In-Person Voting in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Moderately or somewhat challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Not at all challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Lack of experienced election workers	12	9	16	41	35	47	40	33	46
Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	14	10	19	38	31	44	41	34	47
Changes made to state in-person voting processes as a result of legislation or court orders	17	13	23	31	25	37	35	29	41
Insufficient funding for in-person voting	10	7	14	25	20	31	53	47	59
Lack of clear guidance from state election officials regarding in-person voting	10	6	15	24	19	30	54	47	60
Voters did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	5	3	9	26	21	32	57	50	63
In-person voting locations were not large enough to facilitate social distancing	6	4	10	24	18	29	53	47	60
Long wait times and/or lines at in-person voting locations	6	3	9	24	18	29	56	50	63
Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	2	1	3	19	14	24	60	54	66
Lack or loss of in-person voting locations	3	2	5	8	5	11	58	52	65
Election workers did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	2	1	4	6	4	9	76	71	81

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

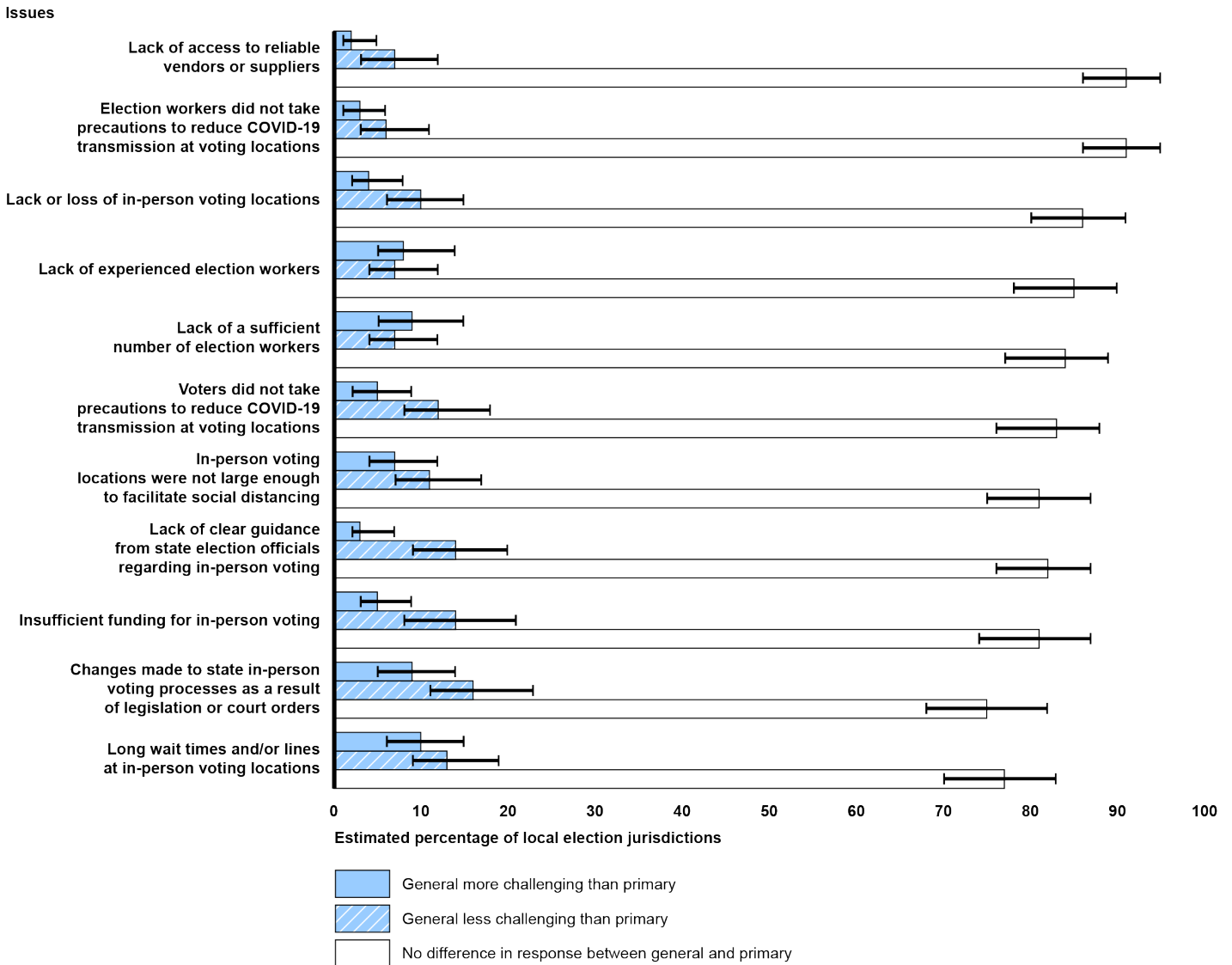
The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to in-person voting. The figure does not include the percentage of local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

We compared local jurisdiction responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. For each issue, for the largest percentage of local jurisdictions, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, in-person voting issues were during the general election and during the primary elections. However, 14 percent of local jurisdictions reported that understanding guidance from state election officials was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Three percent of local jurisdictions reported that this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.²⁹ See figure 8.

²⁹The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (9, 20) and (2, 7) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

Figure 8: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 8: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to In-Person Voting Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	General more challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	General less challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	No difference in response between general and primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	2	1	5	7	3	12	91	86	95
Election workers did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	3	1	6	6	3	11	91	86	95
Lack or loss of in-person voting locations	4	2	8	10	6	15	86	80	91
Lack of experienced election workers	8	5	14	7	4	12	85	78	90
Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	9	5	15	7	4	12	84	77	89
Voters did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	5	2	9	12	8	18	83	76	88
In-person voting locations were not large enough to facilitate social distancing	7	4	12	11	7	17	81	75	87
Lack of clear guidance from state election officials regarding in-person voting	3	2	7	14	9	20	82	76	87
Insufficient funding for in-person voting	5	3	9	14	8	20	81	74	87
Changes made to state in-person voting processes as a result of legislation or court orders	9	5	14	16	11	23	75	68	82

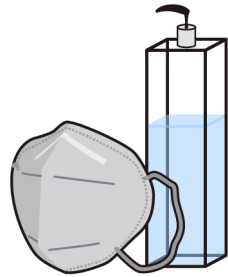
Issues	General more challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	General less challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	No difference in response between general and primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Long wait times and/or lines at in-person voting locations	10	6	15	13	9	19	77	70	83

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

With the exception of “lack of clear guidance from state election officials regarding in-person voting,” the differences between (1) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting that an issue was more challenging in the 2020 general election than in the primary elections and (2) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting that an issue was less challenging in the 2020 general election than in the primary elections were not statistically significant for any of the issues in the figure.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to in-person voting. The figure does not include responses from local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.



Election Supplies

Steps and Challenges Identified by States

More than half of the 43 states that responded to our survey assisted local election offices with obtaining all of the types of election supplies we asked about in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including hand sanitizer, personal protective equipment such as face shields or non-medical-grade masks, and disinfectant wipes or other cleaning supplies. See table 5.

Table 5: Election Supplies That State Election Offices Assisted Local Election Offices With Obtaining for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Number of state election offices
Hand sanitizer	39
Personal protective equipment, such as face shields or non-medical-grade masks	36
Disinfectant wipes or other cleaning supplies	35
Signage or other reminders to encourage social distancing among voters and election workers	31
Disposable shared objects, such as pens or sample ballots	29
Physical barriers, such as plexiglass	26
Medical-grade protective equipment, such as N95 masks	24

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The table is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about steps taken related to obtaining election supplies.

Examples of Election Supplies Successes Cited by State Election Offices

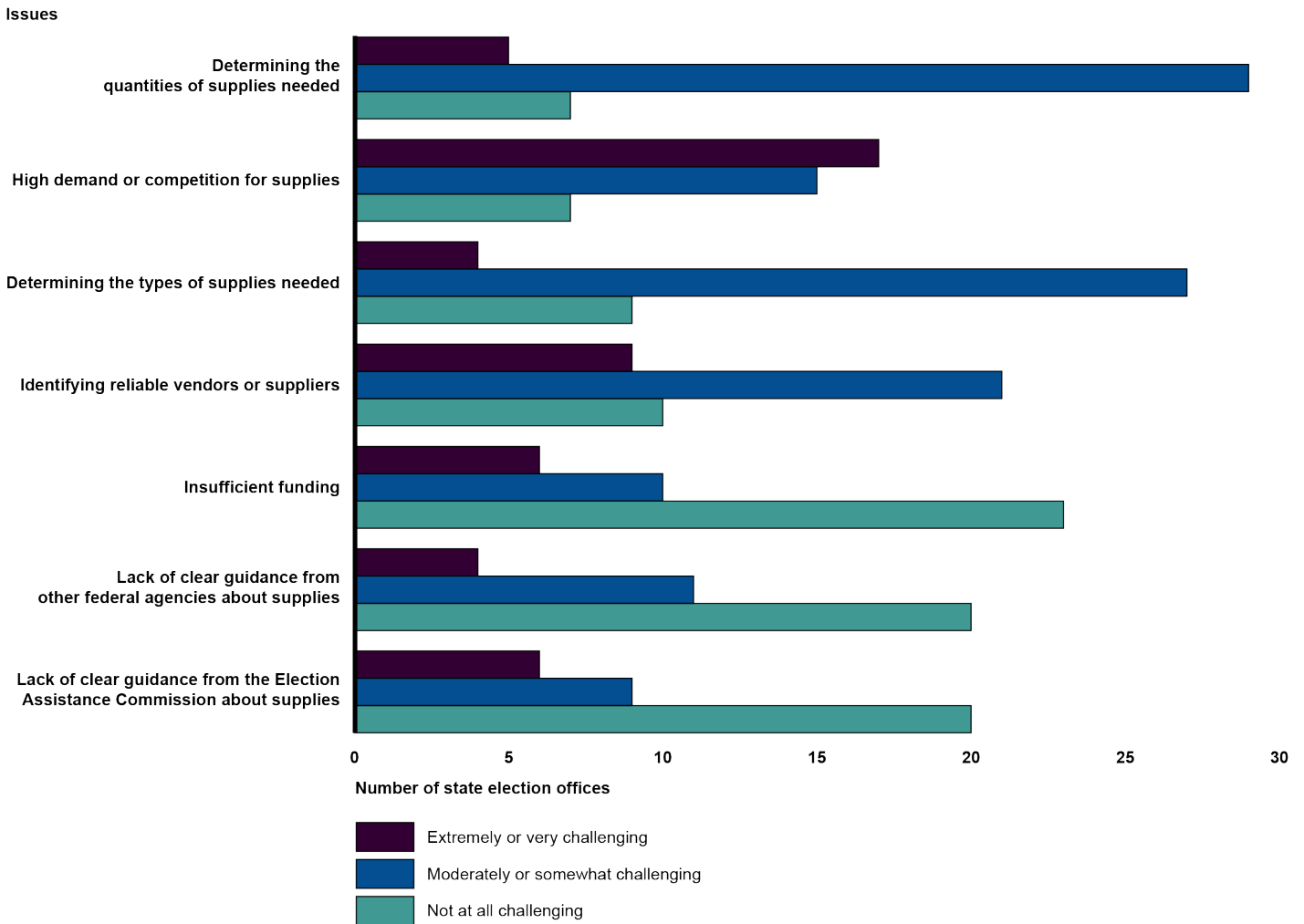
One state election official reported that by the general election, the state had planned and coordinated with other state and federal agencies to ensure each local office had the supplies needed to conduct a safe election with increased vote by mail. Though there were challenges, this state was able to provide the citizens with safe options for voting in person early or on Election Day, or by mail.

Another state election official said that the state was able to obtain and supply personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies to all of its municipalities for the general election.

Source: 2021 state election office survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Most states found four issues we asked about related to determining the types of supplies, the quantities of supplies needed, addressing high demand, and identifying reliable suppliers challenging. Meanwhile, many states found issues related to funding for supplies and understanding guidance from the EAC and other federal agencies not challenging. See figure 9.

Figure 9: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Assisting Local Election Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 9: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Assisting Local Election Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	Moderately or somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging
Determining the quantities of supplies needed	5	29	7
High demand or competition for supplies	17	15	7
Determining the types of supplies needed	4	27	9
Identifying reliable vendors or suppliers	9	21	10
Insufficient funding	6	10	23
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about supplies	4	11	20
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission about supplies	6	9	20

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to obtaining election supplies. The figure does not include the number of state election offices that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

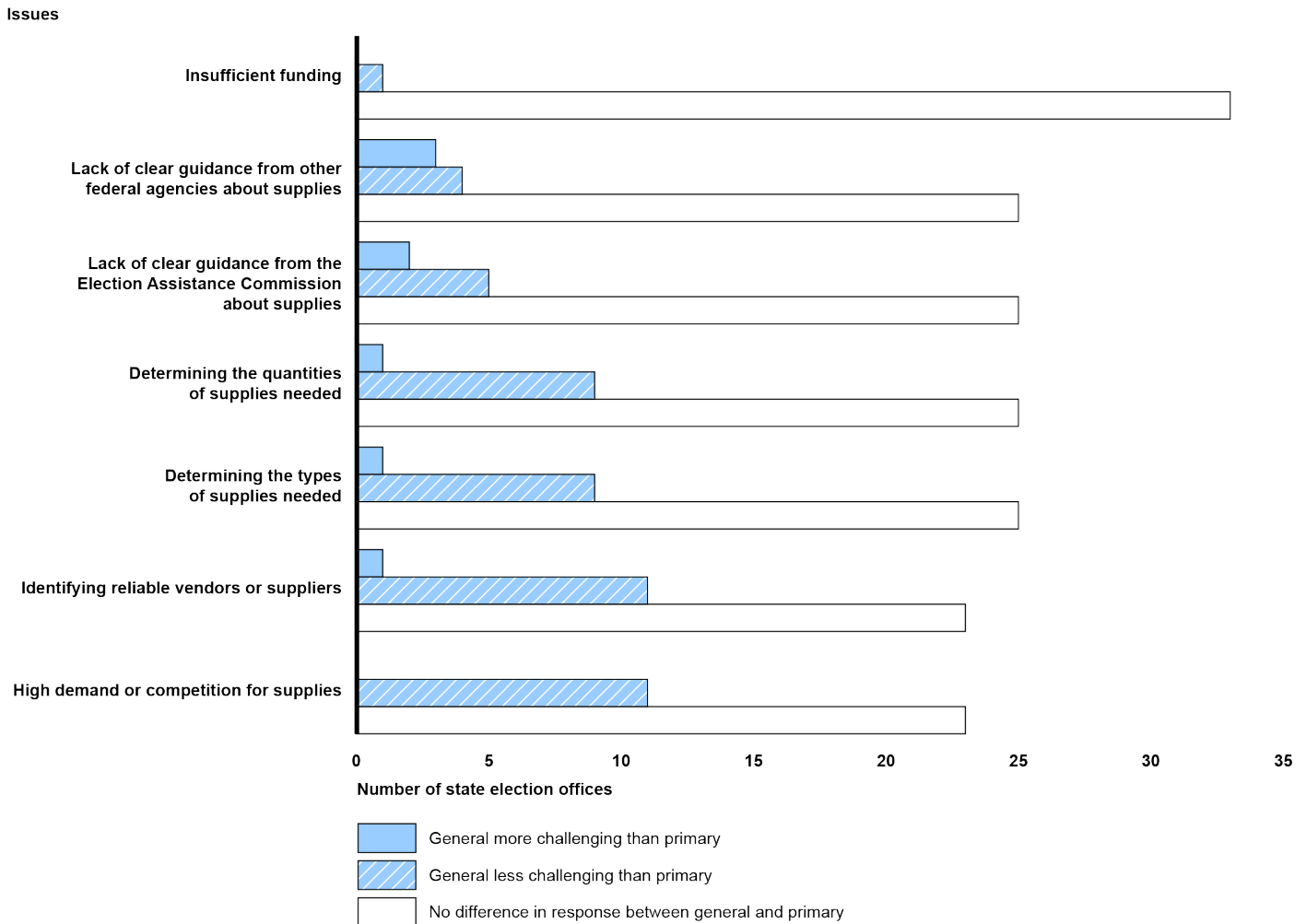
We compared states’ responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. (See figure 10.) For each issue, for the largest number of states, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, issues related to obtaining election supplies were during the general election and during the primary elections. However:

- Nine states reported that determining the quantity of supplies needed was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. One state reported that this issue was more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the primary elections.
- Nine states reported that determining the types of supplies needed was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. One state reported that this issue was more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the primary elections.
- Eleven states reported that identifying reliable suppliers was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020

primary elections. One state reported that this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.

- Eleven states reported that addressing high demand or competition for supplies was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. No states reported that this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.

Figure 10: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Issues Related to Assisting Local Election Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies during the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 10: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Issues Related to Assisting Local Election Offices With Obtaining Election Supplies during the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)

Issues	General more challenging than primary	General less challenging than primary	No difference in response between general and primary
Insufficient funding	0	1	33
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about supplies	3	4	25
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission about supplies	2	5	25
Determining the quantities of supplies needed	1	9	25
Determining the types of supplies needed	1	9	25
Identifying reliable vendors or suppliers	1	11	23
High demand or competition for supplies	0	11	23

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to obtaining election supplies. The figure does not include responses from states that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

Steps and Challenges Identified by Local Jurisdictions

Nearly all local jurisdictions obtained a variety of supplies, for example, cleaning supplies and disposable shared objects, to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in response to the pandemic. Meanwhile, less than half of local jurisdictions obtained medical-grade protective equipment, such as N95 masks, for election workers. See table 6.

Table 6: Election Supplies That Local Election Jurisdictions Obtained for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that obtained specified supplies
Disinfectant wipes or other cleaning supplies	96 (93, 98)
Hand sanitizer	94 (90, 96)
Personal protective equipment, such as face shields or non-medical-grade masks, for election workers	92 (88, 95)
Signage or other reminders to encourage social distancing among voters and election workers	92 (88, 95)

Steps taken	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that obtained specified supplies
Disposable shared objects, such as pens or sample ballots	82 (77, 86)
Physical barriers, such as plexiglass	78 (73, 83)
Medical-grade protective equipment, such as N95 masks, for election workers	43 (37, 48)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Parentheses contain both the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval. The table is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about steps taken related to obtaining election supplies.

Examples of Election Supplies Successes Cited by Local Election Jurisdictions

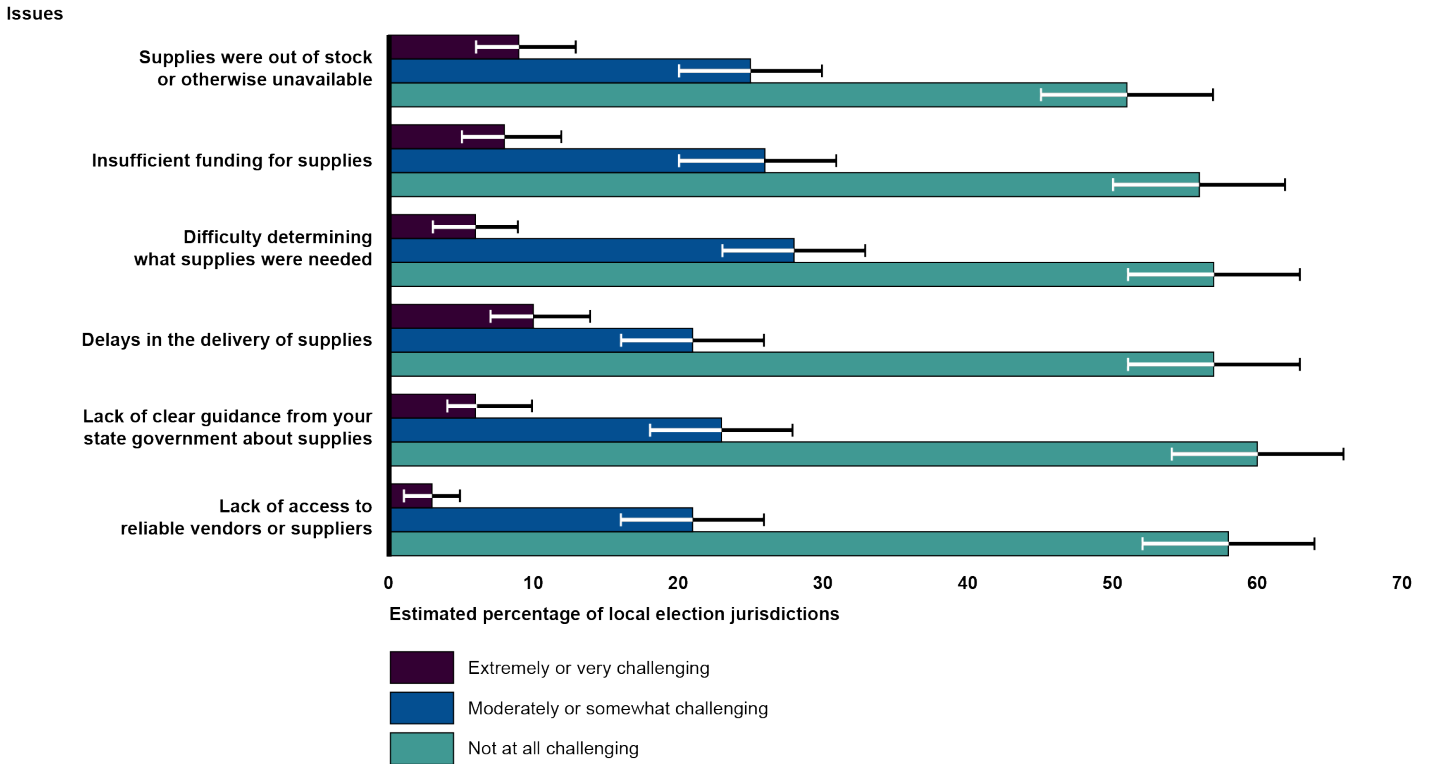
One local election official stated that the county government provided the local jurisdiction with all of the personal protective equipment it needed at no cost.

Another local election official stated that all personal protective equipment supplies were visible and accessible at the jurisdiction's polling locations, helping voters to feel safe.

Source: 2021 local election jurisdiction survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Over half of local jurisdictions reported that all issues we asked about related to obtaining election supplies were not challenging during the 2020 general election. See figure 11.

Figure 11: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 11: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Moderately or somewhat challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Not at all challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Supplies were out of stock or otherwise unavailable	9	6	13	25	20	30	51	45	57
Insufficient funding for supplies	8	5	12	26	20	31	56	50	62
Difficulty determining what supplies were needed	6	3	9	28	23	33	57	51	63
Delays in the delivery of supplies	10	7	14	21	16	26	57	51	63
Lack of clear guidance from your state government about supplies	6	4	10	23	18	28	60	54	66
Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	3	1	5	21	16	26	58	52	64

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to obtaining election supplies. The figure does not include the percentage of local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

We compared local jurisdictions’ responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. (See figure 12.) For each issue, for the largest percentage of local jurisdictions, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, issues related to obtaining election supplies were during the general election and during the primary elections. However:

- Twelve percent of local jurisdictions reported that lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Two percent of local jurisdictions reported that the issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³⁰
- Fifteen percent of local jurisdictions reported that the issue of delays in the delivery of supplies was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Five percent of local jurisdictions reported that the issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³¹
- Seventeen percent of local jurisdictions reported that difficulty in determining what supplies were needed was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Five percent of local jurisdictions reported that the issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³²
- Twenty-one percent of local jurisdictions reported that the issue of out of stock supplies was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Four percent of local jurisdictions reported that the issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³³

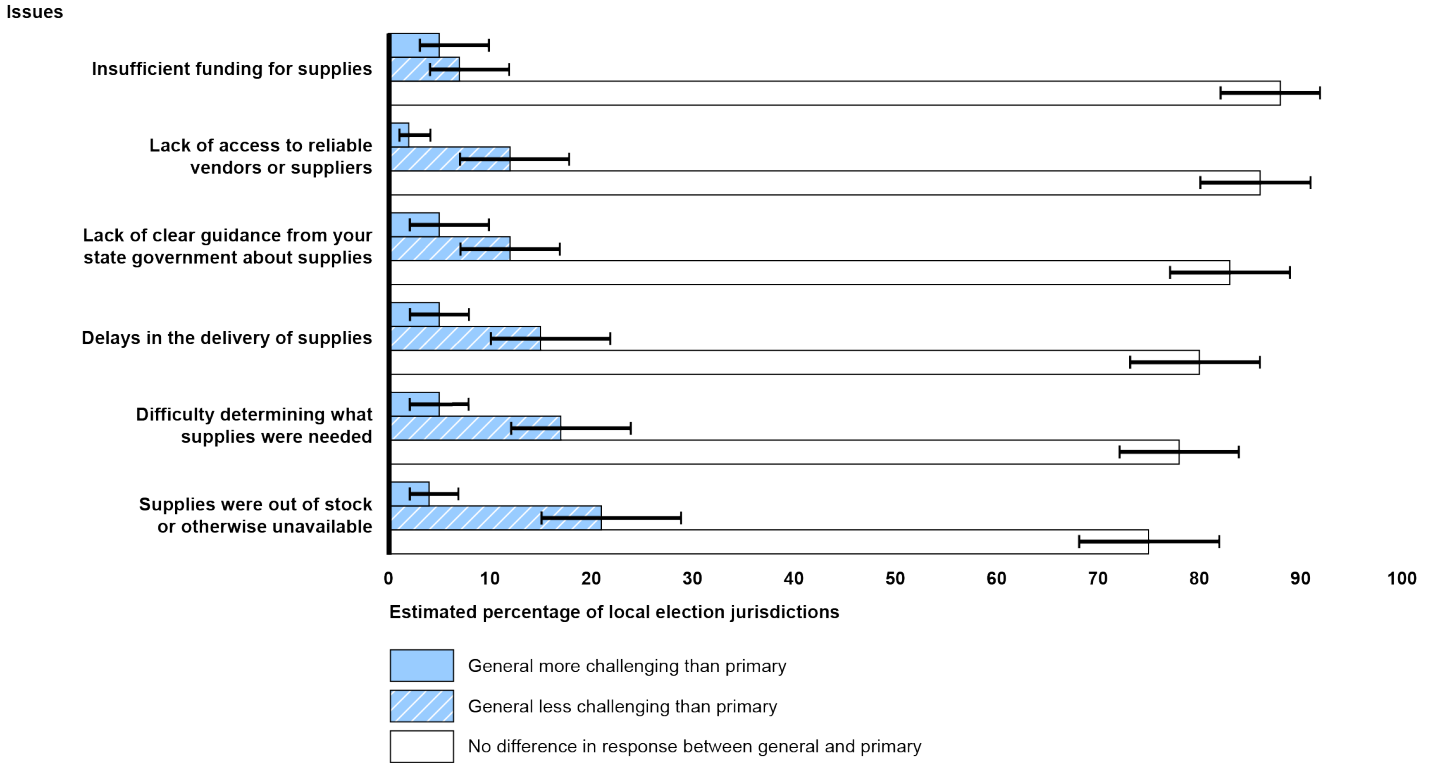
³⁰The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (7, 18) and (1, 4) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

³¹The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (10, 22) and (2, 8) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

³²The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (12, 24) and (2, 8) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

³³The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (15, 29) and (2, 7) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

Figure 12: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 12: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses Related to Obtaining Election Supplies in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	General more challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	General less challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	No difference in response between general and primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Insufficient funding for supplies	5	3	10	7	4	12	88	82	92
Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	2	1	4	12	7	18	86	80	91
Lack of clear guidance from your state government about supplies	5	2	10	12	7	17	83	77	89
Delays in the delivery of supplies	5	2	8	15	10	22	80	73	86
Difficulty determining what supplies were needed	5	2	8	17	12	24	78	72	84
Supplies were out of stock or otherwise unavailable	4	2	7	21	15	29	75	68	82

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

With the exceptions of “insufficient funding” and “lack of clear guidance from your state government about supplies,” the differences between (1) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting the 2020 general election was more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and (2) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting the 2020 general election was less challenging than the 2020 primary election were all statistically significant.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to obtaining election supplies. The figure does not include responses from local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.



Election Worker Recruitment and Training

Steps and Challenges Identified by States

Nearly all states conducted an outreach campaign in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage people to serve as election workers, and provided guidance to help local officials train them. More than half of states took other steps to recruit workers and to train election officials. See table 7.

Table 7: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Categories	Steps taken	Number of state election offices
Recruitment	Conducted an outreach campaign to encourage people to serve as election workers	36
Recruitment	Coordinated with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to recruit election workers	32
Recruitment	Encouraged state government employees to serve as election workers	24
Training	Provided guidance or materials to help local election officials train election workers	37
Training	Trained local election officials	28

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The table is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about steps taken related to election worker recruitment and training.

Examples of Election Worker Recruitment and Training Successes Cited by State Election Offices

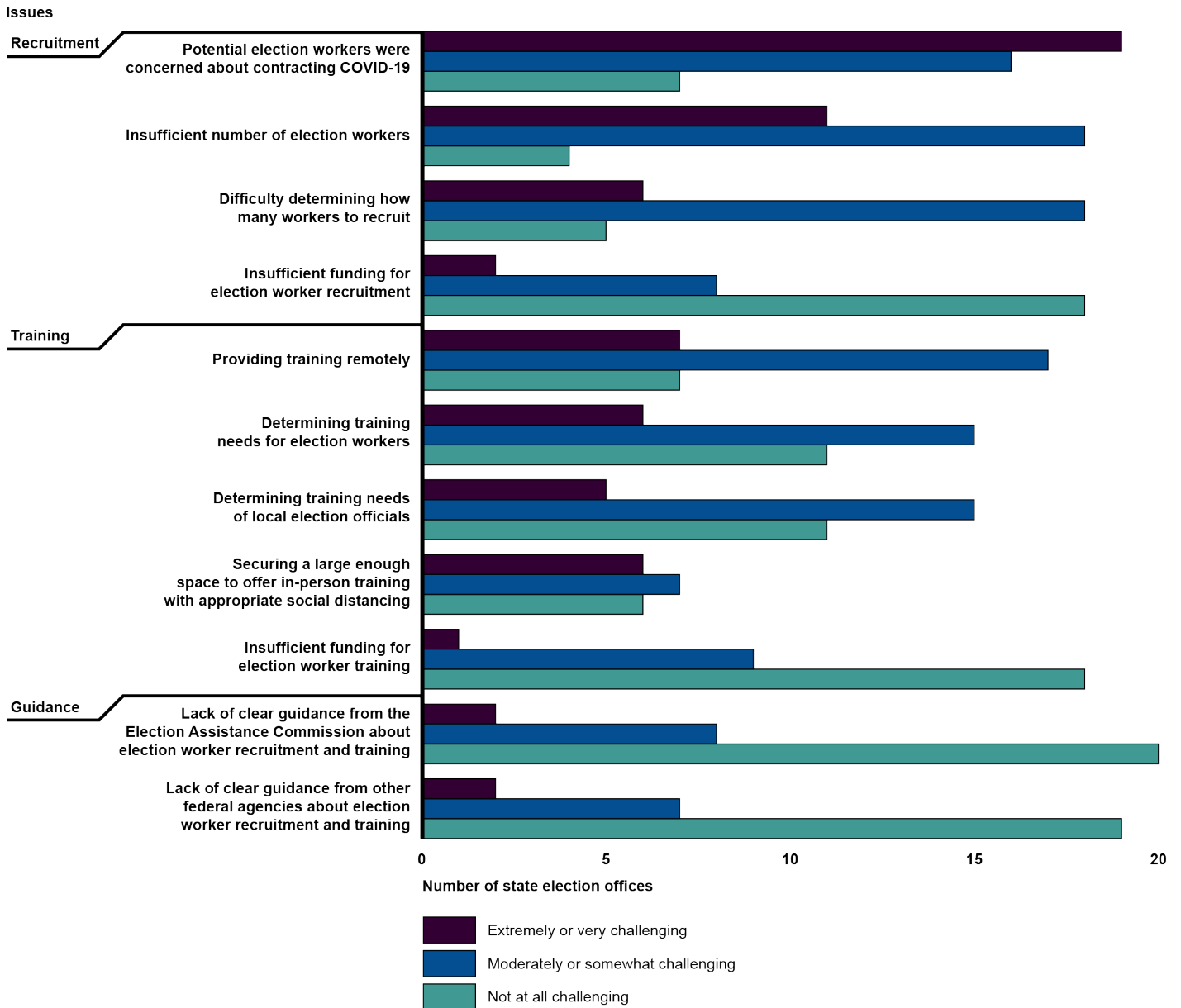
One state election official reported that the state worked with the governor's office to create a program where state employees could receive paid civic duty leave to serve as poll workers. Through this program, the state was able to supply backup poll workers even with only last-minute notice.

Another state election official reported that election officials were able to use remote meeting and training options to ensure continuity of operations despite COVID-19 challenges.

Source: 2021 state election office survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Nearly all states that responded to our survey found recruiting election workers challenging, due to potential election workers' concerns about contracting COVID-19, and most states found recruiting a sufficient number of election workers challenging. Additionally, many states found providing remote training and determining training needs for election workers and local election officials challenging. See figure 13.

Figure 13: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 13: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)

Issue categories	Issues	Extremely or very challenging	Moderately or somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging
Recruitment	Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	19	16	7
Recruitment	Insufficient number of election workers	11	18	4
Recruitment	Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	6	18	5
Recruitment	Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	2	8	18
Training	Providing training remotely	7	17	7
Training	Determining training needs for election workers	6	15	11
Training	Determining training needs of local election officials	5	15	11
Training	Securing a large enough space to offer in-person training with appropriate social distancing	6	7	6
Training	Insufficient funding for election worker training	1	9	18
Guidance	Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission about election worker recruitment and training	2	8	20
Guidance	Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about election worker recruitment and training	2	7	19

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

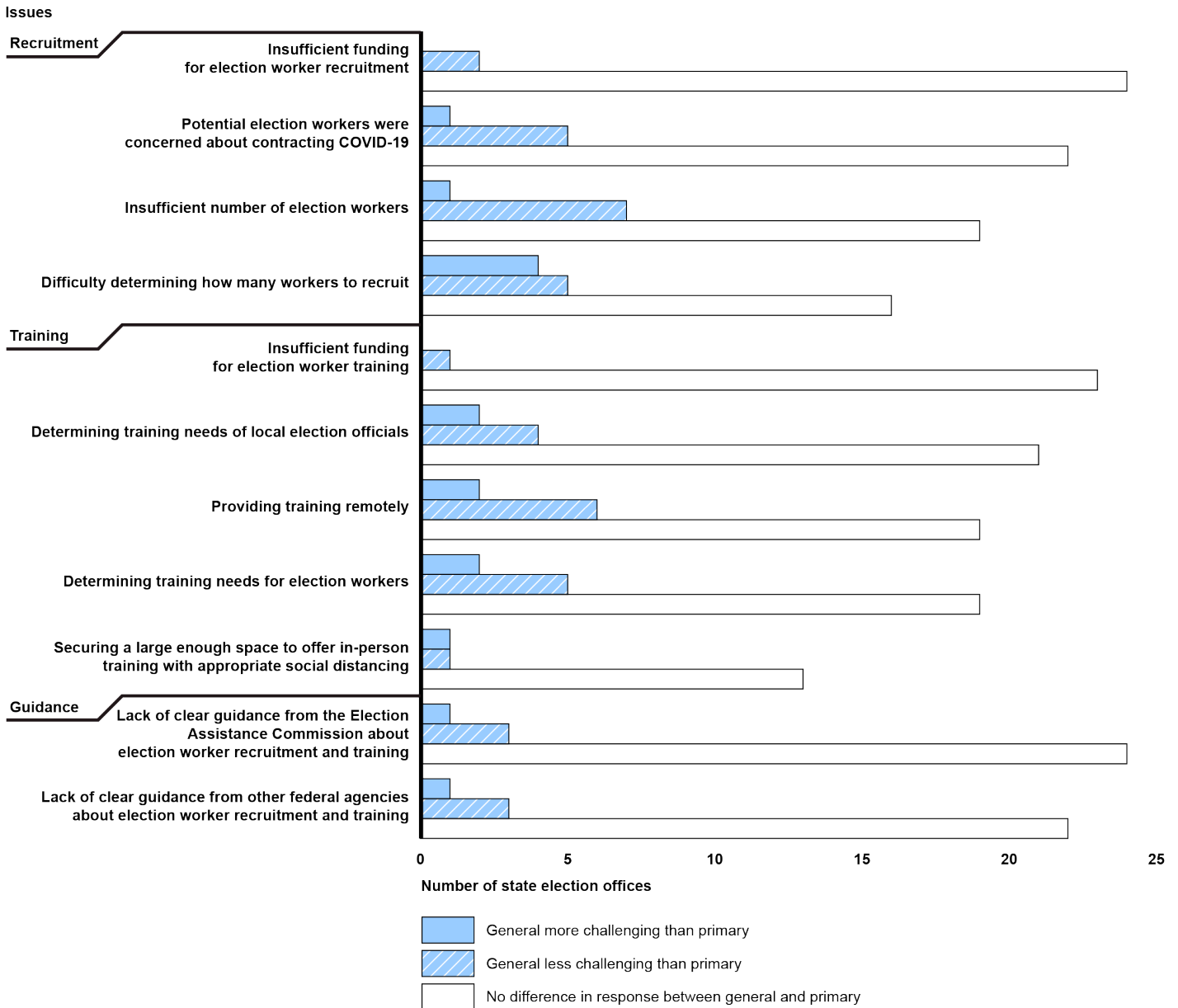
Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to election worker recruitment and training. The figure does not include the number of state election offices that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

We compared states’ responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. For each issue, for the largest number of states, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, recruitment and training issues were during the general election and during the primary elections. However, seven states reported that the issue of an insufficient number of election workers was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. One state reported that

this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections. See figure 14.

Figure 14: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 14: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)

Issue categories	Issues	General more challenging than primary	General less challenging than primary	No difference in response between general and primary
Recruitment	Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	0	2	24
Recruitment	Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	1	5	22
Recruitment	Insufficient number of election workers	1	7	19
Recruitment	Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	4	5	16
Training	Insufficient funding for election worker training	0	1	23
Training	Determining training needs of local election officials	2	4	21
Training	Providing training remotely	2	6	19
Training	Determining training needs for election workers	2	5	19
Training	Securing a large enough space to offer in-person training with appropriate social distancing	1	1	13
Guidance	Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission about election worker recruitment and training	1	3	24
Guidance	Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about election worker recruitment and training	1	3	22

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to election worker recruitment and training. The figure does not include responses from states that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

Steps and Challenges Identified by Local Jurisdictions

Local jurisdictions took a range of steps in relation to election worker recruitment and training for the 2020 elections in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, most local jurisdictions recruited backup

election workers in case others were unable to work, and a small percentage recruited election workers with medical training to assist voters with COVID-19. Additionally, nearly all local jurisdictions trained election workers on measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations and how to protect themselves from COVID-19, and conducted training in socially-distanced settings. See table 8.

Table 8: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Categories	Steps taken	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that took this step
Recruitment	Recruited backup election workers in case others were unable to work	71 (66, 77)
Recruitment	Recruited election workers from populations that do not usually volunteer, such as young people	36 (30, 41)
Recruitment	Worked with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to recruit election workers	23 (19, 27)
Recruitment	Offered incentives, such as hazard pay, to election workers	16 (13, 21)
Recruitment	Recruited election workers with medical training to assist voters with COVID-19	5 (3, 9)
Training	Trained election workers on measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	89 (84, 92)
Training	Trained election workers on measures to protect themselves from COVID-19	86 (82, 90)
Training	Trained election workers in socially-distanced settings	82 (77, 87)
Training	Conducted some or all election worker training online	48 (42, 54)
Training	Trained more election workers than usual to perform tasks in relation to absentee/mail voting	46 (40, 52)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Parentheses contain both the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval.

The table is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about steps taken related to election worker recruitment and training.

Examples of Election Worker Recruitment and Training Successes Cited by Local Election Jurisdictions

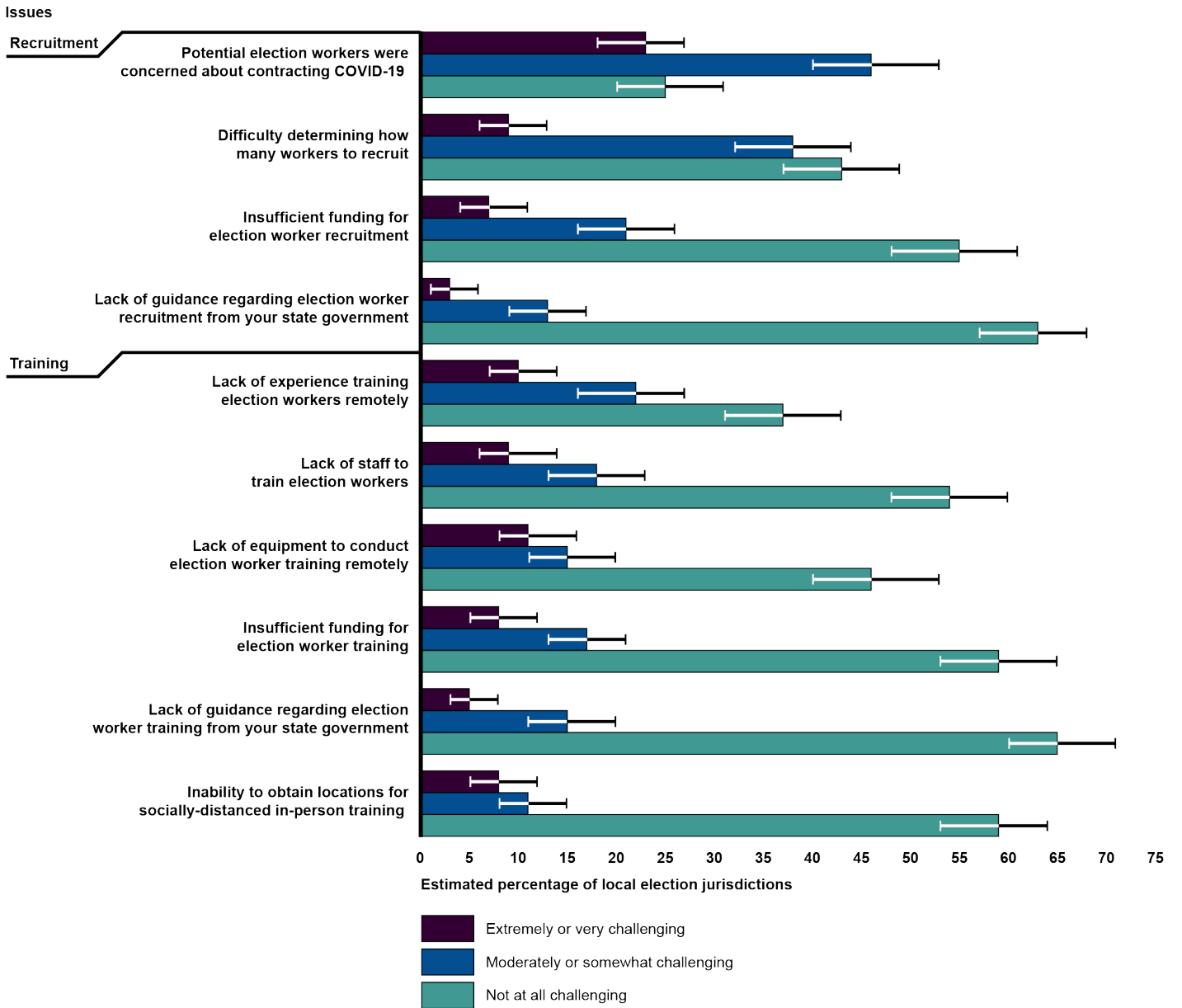
One local election official stated that the jurisdiction still had plenty of poll workers to help work the elections, and that poll workers learning how to operate their new election equipment went well.

Another local election official stated that the jurisdiction had an influx of citizens contacting their office to be election workers. The election official noted that almost all of the jurisdiction's seasoned experienced election workers returned.

Source: 2021 local election jurisdiction survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Many local jurisdictions found the majority of issues we asked about related to election worker recruitment and training not challenging in the 2020 general election. By contrast, most local jurisdictions found one issue—potential election workers' concern about contracting COVID-19—challenging in the general election. See figure 15.

Figure 15: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 15: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Election Worker Recruitment and Training in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issue categories	Issues	Extremely or very challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Moderately or somewhat challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Not at all challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Recruitment	Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	23	18	27	46	40	53	25	20	31
Recruitment	Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	9	6	13	38	32	44	43	37	49
Recruitment	Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	7	4	11	21	16	26	55	48	61
Recruitment	Lack of guidance regarding election worker recruitment from your state government	3	1	6	13	9	17	63	57	68
Training	Lack of experience training election workers remotely	10	7	14	22	16	27	37	31	43
Training	Lack of staff to train election workers	9	6	14	18	13	23	54	48	60

Letter

Issue categories	Issues	Extremely or very challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Moderately or somewhat challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Not at all challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Training	Lack of equipment to conduct election worker training remotely	11	8	16	15	11	20	46	40	53
Training	Insufficient funding for election worker training	8	5	12	17	13	21	59	53	65
Training	Lack of guidance regarding election worker training from your state government	5	3	8	15	11	20	65	60	71
Training	Inability to obtain locations for socially-distanced in-person training	8	5	12	11	8	15	59	53	64

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to election worker recruitment and training. The figure does not include the percentage of local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

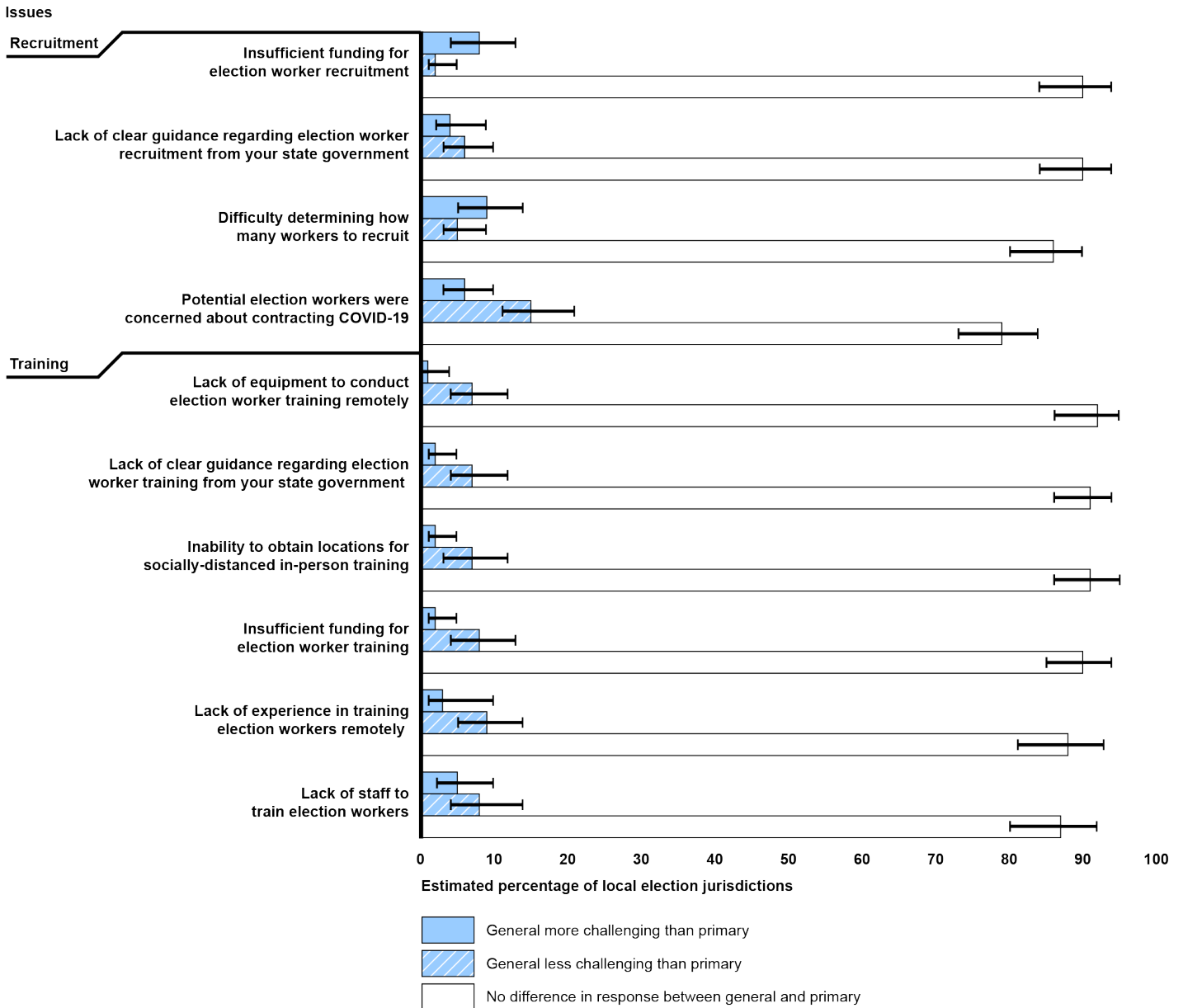
We compared local jurisdictions’ responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. (See figure 16.) For each issue, for the largest percentage of local jurisdictions, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, recruitment and training issues were during the general election and during the primary elections. However:

- Fifteen percent of local jurisdictions reported that the issue of potential election workers' concern about contracting COVID-19 was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Six percent reported that this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³⁴
- Seven percent of local jurisdictions reported that the lack of equipment to train election workers remotely was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. One percent reported that this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³⁵

³⁴The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (11, 21) and (3, 10) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

³⁵The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (4, 12) and (0, 4) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

Figure 16: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 16: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Election Worker Recruitment and Training Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issue categories	Issues	General more challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	General less challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	No difference in response between general and primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Recruitment	Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	8	4	13	2	1	5	90	84	94
Recruitment	Lack of clear guidance regarding election worker recruitment from your state government	4	2	9	6	3	10	90	84	94
Recruitment	Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	9	5	14	5	3	9	86	80	90
Recruitment	Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	6	3	10	15	11	21	79	73	84
Training	Lack of equipment to conduct election worker training remotely	1	0	4	7	4	12	92	86	95
Training	Lack of clear guidance regarding election worker training from your state government	2	0	5	7	4	12	91	86	94

Letter

Issue categories	Issues	General more challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	General less challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	No difference in response between general and primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Training	Inability to obtain locations for socially-distanced in-person training	2	1	5	7	3	12	91	86	95
Training	Insufficient funding for election worker training	2	1	5	8	4	13	90	85	94
Training	Lack of experience in training election workers remotely	3	1	10	9	5	14	88	81	93
Training	Lack of staff to train election workers	5	2	10	8	4	14	87	80	92

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

With the exceptions of “potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19,” and “lack of equipment to conduct election worker training remotely,” the differences between (1) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting the 2020 general election was more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and (2) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting the 2020 general election was less challenging than the 2020 primary elections were not statistically significant.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to election worker recruitment and training. The figure does not include responses from local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.



Voter Education and Outreach

Steps and Challenges Identified by States

All states that responded to our survey reported that they provided information on their elections websites in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to educate voters about voting policies and procedures. In addition, nearly all states took other steps related to education and outreach during the pandemic by, for example, answering questions from people who contacted their offices, or using various forms of media, including social media, to educate voters about voting policies and procedures. See table 9.

Table 9: Steps That State Election Offices Took Related to Voter Education and Outreach for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Number of state election offices that took this step
Provided information on your state’s elections website to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	43
Answered questions about voting policies and procedures from people who contacted your office	42
Used social media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	40
Conducted an outreach campaign using print, electronic, or other media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	40
Engaged with the news media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	40
Worked with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	35
Held or attended meetings or other events to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	31

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The table is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about steps taken related to voter education and outreach.

Examples of Voter Education and Outreach Successes Cited by State Election Offices

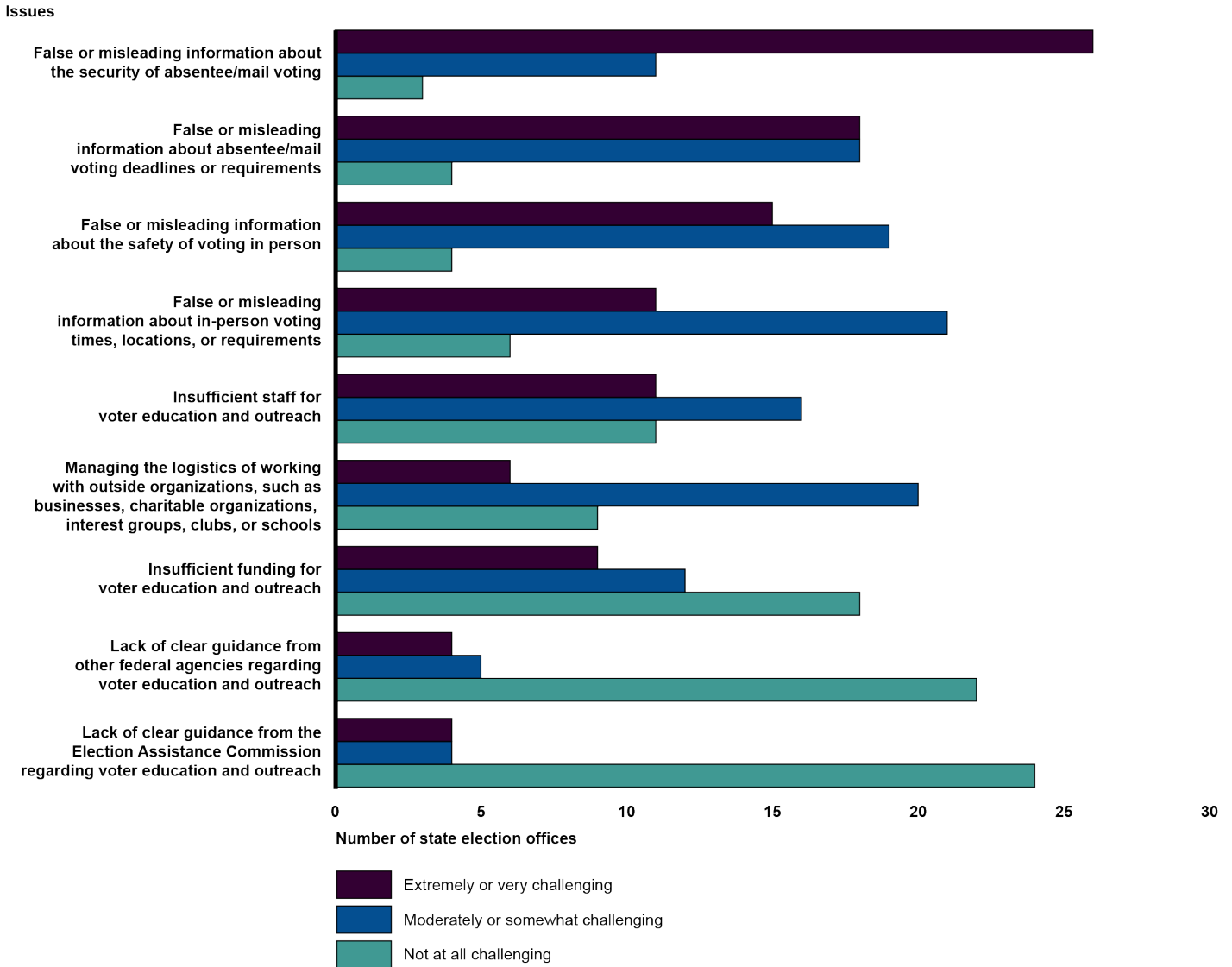
One state election official reported that the state conducted a successful voter education and outreach campaign and that the state had high voter turnout.

Another state election official reported that the state worked with a professional public relations group to assist it in developing and successfully disseminating information about voting.

Source: 2021 state election survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Nearly all states that responded to our survey reported that false or misleading information about absentee/mail voting—particularly about the security of this type of voting, and related deadlines and requirements—was challenging in the general election. By contrast, few states found understanding guidance issued by the EAC to be challenging in the general election. See figure 17.

Figure 17: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 17: How Challenging State Election Offices Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Number of state election offices)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	Moderately or somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging
False or misleading information about security of absentee/mail voting	26	11	3
False or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	18	18	4
False or misleading information about the safety of voting in person	15	19	4
False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	11	21	6
Insufficient staff voter education and outreach	11	16	11
Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations, such as businesses, charitable organizations, interest groups, clubs, or schools	6	20	9
Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	9	12	18
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding voter education and outreach	4	5	22
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission regarding voter education and outreach	4	4	24

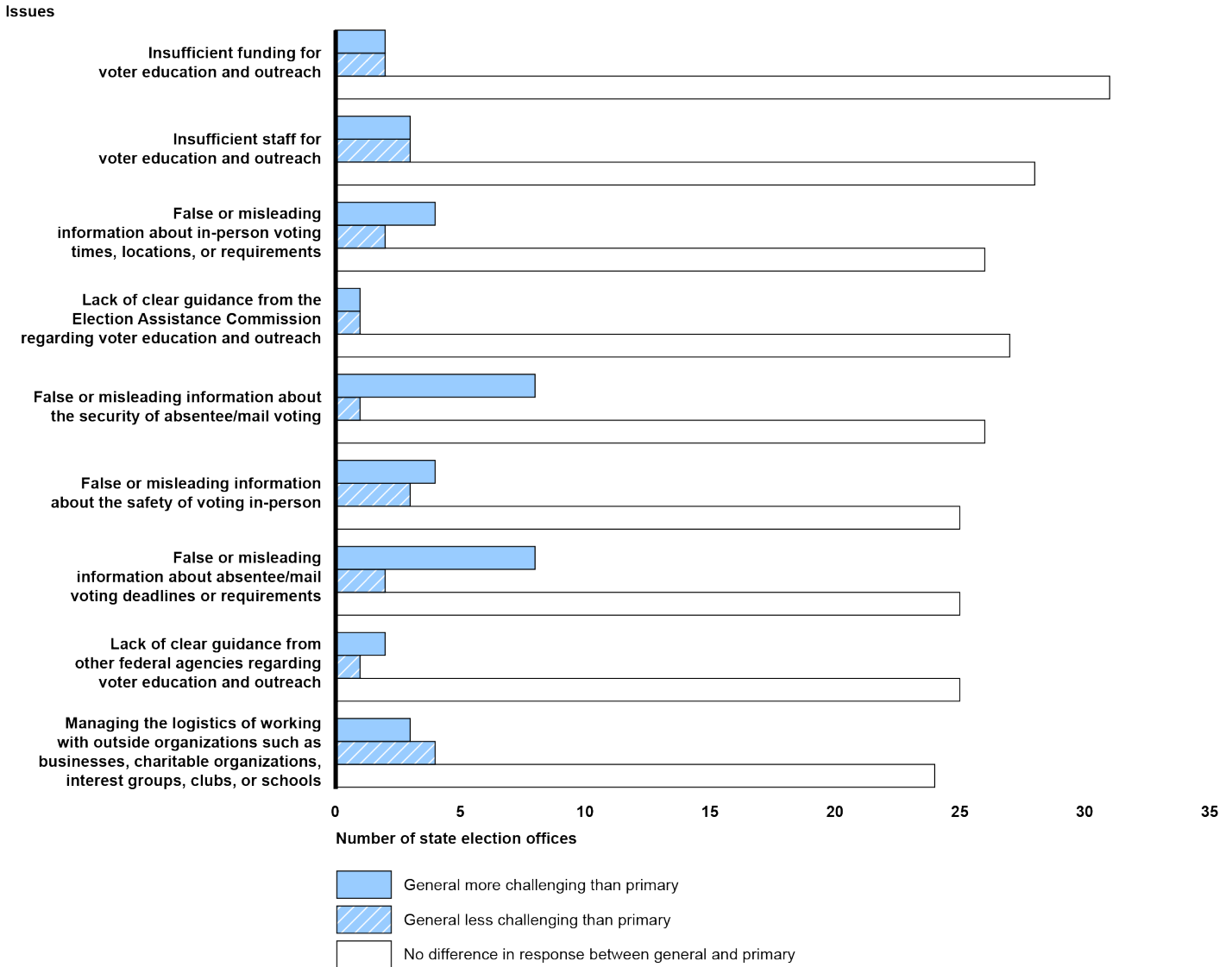
Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to voter education and outreach. The figure does not include the number of state election offices that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or those that did not respond to these survey questions.

We compared states’ responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. For each issue, for the largest number of states, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, voter education and outreach issues were during the general election and during the primary elections. However, eight states reported that false or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting was more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections, while one state reported that the issue was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the primary elections. Similarly, eight states reported that false or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements was more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections, while two states reported that the issue was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the primary elections. See figure 18.

Figure 18: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 18: Comparison of State Election Office Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Number of state election offices)

Issues	General more challenging than primary	General less challenging than primary	No difference in response between general and primary
Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	2	2	31
Insufficient staff for voter education and outreach	3	3	28
False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	4	2	26
Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission regarding voter education and outreach	1	1	27
False or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting	8	1	26
False or misleading information about the safety of voting in-person	4	3	25
False or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	8	2	25
Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding voter education and outreach	2	1	25
Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations such as businesses, charitable organizations, interest groups, clubs, or schools	3	4	24

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to voter education and outreach. The figure does not include responses from states that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

Steps and Challenges Identified by Local Election Jurisdictions

Nearly all local jurisdictions reported that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, they answered questions about voting policies and procedures from people who contacted their offices. Most local jurisdictions also provided voters with information via their websites, and many local jurisdictions used social or news media to educate voters. By contrast, few local jurisdictions worked with organizations such as schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to educate voters. See table 10.

Table 10: Steps That Local Election Jurisdictions Took Related to Voter Education and Outreach for the 2020 Elections in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Steps taken	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that took this step
Answered questions about voting policies and procedures from people who contacted your office	92 (88, 96)
Provided information on your local elections website to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	63 (57, 69)
Used social media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	55 (49, 61)
Engaged with the news media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	42 (37, 48)
Conducted an outreach campaign using print, electronic, or other media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	38 (32, 43)
Held or attended meetings or other events to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	22 (18, 27)
Worked with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	19 (15, 23)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Parentheses contain both the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval. The table is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about steps taken related to voter education and outreach.

Examples of Voter Education and Outreach Successes Cited by Local Election Jurisdictions

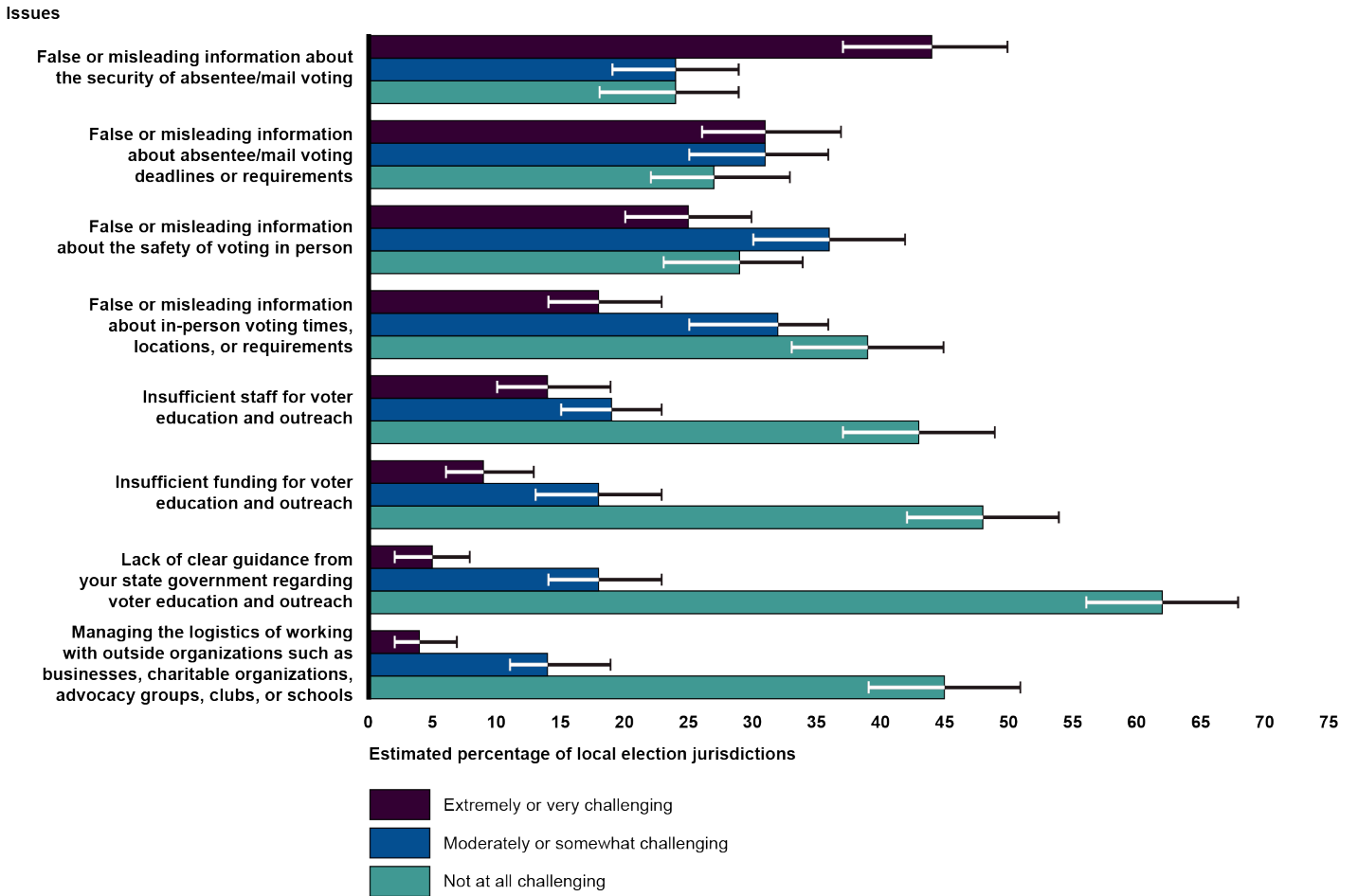
One local election official said that the jurisdiction expanded its outreach and education efforts, helping the jurisdiction register a record number of voters.

Another local election official reported that the jurisdiction worked with an advocacy group to inform voters on methods they could use to vote from home.

Source: 2021 local election jurisdiction survey responses. | GAO-22-104731

Most local jurisdictions found false or misleading information about the following issues challenging: the security of absentee/mail voting and associated deadlines and requirements, and the safety of in-person voting. By comparison, a small percentage of local jurisdictions found it challenging to manage the logistics of working with outside organizations, such as businesses, charitable organizations, advocacy groups, clubs, or schools. See figure 19.

Figure 19: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 19: How Challenging Local Election Jurisdictions Found Issues Related to Voter Education and Outreach in the 2020 General Election as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Moderately or somewhat challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	Not at all challenging	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
False or misleading information about security of absentee/mail voting	44	37	50	24	19	29	24	18	29
False or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	31	26	37	31	25	36	27	22	33
False or misleading information about safety of voting in person	25	20	30	36	30	42	29	23	34
False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	18	14	23	32	26	37	39	33	45
Insufficient staff for voter education and outreach	14	10	19	19	15	24	43	37	49
Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	9	6	13	18	13	23	48	42	54
Lack of clear guidance from state from your state government regarding voter education and outreach	5	2	8	18	14	23	62	56	68
Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations such as businesses, charitable organizations, advocacy groups, clubs, or schools	4	2	7	14	11	19	45	39	51

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to voter education and outreach. The figure does not include the percentage of local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

We compared local jurisdictions’ responses to survey questions about the 2020 general election to those about the 2020 primary elections. (See figure 20.) For each issue, for the largest percentage of local jurisdictions, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how challenging, if at all, voter education and outreach issues were during the general election and during the primary elections. However:

- Thirteen percent of local jurisdictions reported that understanding guidance from their state government about voter education and outreach was less challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Two percent reported that this issue was more challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³⁶
- Fifteen percent of local jurisdictions reported that false or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting was more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Six percent reported that this issue was less challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³⁷
- Twenty percent of local jurisdictions reported that false or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations or requirements was more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Four percent reported that this issue was less challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³⁸
- Eighteen percent of local jurisdictions reported that false or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements was

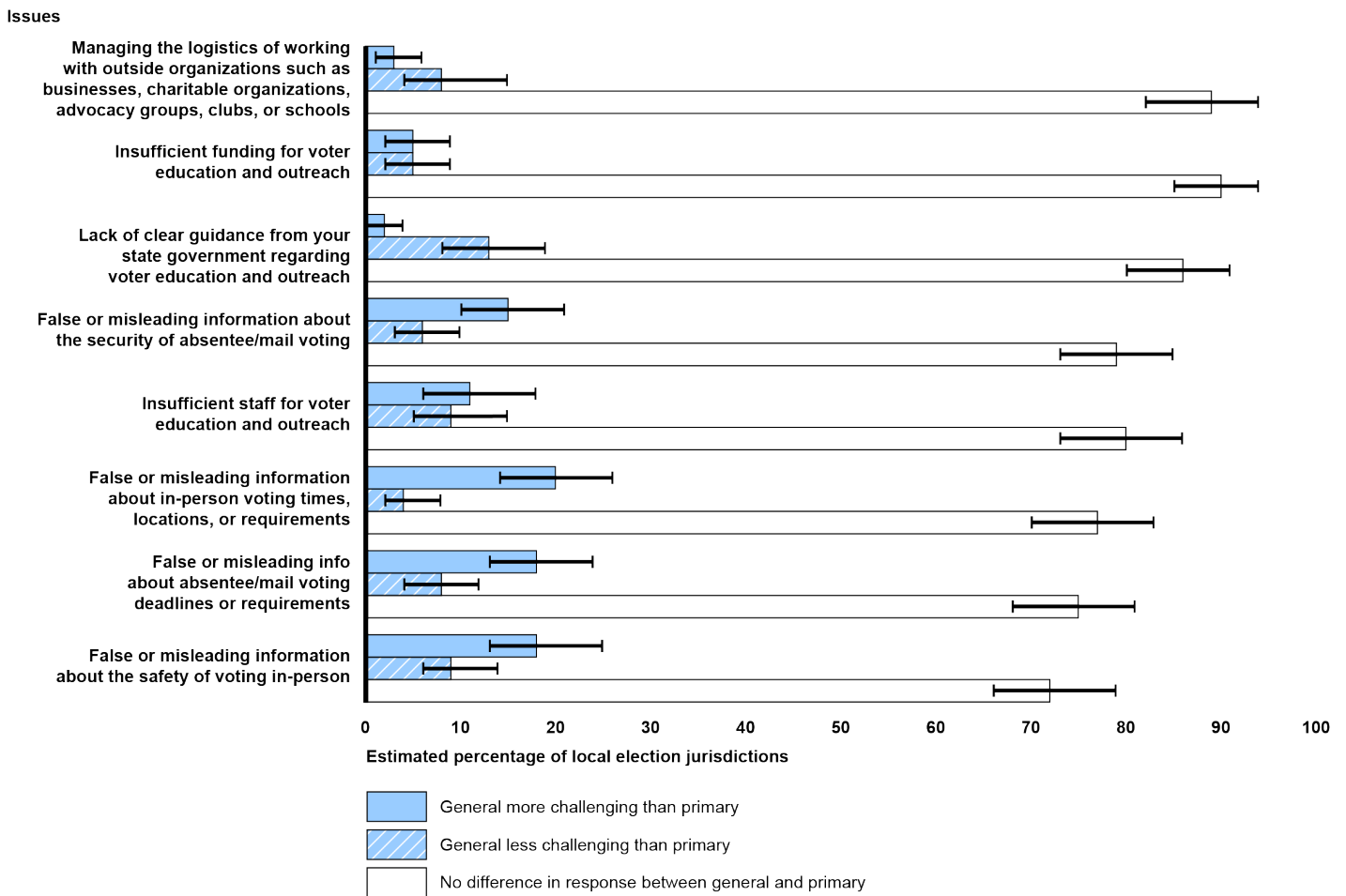
³⁶The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (8, 19) and (0, 4) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

³⁷The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (10, 21) and (3, 10) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

³⁸The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (14, 26) and (2, 8) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

more challenging during the 2020 general election than during the 2020 primary elections. Eight percent reported that this issue was less challenging during the general election than during the primary elections.³⁹

Figure 20: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

³⁹The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (13, 24) and (4, 12) respectively. The difference between these estimates is statistically significant.

Accessible Data for Figure 20: Comparison of Local Election Jurisdiction Responses to Voter Education and Outreach Issues in the 2020 General Election and 2020 Primary Elections (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	General more challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	General less challenging than primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound	No difference in response between general and primary	95% confidence interval—lower bound	95% confidence interval—upper bound
Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations such as businesses, charitable organizations, advocacy groups, clubs, or schools	3	1	6	8	4	15	89	82	94
Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	5	2	9	5	2	9	90	85	94
Lack of clear guidance from your state government regarding voter education and outreach	2	0	4	13	8	19	86	80	91
False or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting	15	10	21	6	3	10	79	73	85
Insufficient staff for voter education and outreach	11	6	18	9	5	15	80	73	86
False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	20	14	26	4	2	8	77	70	83
False or misleading info about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	18	13	24	8	4	12	75	68	81
False or misleading information about the safety of voting in-person	18	13	25	9	6	14	72	66	79

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

With the exception of “lack of clear guidance from your state government regarding voter education and outreach,” “false or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting,” “false or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements,” and “false or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements,” the differences between (1) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting the 2020 general election was more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and (2) the estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions reporting the general election was less challenging than the primary elections were not statistically significant.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to voter education and outreach. The figure does not include responses from local election jurisdictions that selected “not applicable” or “don’t know” or did not respond to these survey questions.

States and Local Jurisdictions Spent CARES Grants on Various Activities; States Found Grant Requirements Challenging and Local Jurisdictions Did Not

States Spent CARES Grants on Supplies, Voter Education, and Absentee/Mail Voting and Found Grant Funding and Reporting Requirements Challenging

Over half of states that responded to our survey reported spending CARES Act grant funds either directly or through subgrants or reimbursements to local jurisdictions on supplies and equipment, voter education, facilitating absentee/mail voting, and recruiting and training election workers for the 2020 elections.⁴⁰ Fewer than half of states reported using CARES Act grant funds to secure additional locations for in-person voting or additional office or storage space. See table 11.

Table 11: Activities on Which State Election Offices Reported Spending CARES Act Grant Funds

Activities	Number of state election offices
Providing supplies for in-person voting, such as personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, physical barriers, or signage	41
Educating voters about their options for voting	37

⁴⁰A subgrant is a grant made under an agency grant by the original award recipient to a subrecipient. In this case, the EAC provided CARES Act grant funds to states, who provided subgrant funds to local jurisdictions to use during the 2020 elections. A reimbursement is a payment received after an agreed upon expense has already been incurred. In this case, the state used CARES Act grant funds to pay local jurisdictions for certain eligible expenses incurred during the 2020 elections.

Activities	Number of state election offices
Facilitating absentee/mail voting, such as mailing applications to voters or prepaying postage	36
Purchasing voting equipment, such as high-speed scanners, automatic mail sorters, or automatic letter openers	31
Providing drop boxes to return absentee/mail ballots	29
Increasing the number of election workers, such as through recruiting efforts or providing additional pay	28
Training election workers	23
Securing additional locations for in-person voting	21
Securing additional office or storage space	17

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

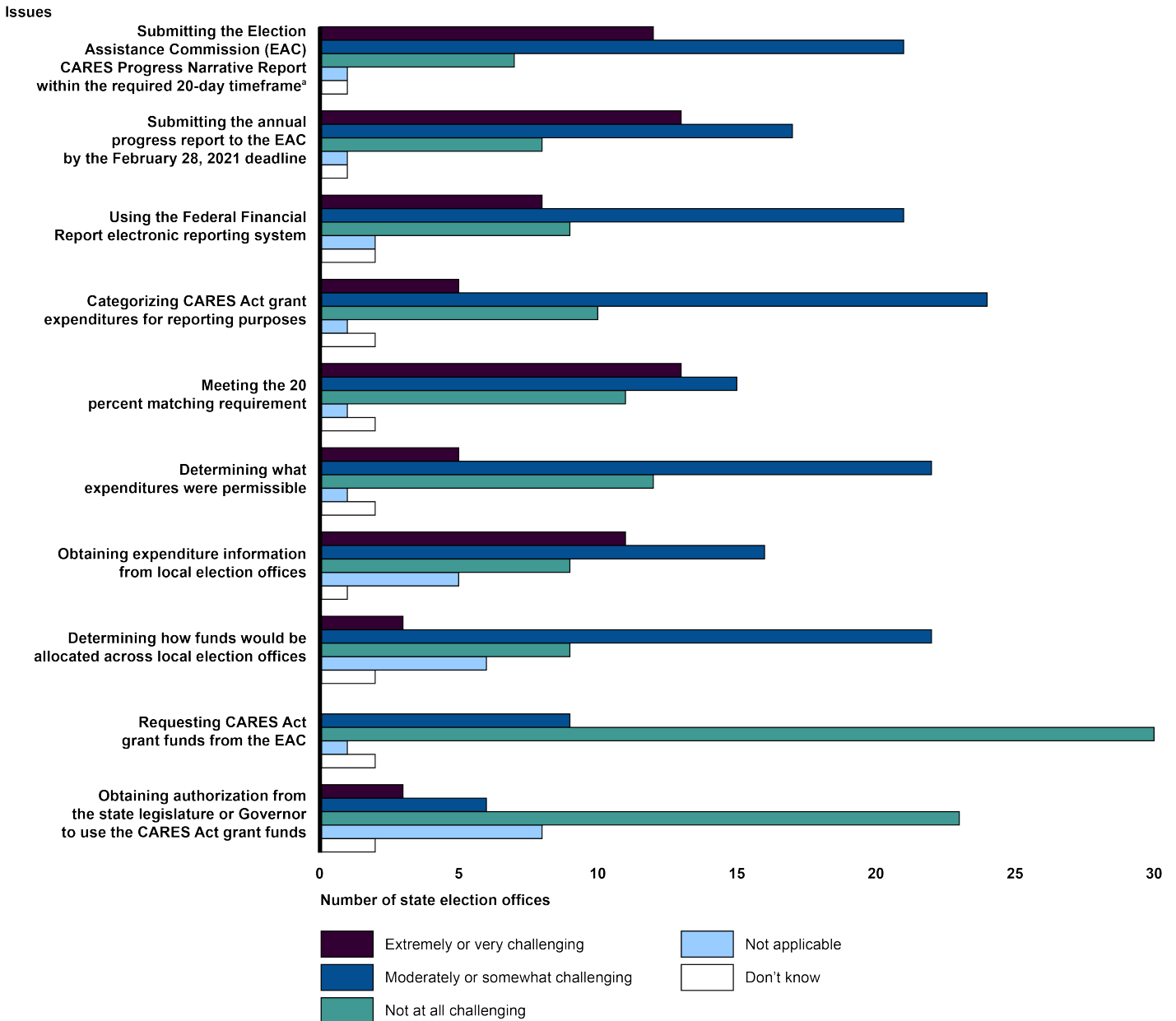
Note: The table is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about CARES Act grant funds.

Most states reported that the majority of issues related to CARES Act grant funding and reporting requirements were challenging,⁴¹ for example, submitting the EAC CARES Act progress narrative report within the required 20-day timeframe.⁴² By contrast, most states reported that requesting CARES Act grant funds from the EAC was not challenging. See figure 21.

⁴¹When presenting survey results regarding how challenging respondents found issues related to CARES Act grant funding and reporting requirements, we aggregated “extremely challenging” and “very challenging” responses, and “moderately challenging” and “somewhat challenging” responses. Additionally, when we report that states or local jurisdictions found selected issues “challenging,” we are referring to the aggregated total of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses.

⁴²These reports are also known as 20-day reports or postelection reports.

Figure 21: State Election Offices' Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 21: State Election Offices’ Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements (Number of state election offices)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	Moderately or somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don’t know
Submitting the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) CARES Progress Narrative Report within the required 20-day timeframe ^a	12	21	7	1	1
Submitting the annual progress report to the EAC by the February 28, 2021 deadline	13	17	8	1	1
Using the Federal Financial Report electronic reporting system	8	21	9	2	2
Categorizing CARES Act grant expenditures for reporting purposes	5	24	10	1	2
Meeting the 20 percent matching requirement	13	15	11	1	2
Determining what expenditures were permissible	5	22	12	1	2
Obtaining expenditure information from local election offices	11	16	9	5	1
Determining how funds would be allocated across local election offices	3	22	9	6	2
Requesting CARES Act grant funds from the EAC	0	9	30	1	2
Obtaining authorization from the state legislature or Governor to use the CARES Act grant funds	3	6	23	8	2

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about challenges related to CARES Act grant funding and reporting requirements.

^aThese reports are also known as 20-day reports or postelection reports.

Local Jurisdictions Spent CARES Grants on Supplies and to Clean Voting Locations, and Did Not Find Grant Funding and Reporting Requirements Challenging

More than half of local jurisdictions reported spending CARES Act grant funds for the 2020 elections on some of the in-person voting activities that we asked about, including purchasing protective supplies and physical barriers, and cleaning and disinfecting voting locations following elections. Less than half of local jurisdictions spent grant funds on the activities we asked about related to absentee/mail voting; recruiting, hiring, and training election workers; and voter education and outreach. See table 12.

Table 12: Activities on Which Local Election Jurisdictions Reported Spending CARES Act Grant Funds

Categories	Activities	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions
Absentee/mail voting	Paying for postage to send absentee/mail ballots	42 (36, 48)
Absentee/mail voting	Paying for postage to send absentee/mail ballot applications	31 (25, 37)
Absentee/mail voting	Printing envelopes for absentee/mail voting	30 (24, 36)
Absentee/mail voting	Paying for prepaid postage for voters to return completed absentee/mail ballots	29 (23, 34)
Absentee/mail voting	Purchasing drop boxes	27 (21, 32)
Absentee/mail voting	Purchasing equipment for absentee/mail voting, such as high-speed scanners, automatic mail sorters, or automatic letter openers	27 (21, 32)
Absentee/mail voting	Reconfiguring election office space to accommodate more staff and social distancing	23 (18, 28)
Absentee/mail voting	Printing absentee/mail ballots	22 (17, 27)
Absentee/mail voting	Printing absentee/mail ballot applications	20 (15, 26)
Absentee/mail voting	Installing drop boxes	14 (10, 19)
Absentee/mail voting	Securing additional locations for absentee/mail ballot processing or storage	6 (4, 10)
Absentee/mail voting	Setting up an electronic system for tracking ballots	5 (2, 8)
Absentee/mail voting	Hiring additional personnel to monitor drop boxes	3 (2, 6)
In-person voting activities	Purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE)	62 (56, 68)
In-person voting activities	Purchasing cleaning supplies	62 (56, 68)
In-person voting activities	Purchasing physical barriers, such as plexiglass or sneeze guards	59 (53, 65)
In-person voting activities	Purchasing hand sanitizer	58 (52, 64)
In-person voting activities	Cleaning and disinfecting voting locations following the primary or general elections	51 (45, 57)

Letter

Categories	Activities	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions
In-person voting activities	Purchasing signage to remind voters to socially distance, such as floor markings	48 (42, 54)
In-person voting activities	Securing additional locations for in-person voting	4 (2, 6)
Office staff or election worker activities	Hiring additional election workers	34 (28, 40)
Office staff or election worker activities	Training election workers	27 (21, 32)
Office staff or election worker activities	Providing additional pay to election workers	25 (19, 30)
Office staff or election worker activities	Hiring additional election office staff	24 (19, 29)
Office staff or election worker activities	Recruiting election workers	15 (11, 20)
Voter education and outreach	Educating voters about their options for voting	19 (15, 24)
Voter education and outreach	Educating voters about policies and procedures for in-person voting	19 (14, 23)
Voter education and outreach	Educating voters about policies and procedures for absentee/mail voting	18 (13, 22)

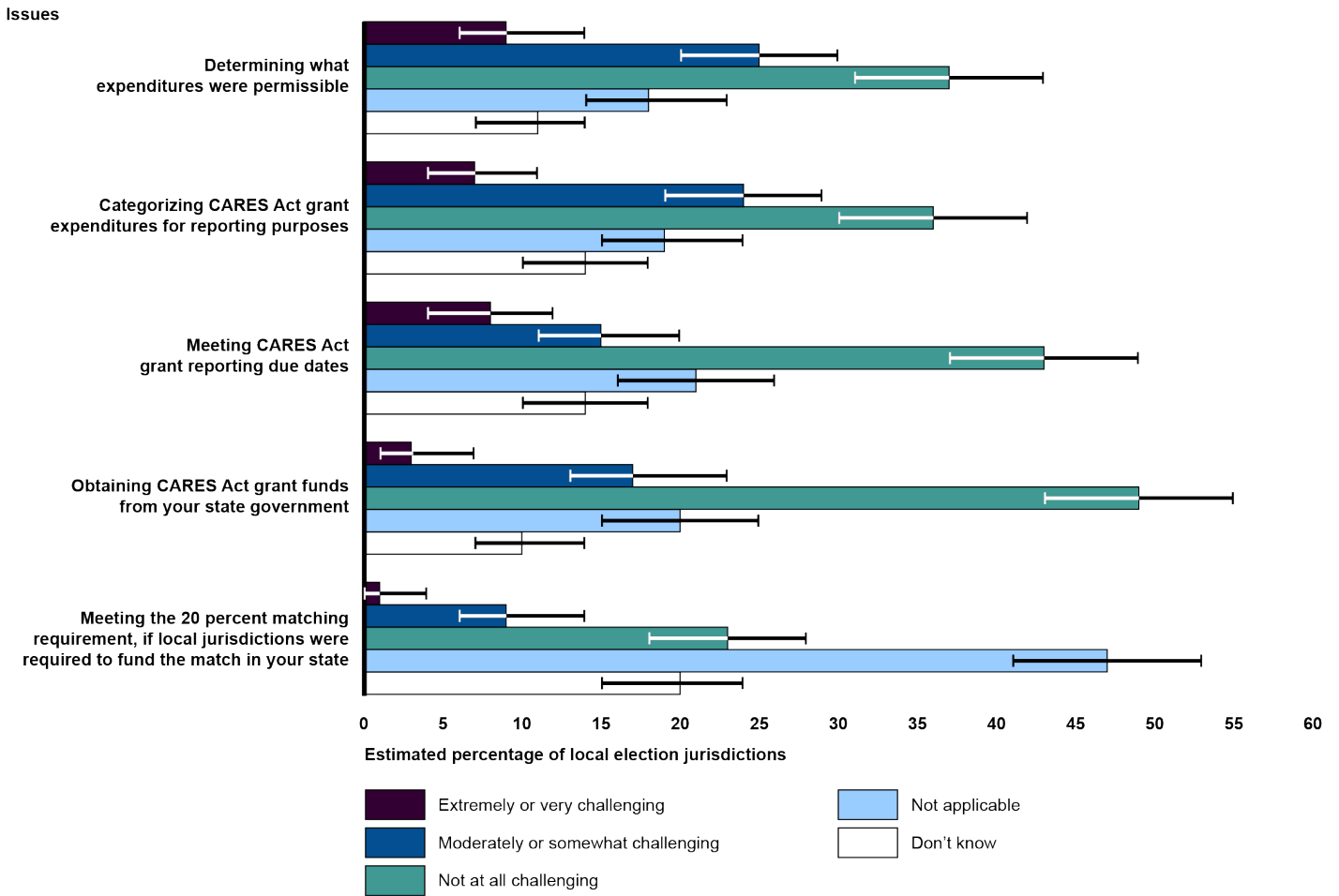
Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Parentheses contain both the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval. The table is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about CARES Act grant funds.

Local jurisdictions generally reported that all issues related to funding and reporting requirements for CARES Act grant funds were not challenging or were not applicable to them.⁴³ However, some local jurisdictions identified determining what expenditures were permissible, categorizing CARES Act grant expenditures for reporting purposes, and meeting CARES Act grant reporting due dates as challenging. See figure 22.

⁴³Local jurisdictions may have reported that the issues we asked about were not applicable to them for various reasons. For example, some local jurisdictions did not receive CARES Act grant funding from their states, including when states purchased items using CARES Act grant funds and distributed those items to the local jurisdictions.

Figure 22: Local Election Jurisdictions' Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 22: Local Election Jurisdictions’ Perspectives on CARES Act Funding and Reporting Requirements (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Issues	Extremely or very challenging	95% confidence interval —lower bound	95% confidence interval —upper bound	Moderately or somewhat challenging	95% confidence interval —lower bound	95% confidence interval —upper bound	Not at all challenging	95% confidence interval —lower bound	95% confidence interval —upper bound	Not applicable	95% confidence interval —lower bound	95% confidence interval —upper bound	Don't know	95% confidence interval —lower bound	95% confidence interval —upper bound
Determining what expenditures were permissible	9	6	14	25	20	30	37	31	43	18	14	23	11	7	14
Categorizing CARES Act grant expenditures for reporting purposes	7	4	11	24	19	29	36	30	42	19	15	24	14	10	18
Meeting CARES Act grant reporting due dates	8	4	12	15	11	20	43	37	49	21	16	26	14	10	18
Obtaining CARES Act grant funds from your state government	3	1	7	17	13	23	49	43	55	20	15	25	10	7	14
Meeting the 20 percent matching requirement, if local jurisdictions were required to fund the match in your state	1	0	4	9	6	14	23	18	28	47	41	53	20	15	24

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Issues are displayed in descending order of most challenging to least challenging, based on the sum of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses for each issue.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about challenges related to CARES Act grant funds. The figure does not include the percentage of local election jurisdictions that did not respond to these survey questions.

Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

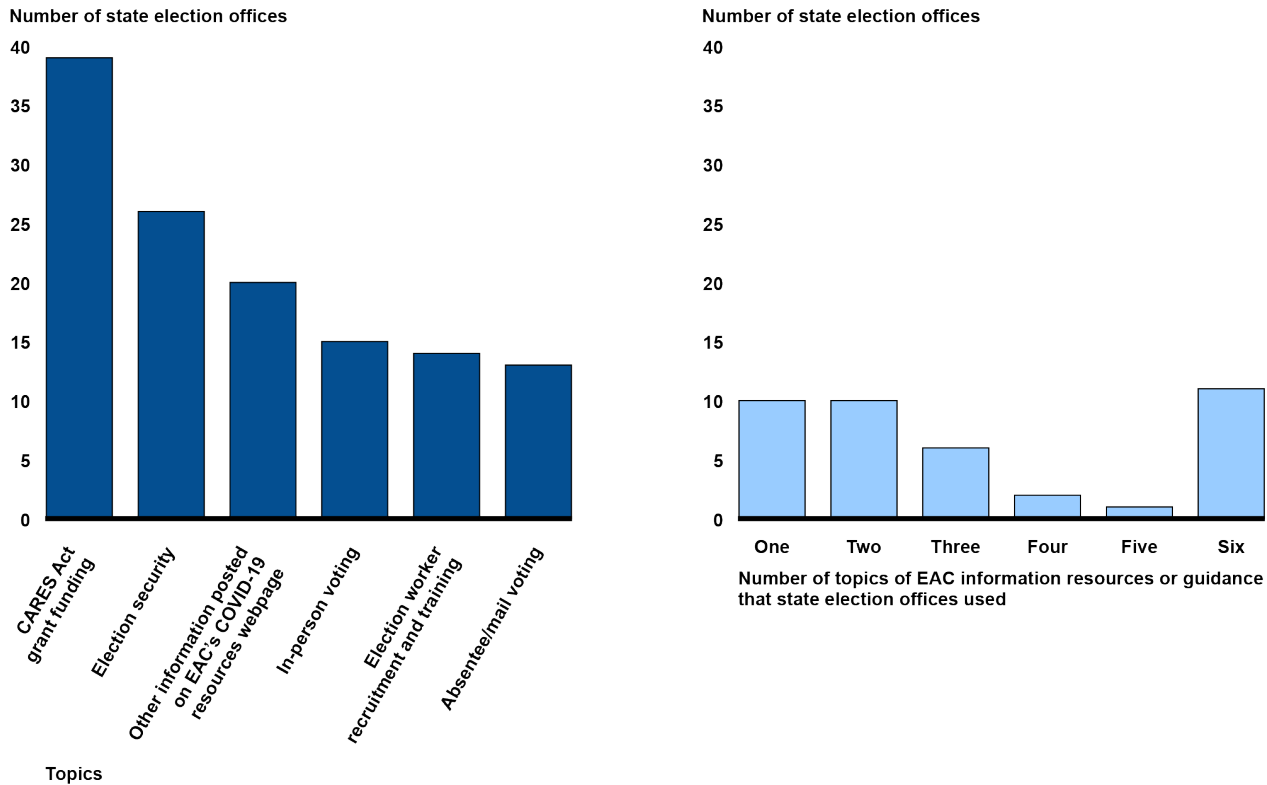
Nearly All States Used EAC Information Resources and Guidance; Local Jurisdictions Commonly Reported They Were Not Aware of or Did Not Need the Information

Nearly All States Used EAC Information Resources or Guidance on Various Topics, and Most Found Them Helpful

Nearly all states that responded to our survey reported that they used EAC information resources or guidance about CARES Act grant funding. Fewer states used EAC information resources or guidance on the other topics we asked about regarding election administration during the pandemic.⁴⁴ Most states used EAC information resources or guidance about two or more of these topics. See figure 23.

⁴⁴In our surveys, we defined EAC information resources and guidance as “documents, instructional materials, webinars, video recordings, links to other agency websites, and any other information made available by the Election Assistance Commission about conducting an election during a pandemic.” We also apply this definition throughout this report.

Figure 23: State Election Offices' Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance by Topic and Number of Resources Used



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 23: State Election Offices' Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance by Topic and Number of Resources Used

Topic	Number of state election offices
CARES Act grant funding	39
Election security	26
Other information posted on EAC's COVID-19 resources webpage	20
In-person voting	15
Election worker recruitment and training	14
Absentee/mail voting	13

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Number of topics of EAC information resources or guidance that state election offices used	Number of state election offices
One	10
Two	10
Three	6
Four	2
Five	1
Six	11

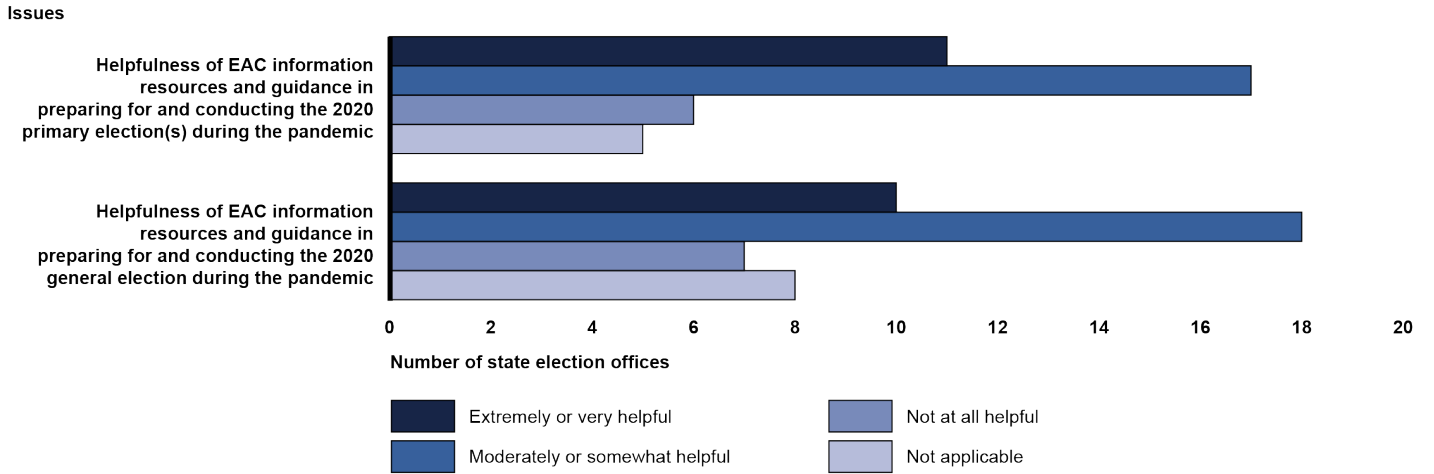
Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about EAC information resources and guidance. Three state election offices responded that they either did not use or did not know if they had used any of the EAC’s information resources or guidance listed in our survey.

We asked states to rate the overall helpfulness of the EAC’s information resources and guidance in preparing for and conducting the 2020 elections during the pandemic. Most states found the EAC’s information resources and guidance helpful during both the 2020 primary elections and the 2020 general election.⁴⁵ (See figure 24.) We compared states’ responses to the questions about the 2020 primary elections to those about the general election. For the majority of states, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how helpful, if at all, were EAC information resources and guidance during the primary elections and during the general election.

⁴⁵We asked states how helpful EAC information resources and guidance were for their offices in the 2020 primary elections and general election—extremely helpful, very helpful, moderately helpful, somewhat helpful, or not at all helpful. When presenting survey results regarding how helpful respondents found EAC resources and guidance, we aggregated “extremely helpful” and “very helpful” responses, and “moderately helpful” and “somewhat helpful” responses. When we report that states or local jurisdictions found EAC information resources and guidance “helpful,” we are referring to the aggregated total of “extremely or very helpful” and “moderately or somewhat helpful” responses.

Figure 24: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to State Election Offices



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 24: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to State Election Offices (Number of state election offices)

Issues	Extremely or very helpful	Moderately or somewhat helpful	Not at all helpful	Not applicable
Helpfulness of EAC information resources and guidance in preparing for and conducting the 2020 primary election(s) during the pandemic	11	17	6	5
Helpfulness of EAC information resources and guidance in preparing for and conducting the 2020 general election during the pandemic	10	18	7	8

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The figure is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about EAC information resources and guidance. Thirty-nine states responded to our question about the helpfulness of EAC information resources during the 2020 primary elections and 43 states responded to our question about the helpfulness of these resources during the 2020 general election.

We asked states to identify the main reason(s) for not using EAC information resources or guidance, if they reported not using EAC resources or guidance in one or more of the topic areas listed in our survey. The most frequently reported reason was that they did not need the resources or guidance. See table 13.

Table 13: Reasons State Election Offices Reported for Not Using U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources or Guidance

Reason	Number of state election offices that selected this reason for not using EAC information resources or guidance
I did not need these resources or guidance	18
The resources or guidance were not available in time to be helpful for my purposes	7
I was not aware the resources or guidance existed	7
The resources or guidance were not relevant to the topics I was interested in	5
The resources or guidance were not available in a useful format	4
The resources or guidance were not clearly written or presented	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The table is based on the 43 states that responded to the closed-ended questions in our state election office survey about EAC information resources and guidance. States had the option to select more than one response when reporting why they did not use EAC information resources or guidance.

Ten of 43 states that responded to our survey reported that they requested technical assistance or additional guidance from the EAC in response to the pandemic during the 2020 primary elections or general election. Seven of those 10 states reported that they were satisfied with

the timeliness of EAC's technical assistance or additional guidance and seven were satisfied with its quality.⁴⁶

Most Local Jurisdictions Did Not Use EAC Information Resources or Guidance; Local Jurisdictions Reported that They Were Not Aware of or Did Not Need the Information

We estimate that most local jurisdictions—65 percent—did not use EAC information resources or guidance on any of the topics listed in our survey to conduct elections during the pandemic.⁴⁷ However, the remaining 35 percent used EAC information resources and guidance on at least one of the topics.⁴⁸ Among the local jurisdictions that used EAC information resources or guidance about at least one topic, nearly all—87 percent—used EAC information resources or guidance about more than one topic.⁴⁹ See figure 25.

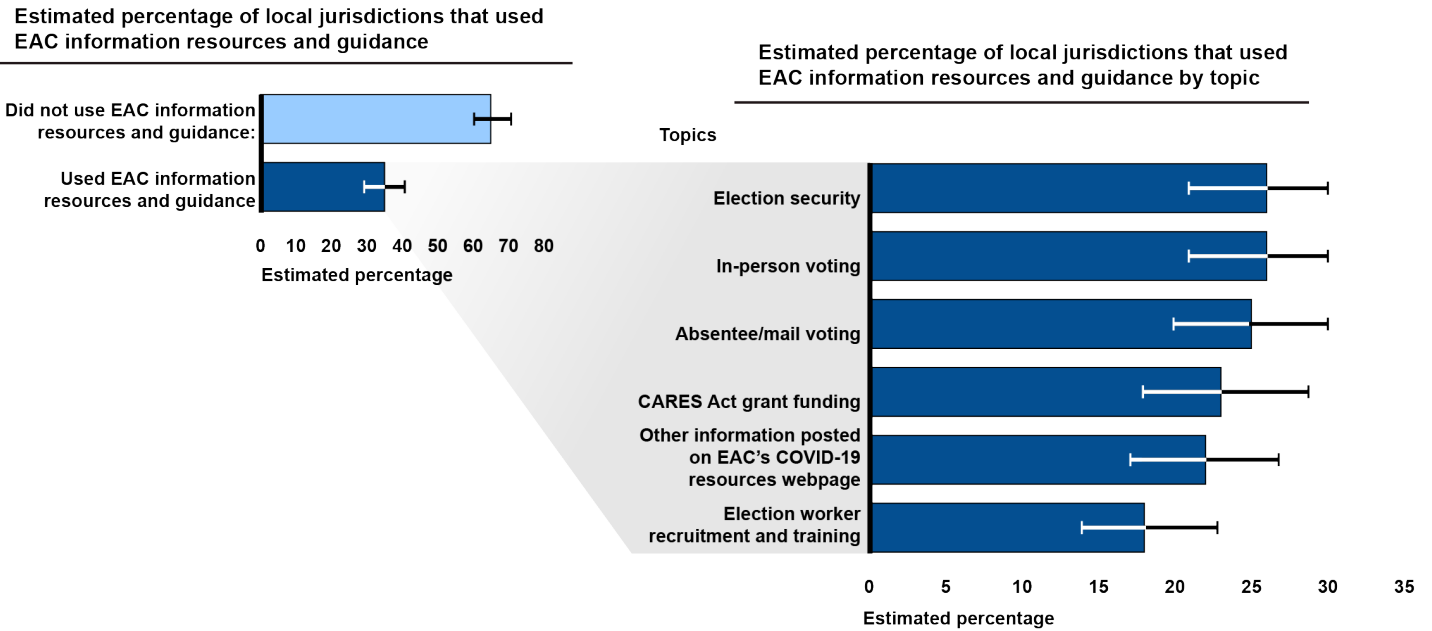
⁴⁶We asked states who reported that they requested technical assistance or additional guidance from the EAC to indicate whether they were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the timeliness and with the quality of the assistance or guidance the EAC provided in response to their request. For the purposes of this report, we aggregated “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” responses, as well as “somewhat dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” responses. One state reported that it was dissatisfied with the timeliness of technical assistance or additional guidance and one state reported that it was dissatisfied with its quality. One state reported that it was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with its timeliness. One state did not respond to our question about timeliness, and two did not respond to our question about quality. Regarding local jurisdictions, 4 out of the 407 jurisdictions that responded to our survey reported that they requested technical assistance or additional guidance from the EAC. Because of this small number, we did not evaluate the extent to which local jurisdictions found technical assistance or additional guidance helpful.

⁴⁷The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (60, 71).

⁴⁸The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (29, 41).

⁴⁹The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (78, 94).

Figure 25: Local Election Jurisdictions’ Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance and Use by Topic



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 25: Local Election Jurisdictions’ Use of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance and Use by Topic

Estimated percentage of local jurisdictions that used EAC information resources and guidance	Estimated percentage	95% confidence interval, lower and upper bound
Did not use EAC information resources and guidance:	65	60, 71
Used EAC information resources and guidance	35	29, 40

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Estimated percentage of local jurisdictions that used EAC information resources and guidance by topic	Of those that used EAC information resources and guidance, estimated percentage of local jurisdictions that used EAC information resources and guidance by topic	95% confidence interval, lower and upper bound
Election Security	26	20, 31
In-person voting	26	20, 31
Absentee/mail voting	25	20, 30
CARES Act grant funding	23	18, 29

Estimated percentage of local jurisdictions that used EAC information resources and guidance by topic	Of those that used EAC information resources and guidance, estimated percentage of local jurisdictions that used EAC information resources and guidance by topic	95% confidence interval, lower and upper bound
Other information posted on EAC's COVID-19 resources webpage	22	17, 27
Election worker recruitment and training	18	14, 23

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about EAC information resources and guidance. The figure does not include the percentage of local election jurisdictions that did not respond to these survey questions.

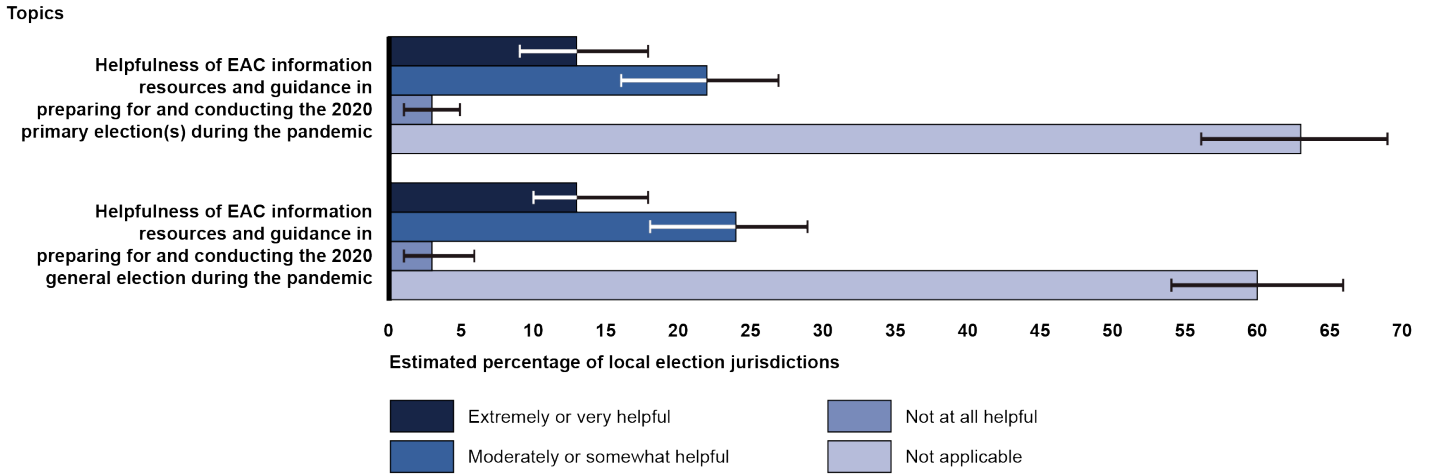
Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

When we asked respondents how helpful they found the EAC information resources and guidance in preparing for and conducting elections during the pandemic, the most common response we received was “not applicable.”⁵⁰ The next most common response was that EAC information resources and guidance were moderately or somewhat helpful during the primary elections and the general election. (See figure 26.) We compared local jurisdictions’ responses to the questions about the 2020 primary elections to those about the 2020 general election.⁵¹ For the majority of local jurisdictions, there was no difference in their responses to questions about how helpful, if at all, EAC information resources and guidance were during the primary elections, and during the general election.

⁵⁰Our survey did not ask local jurisdictions why they selected certain responses to survey questions. However, local jurisdictions may have selected “not applicable” to survey questions about the helpfulness of EAC information resources and guidance because most did not use EAC information resources or guidance.

⁵¹We asked local jurisdictions how helpful EAC resources and guidance were for their offices in the 2020 primary elections and general election—extremely helpful, very helpful, moderately helpful, somewhat helpful, not at all helpful. When presenting survey results regarding how helpful respondents found EAC resources and guidance, we aggregated “extremely helpful” and “very helpful” responses, and “moderately helpful” and “somewhat helpful” responses.

Figure 26: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to Local Election Jurisdictions



Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Accessible Data for Figure 26: Helpfulness of U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance During the 2020 Primary and General Elections, According to Local Election Jurisdictions (Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions)

Topics	Extremely or very helpful	95% confidence interval —upper bound	95% confidence interval —lower bound	Moderately or somewhat helpful	95% confidence interval —upper bound	95% confidence interval —lower bound	Not at all helpful	95% confidence interval —upper bound	95% confidence interval —lower bound	Not applicable	95% confidence interval —upper bound	95% confidence interval —lower bound
Helpfulness of EAC information resources and guidance in preparing for and conducting the 2020 primary election(s) during the pandemic	13	18	9	22	27	16	3	5	1	63	69	56
Helpfulness of EAC information resources and guidance in preparing for and conducting the 2020 general election during the pandemic	13	18	10	24	29	18	3	6	1	60	66	54

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Brackets in figure contain 95 percent confidence intervals.

The figure is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about EAC information resources and guidance.

The most common reasons cited by local jurisdictions for not using EAC information resources or guidance were that local jurisdictions were not aware that the information resources or guidance existed or that they did not need the information resources or guidance. A small percentage of local jurisdictions selected any of the other four reasons listed in our survey, as shown in table 14.

Table 14: Reasons Local Election Jurisdictions Reported for Not Using U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources or Guidance

Reason	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions that selected this reason for not using EAC information resources or guidance
I was not aware the resources or guidance existed	37 (31, 42)
I did not need these resources or guidance	36 (30, 42)
The resources or guidance were not relevant to the topics I was interested in	3 (1, 7)
The resources or guidance were not available in time to be helpful for my purposes	2 (1, 5)
The resources or guidance were not clearly written or presented	2 (1, 5)
The resources or guidance were not available in a useful format	1 (0, 3)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Notes: Parentheses contain both the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval. The table is based on responses to the closed-ended questions in our local election jurisdiction survey about EAC information resources and guidance. Local jurisdictions had the option to select more than one response when reporting why they did not use EAC information resources or guidance.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to the EAC and the Department of Homeland Security for review and comment. Neither the EAC nor the Department of Homeland Security had formal written comments on the draft report, as noted in emails received from the agencies on June 10 and June 21, 2022, respectively. The Department of Homeland Security provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Executive Director of the EAC, and the Secretary of Homeland Security. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8777 or gablerr@gao.gov. Contact points for our

Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff members who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Gambler". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Rebecca Gambler
Director, Homeland Security and Justice

List of Committees

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Chairman
The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Chair
The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Leader
Committee on Energy and Commerce
House of Representatives

List of Committees Continued

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman

The Honorable John Katko
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman

The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chair

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Republican Leader
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report addresses the following questions:

1. What steps did states and local jurisdictions take to prepare for and conduct elections in 2020 during the pandemic, and what challenges did officials report?
2. How did states and local jurisdictions report using CARES Act grant funding, and what challenges did officials report?
3. What U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) resources and guidance did states and local jurisdictions use during the pandemic, and what were their perspectives on such assistance?

Our scope focused on obtaining information and perspectives from state and local election officials. Thus, to address these three objectives, we conducted two web-based surveys of election officials—one of state election officials and one of local election officials—and this report presents the results of those surveys. Based on this scope, we did not conduct follow-up work on the survey results with federal agencies, such as the EAC and the Department of Homeland Security.

State Election Office Survey

We surveyed state election officials in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.¹ We received 43 completed questionnaires for an 84 percent response rate. We conducted pretests of our draft state questionnaire by telephone with election officials from five states with varying election system characteristics, such as policies on absentee/mail voting, the size of the electorate, geographic region, and whether local election responsibilities are delegated generally to county governments or to sub-county governmental units.² We also considered whether the state had held a presidential primary on or after March 13, 2020, when the

¹When reporting survey results, we use the term “states” in reference to the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

²In six states with county-run elections, selected cities within the states are responsible for administering elections. Nine states delegate election responsibilities to sub-county governmental units, rather than to counties.

President declared a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We used these pretests to help further refine our questions, develop new questions, clarify any ambiguous portions of the survey, and identify any potentially biased questions, and made revisions, as necessary.

Prior to fielding our state election office survey, we contacted the state election directors to confirm the contact information for an appropriate official to complete the survey, whether themselves or a designee. We launched our web-based state election office survey in May 2021 and collected responses online through August 2021. To encourage response, we sent pre-notification emails prior to launching the survey, and during fielding, followed up multiple times with non-respondents by both phone and e-mail. The total number of responses to individual questions may be fewer than 43, depending upon how many respondents were eligible or chose to respond to a particular question. For example, we did not ask survey respondents who indicated that their state did not hold a primary election during the pandemic subsequent questions related to conducting primary elections during the pandemic.

All sample surveys are subject to sampling error—that is, the extent to which the survey results differ from what would have been obtained if the whole population had been observed. Sampling errors are not relevant to our state election office survey because we surveyed the entire population of interest. However, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors. For example, differences in how a particular question is interpreted, the sources of information available to respondents, or the types of people who do not respond can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results, which is generally referred to as non-sampling error.

We took numerous steps in questionnaire development, data collection, and the editing and analysis of the state election office survey data to minimize non-sampling errors. For example, to inform the development of our questionnaire, we reviewed some of our previous surveys and work related to this issue area.³ We interviewed election subject matter experts

³See, for example, GAO, *Elections: Observations on Wait Times for Voters on Election Day 2012*, [GAO-14-850](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 30, 2014), *Voters with Disabilities: Observations on Polling Place Accessibility and Related Federal Guidance [Reissued on December 4, 2017]*, [GAO-18-4](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 3, 2017), and *Elections: Observations on Voting Equipment Use and Replacement*, [GAO-18-294](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 11, 2018).

and representatives from organizations in the field of election administration to obtain their views and perspectives on potential issues and subject areas to consider covering in our questionnaire. Additionally, we examined the survey results and performed computer analyses to identify inconsistencies and other indications of error. A second, independent analyst checked the accuracy of all computer analyses.

Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

In addition to the survey of state election officials, we conducted a web-based survey of local election officials.⁴ We selected a nationally representative statistical sample of 829 local election jurisdictions. For the local election jurisdiction survey, we received 407 completed questionnaires for an overall weighted response rate of 47 percent.⁵

To identify the universe of local election jurisdictions for the 2020 federal elections, we utilized the population frame previously developed for the survey of local election officials conducted for [GAO-18-294](#).⁶ For the nine states that delegate election responsibilities to sub-county governmental units, known by the U.S. Census Bureau as Minor Civil Divisions (MCDs), we compared the list of MCDs from the [GAO-18-294](#) survey population frame with 2019 Census MCD data for these states to identify all mergers and splits which had occurred over the intervening years and updated the

⁴For the purposes of this report, we refer to this survey as the “local election jurisdiction survey.”

⁵We used a weighted response rate because our survey sample incorporates strata with different probabilities of selection. A weighted response rate more accurately reflects the statistical effect of differing probabilities of selection. To calculate our weighted response rate, we used a standard definition, known as RR2, from the American Association for Public Opinion Research. See American Association for Public Opinion Research, *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*, 9th edition (2016). All survey results presented in the body of this report are generalizable to the population of local election jurisdictions, except where otherwise noted.

⁶For the survey that was administered for [GAO-18-294](#), we constructed our nationwide sample frame of all local election jurisdictions using 2010 decennial census data and information on local jurisdictions from state election office websites.

local jurisdiction population file accordingly.⁷ In states with cities that are independent election jurisdictions, we checked the state government websites to determine whether any changes had occurred between the 2016 and 2020 elections.⁸ There are about 10,300 local election jurisdictions nationwide that are responsible for conducting elections.

To account for the variation in the characteristics of local election jurisdictions nationwide, we stratified the population frame by type of jurisdiction, population size, and whether it was located in an urban or rural area.⁹ Due to the much greater number of Midwestern MCDs, we separated Midwestern MCDs from New England MCDs in order to guarantee geographic coverage in the sample. The total number of strata is 33 because some combinations did not apply to any local election jurisdictions, such as a rural county with a population of over 1 million. See table 15.

Table 15: Stratification of Local Election Jurisdictions for Sample

Stratum Number	Stratum	Stratum Population	Sample Size
1	County/City 1,000,000 < Population - URBAN	33	11
2	County/City 500,000 < Pop <= 1,000,000 - URBAN	74	24
3	County/City 100,000 < Pop <= 500,000 - URBAN	394	129

⁷Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont in New England and Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin in the Midwest administer their elections at the MCD level. Of the remainder, 41 states do so at the county or city-equivalent level. The District of Columbia is also treated as a county/city equivalent for sampling purposes. Alaska is organized into four election districts; for sampling purposes, the state is also included with the 41 county/city-equivalent states and the District of Columbia.

⁸In Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New York, and Virginia, selected cities are responsible for administering elections. Examples of cities that are separate election jurisdictions from the counties surrounding them include Baltimore in Maryland, and Kansas City and St. Louis in Missouri; 37 of the 133 jurisdictions in Virginia are cities. New York City is a single election jurisdiction that combines the five counties, or boroughs, that constitute the city.

⁹To identify jurisdictions located in a rural area, we used the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service’s Rural-Urban Continuum Code system, which classifies counties into a nine-category continuum based on their characteristics and location relative to metropolitan areas. The urban stratum was defined as all local election jurisdictions located in a county with a Rural-Urban Continuum code of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. The rural stratum was defined as all local election jurisdictions that were counties with a code of 7, 8, or 9. Minor Civil Divisions were assigned based upon the coding of the county in which they were located.

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Stratum Number	Stratum	Stratum Population	Sample Size
4	County/City 50,000 < Pop <= 100,000 - URBAN	341	57
5	County/City 50,000 < Pop <= 100,000 - RURAL	5	3
6	County/City 25,000 < Pop <= 50,000 - URBAN	464	79
7	County/City 25,000 < Pop <= 50,000 - RURAL	86	16
8	County/City 10,000 < Pop <= 25,000 - URBAN	441	19
9	County/City 10,000 < Pop <= 25,000 - RURAL	331	23
10	County/City 1,000 < Pop <= 10,000 - URBAN	114	6
11	County/City 1,000 < Pop <= 10,000 - RURAL	496	34
12	County/City 0 < Pop <= 1,000 - URBAN	1	1
13	County/City 0 < Pop <= 1,000 - RURAL	30	3
14	New England MCD (Minor Civil Division) 500,000 < Pop <= 1,000,000 - URBAN	1	1
15	New England MCD 100,000 < Pop <= 500,000 - URBAN	11	4
16	New England MCD 50,000 < Pop <= 100,000 - URBAN	39	7
17	New England MCD 25,000 < Pop <= 50,000 - URBAN	92	16
18	New England MCD 10,000 < Pop <= 25,000 - URBAN	214	10
19	New England MCD 10,000 < Pop <= 25,000 - RURAL	4	3
20	New England MCD 1,000 < Pop <= 10,000 - URBAN	642	27
21	New England MCD 1,000 < Pop <= 10,000 - RURAL	158	11
22	New England MCD 0 < Pop <= 1,000 - URBAN	196	9
23	New England MCD 0 < Pop <= 1,000 - RURAL	175	13
24	Midwest MCD 500,000 < Pop <= 1,000,000 - URBAN	2	2
25	Midwest MCD 100,000 < Pop <= 500,000 - URBAN	11	4
26	Midwest MCD 50,000 < Pop <= 100,000 - URBAN	46	9
27	Midwest MCD 25,000 < Pop <= 50,000 - URBAN	84	14
28	Midwest MCD 10,000 < Pop <= 25,000 - URBAN	230	10
29	Midwest MCD 10,000 < Pop <= 25,000 - RURAL	8	3
30	Midwest MCD 1,000 < Pop <= 10,000 - URBAN	1871	79
31	Midwest MCD 1,000 < Pop <= 10,000 - RURAL	396	27
32	Midwest MCD 0 < Pop <= 1,000 - URBAN	1941	81
33	Midwest MCD 0 < Pop <= 1,000 - RURAL	1405	94
	Total	10336	829

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104731

Our initial sample size was designed to achieve a margin of error of no greater than plus or minus 8 percentage points for an attribute measure at the 95 percent level of confidence when making population estimates for urban local election jurisdictions, rural local election jurisdictions, and

local election jurisdiction size.¹⁰ To adjust for expected non-response, we increased the initial stratum sample sizes upward using an assumed response rate of 70 percent to arrive at our final sample size. This resulted in several small strata becoming certainty strata, where all members of the stratum population were selected into the sample.

After selecting the jurisdictions to be included in our survey sample, we obtained contact information for the chief election official within the jurisdictions selected.¹¹ To do this, we first collected contact information for local election jurisdictions from state election office websites and other publicly available sources. We then called the jurisdiction offices directly to confirm the accuracy of the information and the appropriate official and e-mail address to which we should send the survey URL and the respondent's login information for the questionnaire. We learned that some MCDs in Minnesota contract with their respective counties to carry out election administration responsibilities. In these cases, we sent the questionnaire for the MCD to the appropriate county official for completion.¹² We launched the web-based local election official survey in May 2021, and collected responses online through August 2021.¹³ We emailed login information for the survey to the relevant election official of each sampled jurisdiction. In June and July 2021, we conducted follow-up with non-respondents by phone and e-mail.¹⁴

¹⁰We aggregated the strata by population size into 3 categories. Jurisdictions with 25,000 or fewer inhabitants were categorized as small, jurisdictions with 25,001 – 100,000 inhabitants were categorized as medium, and jurisdictions with a population of 100,001 or more were categorized as large.

¹¹In some states, multiple local officials are responsible for administering elections. For example, in New York, county boards of elections have commissioners from both major political parties. We contacted both and confirmed which of them should receive the survey or obtained a shared email address they asked us to use.

¹²We did this for 38 Minnesota MCDs.

¹³We mailed a paper copy of the survey to seven jurisdictions that indicated they could not complete the survey in its web-based format.

¹⁴After launching the local election jurisdiction survey, we learned that questions 8 and 10 in the questionnaire incorrectly asked about how challenging issues were for the state election office rather than the local election office. We corrected the question wording and emailed respondents who may have previously seen the incorrect wording to encourage them to review their responses for accuracy. When analyzing responses to these questions, we excluded respondents who responded before the correction unless they confirmed the accuracy of their response, such as by reopening the survey or contacting the survey team. Based on this, we excluded 44 respondents for questions 8 and 10.

All sample surveys are subject to sampling error—that is, the extent to which the survey results differ from what would have been obtained if the whole population had been observed. Because we followed a probability procedure based on random selections, our sample is one of a large number of samples that we might have drawn. Since each sample could have provided different estimates, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular sample’s results as a 95 percent confidence interval (for example, plus or minus 8 percentage points). This is the interval that would contain the actual population value for 95 percent of the samples we could have drawn. Confidence intervals are provided with each sample estimate in the report. All survey results presented in the body of this report are generalizable to the population of local election jurisdictions, except where otherwise noted. We tested for statistical response bias using logistic regression models on available administrative variables, and did not find any statistical response bias. We adjusted the base sampling weights for nonresponse within each stratum.

In addition to the reported sampling errors, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce non-sampling errors—as discussed above in relation to the state election office survey—and we took similar steps with the local election jurisdiction survey as we did with the state election office survey to minimize these errors. We also pretested the draft questionnaire by telephone with officials in five local election jurisdictions (four counties and one MCD) in five states representing a variety of policies on absentee/mail voting, population sizes, and timing of primary elections. These pretests included some jurisdictions that held elections before and some that held elections after the President declared a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 13, 2020. We used these pretests and reviews to further refine our questions, develop new questions, clarify any ambiguous portions of the questionnaire, and identify any potentially biased questions, and made revisions, as necessary. We conducted computer analyses to identify any inconsistencies in response patterns or other indications of questionnaire response errors. All computer syntax was peer reviewed and verified by separate programmers to ensure that the syntax had been written and executed correctly.

Survey Topics and Reporting Decisions

For our first objective, we conducted our state election office survey and local election jurisdiction survey as described above to obtain information on steps state and local election officials took regarding absentee/mail

voting and in-person voting; obtaining election supplies; recruiting and training staff and election workers; and conducting voter education and outreach efforts.¹⁵ We also asked respondents to comment in open-ended survey questions about aspects of the 2020 elections that they thought went particularly well. We reviewed all of the responses and included two responses that were unique for each area (i.e., absentee/mail voting, in-person voting, election supplies, election worker recruitment and training, and voter education and outreach) from the state election office survey and the local election jurisdiction survey. In reporting these examples, we attempted to use the exact wording of the open-ended response if possible, but also edited the selected responses for concision and clarity, and to ensure anonymity of the responding states or local jurisdictions.

We also asked respondents whether issues related to each of these various election activities were challenging to them. When presenting survey results regarding how challenging respondents found these issues, we aggregated “extremely challenging” and “very challenging” responses, and “moderately challenging” and “somewhat challenging” responses. Additionally, when we report that states or local jurisdictions found selected issues “challenging,” we are referring to the aggregated total of “extremely or very challenging” and “moderately or somewhat challenging” responses.

For all of the survey questions on reported challenges associated with these election activities, we compared responses to survey questions about challenges in the 2020 general election to similar questions about the 2020 primary elections. When reporting these results for the state election office survey, we highlight those issues for which the difference is 5 or greater in the number of states that found the 2020 general election more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and the number that found the general election less challenging than the primary elections. When reporting these results for the local election jurisdiction survey, we highlight those issues for which the difference in the estimated percentage of respondents that found the 2020 general election more challenging than the 2020 primary elections and the estimated

¹⁵The state election office survey questionnaire and aggregated responses for each closed-ended question are included in appendix II. The local election jurisdiction survey questionnaire and aggregated responses for each closed-ended question are included in appendix III.

percentage that found the general election less challenging than the primary elections was statistically significant.

For our second objective, we conducted our state election office survey and local election jurisdiction survey as described above to obtain information about states' and local jurisdictions' use of grant funding provided by the CARES Act.¹⁶ When presenting survey results regarding how challenging respondents found issues related to CARES Act grant funding and reporting requirements, we aggregated "extremely challenging" and "very challenging" responses, and "moderately challenging" and "somewhat challenging" responses. Additionally, when we report that states or local jurisdictions found selected issues "challenging," we are referring to the aggregated total of "extremely or very challenging" and "moderately or somewhat challenging" responses.

For our third objective, we conducted our state election office survey and local election jurisdiction survey as described above to obtain information about states' and local jurisdictions' use of EAC information resources and guidance. When presenting survey results regarding how helpful respondents found EAC information resources and guidance, we aggregated "extremely helpful" and "very helpful" responses, and "moderately helpful" and "somewhat helpful" responses. Additionally, when we report that states or local jurisdictions found EAC information resources and guidance "helpful," we are referring to the aggregated total of "extremely or very helpful" and "moderately or somewhat helpful" responses. We also compared responses to survey questions about how helpful respondents found EAC information resources and guidance in the 2020 primary elections to a similar question about the 2020 general election.

We also asked states and local jurisdictions who reported that they requested technical assistance or additional guidance from the EAC to indicate how satisfied they were with the timeliness and quality of the assistance or guidance the EAC provided in response to their request. For the purposes of this report, we aggregated "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses, as well as "somewhat dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied" responses. When we report that states were "satisfied" with technical assistance or additional guidance provided by the EAC, we

¹⁶See Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281, 530 (2020).

are referring to the aggregated total of “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” responses.

For all three objectives, for the purpose of reporting results of the state election office survey, “nearly all” refers to responses given by 35 to 43 states, “most” to responses given by 26 to 34 states, “many” to responses given by 18 to 25 states, “some” to responses given by 9 to 17 states, and “few” to responses given by 1 to 8 states.

For the purpose of reporting results of the local election jurisdiction survey, “nearly all” refers to responses given by an estimated 81 to 100 percent of local jurisdictions, “most” to responses given by 61 to 80 percent of local jurisdictions, “many” to responses given by 41 to 60 percent of local jurisdictions, “some” to responses given by 21 to 40 percent of local jurisdictions, and “a small percentage” to responses given by 1 to 20 percent of local jurisdictions. Unless noted otherwise, the estimates we report from the local election jurisdiction survey responses are national-level estimates representing the experiences, views, and opinions of all local election jurisdictions nationwide.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2020 to July 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

We conducted a web-based survey of state-level election offices in the 50 states and the District of Columbia to obtain information on (1) the steps states took to prepare for and conduct elections in 2020 during the pandemic, and what reported challenges officials faced, (2) how states reported using CARES Act grant funding,¹ and what challenges they reported facing, and (3) what U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) resources and guidance states used during the pandemic, and their perspectives on such assistance.² Our survey was composed of closed-ended and open-ended questions. In this appendix, we include all survey questions and results of responses to the closed-ended questions. We do not provide information on responses provided to open-ended questions that required manually entered text responses. The tables below represent the frequencies of state responses to the questions. We received surveys from 43 states (an 84 percent response rate), while 8 states did not respond. However, the total number of responses to individual questions may be fewer than 43, depending upon how many states were eligible or chose to respond to a particular question. For a more detailed discussion of our methodology, see appendix I.

Background

Table 16: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 1

Did your state conduct a primary election—either a presidential preference primary or a primary for congressional offices—on or after March 13, 2020 when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared?

	Number of state election offices
Yes	39
No	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

¹See Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281, 530 (2020).

²For the purpose of this appendix, we refer to the 50 states and the District of Columbia collectively as “states.”

Absentee/Mail Voting

Table 17: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 2

Prior to the 2020 election(s), did your state—or any jurisdiction in your state—use an all vote-by-mail system (i.e., send a mail ballot to all registered or active registered voters)?

	Number of state election offices
Yes	8
No	31

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Table 18: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 2 Part II

Was the vote-by-mail system used statewide, or only in certain jurisdictions?

	Number of state election offices
Statewide	4
Only in certain jurisdictions	4

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 19: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 3

Did your **state election office** take any of the following steps in relation to **absentee/mail voting** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your local election offices) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Coordinated with the United States Postal Service	39	2	2	0
b. Set up a system to allow voters to track the status of their absentee/mail ballots	33	4	6	0
c. Consulted with vendors regarding absentee/mail voting	33	7	3	0
d. Consulted with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other states—regarding absentee/mail voting	28	11	3	1
e. Developed and distributed guidance on absentee/mail voting to local election offices	39	0	3	0
f. Distributed guidance on absentee/mail voting developed by other organizations or agencies to local elections offices	16	22	3	1
g. Worked with state legislators to make changes to absentee/mail voting requirements	20	18	4	0
h. Worked with the Governor's office or other executives to make changes to absentee/mail voting requirements	25	15	2	0

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

Table 20: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 4

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 primary election(s) in relation to **absentee/mail voting**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	5	11	7	5	4	5	1
b. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) on absentee/mail voting	1	2	4	2	17	11	1
c. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies on absentee/mail voting	1	1	3	3	19	10	1
d. Limited state or local election official experience with absentee/mail voting	0	2	4	14	10	7	0
e. Limited voter experience with absentee/mail voting	2	7	8	11	8	2	0
f. Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	1	2	6	5	16	7	1
g. Responding to litigation related to absentee/mail voting	1	8	5	7	4	12	0

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
h. Changes made to absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	3	6	2	9	2	16	0
i. State requirements regarding when localities may begin counting absentee/mail ballots	1	3	3	5	20	6	0
j. Concerns about the United States Postal Service's ability to deliver absentee/mail ballot applications and/or absentee/mail ballots in a timely manner	7	9	5	11	5	1	0
k. Other	0	0	2	0	0	16	2

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

Table 21: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 5

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 general election in relation to absentee/mail voting?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	8	10	8	6	6	3	1
b. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) on absentee/mail voting	1	2	4	2	18	14	1
c. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies on absentee/mail voting	0	2	4	2	22	11	1
d. Limited state or local election official experience with absentee/mail voting	1	3	5	16	12	5	0
e. Limited voter experience with absentee/mail voting	3	6	10	10	10	3	0
f. Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	1	4	5	5	17	9	1
g. Responding to litigation related to absentee/mail voting	2	8	8	4	5	14	0

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
h. Changes made to absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	4	7	2	8	6	15	0
i. State requirements regarding when localities may begin counting absentee/mail ballots	2	3	4	6	19	7	0
j. Concerns about the United States Postal Service's ability to deliver absentee/mail ballot applications and/or absentee/mail ballots in a timely manner	7	14	5	10	4	1	0
k. Other	0	0	0	0	1	18	4

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

In-Person Voting

Table 22: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 6

Did your **state election office** take any of the following steps in relation to **in-person voting** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your local election offices) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

We will ask in a later section about steps your office took to assist local election offices in obtaining specific election supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Coordinated with state, regional, or local emergency management agencies about in-person voting	34	6	3	0
b. Coordinated with state, regional, or local public health agencies about in-person voting	35	4	3	1

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
c. Used National Guard personnel to assist with in-person voting	8	31	3	1
d. Consulted with vendors regarding in-person voting	26	14	2	0
e. Consulted with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other states—regarding in-person voting	26	13	3	0
f. Assisted local election offices in adding new polling locations or voting centers, such as at sports arenas or other large venues	26	12	4	1
g. Worked with state legislators to make changes to in-person voting requirements during the pandemic	16	20	5	1
h. Worked with the Governor's office or other executives to make changes to in-person voting requirements during the pandemic	24	13	3	0

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

Table 23: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 7

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **in-person voting**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will ask in a later section about challenges related to election supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) regarding in-person voting	2	0	5	6	16	9	0
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding in-person voting	2	2	3	6	14	11	0
c. Lack of clear guidance from state health authorities regarding in-person voting	2	3	4	7	16	6	0
d. Insufficient funding for in-person voting	1	1	7	5	15	9	0
e. Responding to litigation related to in-person voting	2	5	1	4	8	17	0
f. Changes made to in-person voting processes as a result of legislation or court orders	0	5	1	5	7	19	0
g. Other	0	0	1	0	1	20	1

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 24: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 8

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 general election in relation to in-person voting?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will ask in a later section about challenges related to election supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) regarding in-person voting	2	1	3	8	19	9	0
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding in-person voting	2	4	2	7	17	11	0
c. Lack of clear guidance from state health authorities regarding in-person voting	2	4	3	8	20	6	0
d. Insufficient funding for in-person voting	1	3	7	5	18	9	0
e. Responding to litigation related to in-person voting	1	6	6	3	11	16	0
f. Changes made to in-person voting processes as a result of legislation or court orders	1	7	3	6	8	18	0
g. Other	0	0	1	0	1	21	2

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Election Supplies

Table 25: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 9

Did your **state election office** assist local election offices with obtaining the following **election supplies** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

Assisting local election offices could include, for example, obtaining and distributing supplies directly or coordinating with external groups (such as state or federal agencies, businesses, or non-profits) to provide them.

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your local election offices) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

For each step, please exclude funding provided to local election offices to purchase these supplies. Subsequent questions will ask about funding.

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Personal protective equipment, such as face shields or non-medical-grade masks	36	5	1	1
b. Medical-grade protective equipment, such as N95 masks	24	15	1	2
c. Hand sanitizer	39	3	1	0
d. Disinfectant wipes or other cleaning supplies	35	6	1	1
e. Disposable shared objects, such as pens or sample ballots	29	12	1	1
f. Signage or other reminders to encourage social distancing among voters and election workers	31	10	1	1
g. Physical barriers, such as plexiglass	26	15	1	1

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 26: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 10

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to assisting with **election supplies**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) about supplies	1	3	4	9	15	5	0
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about supplies	0	3	2	9	18	6	0
c. Insufficient funding	1	4	5	4	20	4	0
d. Determining the types of supplies needed	2	5	12	10	6	3	0
e. Determining the quantities of supplies needed	2	6	13	8	6	3	0
f. Identifying reliable vendors or suppliers	6	5	9	9	6	3	0
g. High demand or competition for supplies	8	11	7	4	5	3	0
h. Other	1	0	1	1	2	13	4

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 27: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 11

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to assisting with **election supplies**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) about supplies	1	5	2	7	20	7	1
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about supplies	1	3	1	10	20	7	1
c. Insufficient funding	2	4	4	6	23	4	0
d. Determining the types of supplies needed	2	2	15	12	9	2	1
e. Determining the quantities of supplies needed	2	3	18	11	7	2	0
f. Identifying reliable vendors or suppliers	2	7	12	9	10	2	1
g. High demand or competition for supplies	5	12	10	5	7	2	1
h. Other	0	1	1	1	3	15	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Recruitment and Training

Table 28: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 12

Did **your state election office** take any of the following steps in relation to **recruitment and training** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your local election offices) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Conducted an outreach campaign to encourage people to serve as election workers	36	5	2	0
b. Coordinated with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to recruit election workers	32	7	3	1
c. Encouraged state government employees to serve as election workers	24	15	3	1
d. Trained local election officials	28	11	4	0
e. Provided guidance or materials to help local election officials train election workers	37	2	4	0

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

Table 29: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 13

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **recruitment and training**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) about election worker recruitment and training	1	0	2	8	17	9	0
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about election worker recruitment and training	0	1	2	7	16	11	0
c. Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	0	2	5	5	16	9	0
d. Insufficient funding for election worker training	0	1	6	3	14	12	1
e. Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	2	4	5	8	6	11	1
f. Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	11	8	5	4	0	8	0
g. Insufficient number of election workers	6	8	5	7	2	8	1

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
h. Determining training needs of local election officials	0	4	9	9	8	7	0
i. Determining training needs for election workers	0	5	5	8	8	11	0
j. Providing training remotely	1	9	7	8	3	9	0
k. Securing a large enough space to offer in-person training with appropriate social distancing	3	3	1	7	3	20	0
l. Other	0	0	1	0	0	19	1

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

Table 30: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 14

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to **recruitment and training**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) about election worker recruitment and training	1	1	2	6	20	12	0
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies about election worker recruitment and training	0	2	2	5	19	14	0
c. Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	0	2	4	4	18	13	0
d. Insufficient funding for election worker training	0	1	6	3	18	14	0
e. Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	2	4	7	11	5	13	0
f. Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	13	6	11	5	0	7	0
g. Insufficient number of election workers	6	5	10	8	4	8	0

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
h. Determining training needs of local election officials	1	4	5	10	11	8	0
i. Determining training needs for election workers	1	5	3	12	11	9	0
j. Providing training remotely	2	5	9	8	7	11	0
k. Securing a large enough space to offer in-person training with appropriate social distancing	4	2	2	5	6	23	0
l. Other	0	0	1	0	0	20	2

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Voter Education and Outreach

Table 31: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 15

Did your **state election office** take any of the following steps in relation to **voter education and outreach** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your local election offices) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Provided information on your state's elections website to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	43	0	0	0
b. Used social media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	40	2	1	0
c. Conducted an outreach campaign using print, electronic, or other media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	40	2	1	0
d. Engaged with news media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	40	2	0	0
e. Held or attended meetings or other events to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	31	10	1	1

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
f. Worked with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	35	5	2	0
g. Answered questions about voting policies and procedures from people who contacted your office	42	0	1	0

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 32: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 16

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **voter education and outreach**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) regarding voter education and outreach	1	2	1	4	21	8	0
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding voter education and outreach	0	1	3	4	20	9	0
c. Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations such as businesses, charitable organizations, interest groups, clubs, or schools	0	6	6	12	8	5	0
d. Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	2	6	4	6	17	2	0
e. Insufficient staff for voter education and outreach	4	6	7	8	9	3	0
f. False or misleading information about the safety of voting in-person	8	6	10	6	3	4	0

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
g. False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	7	3	7	11	4	4	1
h. False or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting	14	6	9	5	1	2	0
i. False or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	11	4	9	8	3	2	0
j. Other	0	0	1	0	0	18	1

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 33: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 17

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your state election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to **voter education and outreach**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) regarding voter education and outreach	1	3	1	3	24	10	0
b. Lack of clear guidance from other federal agencies regarding voter education and outreach	0	4	1	4	22	11	0
c. Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations such as businesses, charitable organizations, interest groups, clubs, or schools	0	6	6	14	9	6	1
d. Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	4	5	3	9	18	3	0
e. Insufficient staff for voter education and outreach	3	8	8	8	11	4	0
f. False or misleading information about the safety of voting in-person	9	6	11	8	4	3	0

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
g. False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	7	4	10	11	6	3	1
h. False or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting	18	8	8	3	3	2	0
i. False or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	13	5	13	5	4	2	0
j. Other	0	0	2	0	1	17	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

2020 Election Successes

Question 18 (open-ended question): In your view, what aspects of the 2020 primary election(s) and/or the 2020 general election in your state went particularly well?

CARES Act Funding

Table 34: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 19

Did your **state election office** spend CARES Act funds—either directly or through sub-grants or reimbursements—on any of the following activities?

	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Increasing the number of election workers, such as through recruiting efforts or providing additional pay	28	13	1
b. Training election workers	23	17	2
c. Securing additional office or storage space	17	22	3
d. Securing additional locations for in-person voting	21	19	2

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

	Yes	No	Don't know
e. Providing supplies for in-person voting, such as personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, physical barriers, or signage	41	1	0
f. Facilitating absentee/mail voting, such as mailing applications to voters or prepaying postage	36	5	1
g. Providing drop boxes to return absentee/mail ballots	29	12	1
h. Purchasing voting equipment, such as high-speed scanners, automatic mail sorters, or automatic letter openers	31	9	1
i. Educating voters about their options for voting	37	4	1

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

Table 35: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 20

How challenging, if at all, were the following actions relating to **CARES Act grant funding and reporting** for your **state election office** during either the 2020 primary or general elections?

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Requesting CARES Act grant funds from the Election Assistance Commission (EAC)	0	0	5	4	30	1	2
b. Obtaining authorization from the state legislature or Governor to use the CARES Act grant funds	1	2	3	3	23	8	2
c. Meeting the 20 percent matching requirement	7	6	7	8	11	1	2
d. Determining what expenditures were permissible	2	3	9	13	12	1	2
e. Determining how funds would be allocated across local election offices	2	1	7	15	9	6	2
f. Obtaining expenditure information from local election offices	3	8	10	6	9	5	1
g. Categorizing CARES Act grant expenditures for reporting purposes	1	4	18	6	10	1	2

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
h. Submitting the EAC CARES Progress Narrative Report within the required 20-day timeframe	5	7	11	10	7	1	1
i. Submitting the annual progress report to the EAC by the February 28, 2021 deadline	6	7	9	8	8	1	1
j. Using the Federal Financial Report (FFR) electronic reporting system	2	6	12	9	9	2	2
k. Other	0	0	1	0	1	18	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Table 36: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 21

In your state, who was responsible for meeting the 20 percent match required by the CARES Act?

	Number of state election offices
State government only	28
Both state and local government	10
Local government only	2
Don't know	1

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Other Grants, Donations, and Assistance

Table 37: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 22

Did your **state election office** receive grants, donations, or any other forms of financial or nonfinancial assistance from any of the following sources for the purpose of conducting either the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election during the pandemic?

**Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State
Election Office Survey**

	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Federal agencies, other than the Election Assistance Commission (EAC)	13	29	1
b. Other state agencies	16	25	1
c. Universities, colleges, schools, or any other educational institutions	2	40	1
d. Private businesses	11	31	1
e. Private individuals	0	41	2
f. The Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) and/or the Center for Election Innovation and Research (CEIR)	18	24	1
g. Other nonprofit organizations	8	32	2

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance

Table 38: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 23

Did your **state election office** use EAC information resources or guidance on any of the following topics to administer elections during the pandemic?

“EAC information resources and guidance” includes documents, instructional materials, webinars, video recordings, links to other agency websites, and any other information made available by the Election Assistance Commission about conducting an election during a pandemic.

	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Absentee/mail voting	13	28	2
b. In-person voting	15	26	2
c. Election worker recruitment and training	14	27	1
d. CARES Act grant funding	39	3	1
e. Election security	26	14	3
f. Other information posted on EAC's COVID-10 resources webpage	20	19	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 39: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 24

If you answered “no” for any of the topics above, what were the main reasons your state election office did not use EAC’s information resources or guidance to administer elections during the pandemic? *Check all that apply.*

	Number of state election offices that checked the reason listed
I was not aware the resource or guidance existed.	7
The resources or guidance were not available in time to be helpful for my purposes.	7
The resources or guidance were not clearly written or presented.	3
The resources or guidance were not available in a useful format.	4
The resources or guidance were not relevant to the topics I was interested in.	5
I did not need these resources or guidance.	18
Other	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated “Other” to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Table 40: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 25

Overall, how helpful, if at all, would you say EAC **information** resources and guidance were for your state election office in preparing for and conducting the 2020 **primary** election(s) during the pandemic?

	Number of state election offices
Extremely helpful	1
Very helpful	10
Moderately helpful	7
Somewhat helpful	10
Not at all helpful	6
Not applicable	5

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix II: Results of GAO's 2021 State Election Office Survey

Table 41: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 26

Overall, how helpful, if at all, would you say EAC **information** resources and guidance were for your state election office in preparing for and conducting the 2020 **general** election during the pandemic?

	Number of state election offices
Extremely helpful	1
Very helpful	9
Moderately helpful	9
Somewhat helpful	9
Not at all helpful	7
Not applicable	8

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Table 42: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 27

Did your state election office request technical assistance or additional guidance from the EAC in response to the pandemic during the 2020 primary or general elections?

	Number of state election offices
Yes	10
No	30
Don't know	3

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Table 43: Responses to GAO 2021 State Election Office Survey Question 27 Part II

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of the technical assistance or additional guidance that the EAC provided in response to your request?

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not applicable
Timeliness	6	1	1	1	0	0
Quality	7	0	0	1	0	0

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 state election office survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Additional Comments and Survey Contact

Question 28 (open-ended question): If you have any additional comments concerning any of the topics covered in this questionnaire, please use the space below.

Question 29 (open-ended question): What is the name, title, telephone number, and e-mail address of the primary person completing this questionnaire so that we may contact you if we need to clarify any responses?

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

We conducted a web-based survey of officials from a stratified sample of 829 local election jurisdictions nationwide to obtain information on (1) the steps local jurisdictions took to prepare for and conduct elections in 2020 during the pandemic, and what reported challenges officials faced, (2) how local jurisdictions reported using CARES Act grant funding,¹ and what challenges they reported facing, and (3) what U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) resources and guidance local jurisdictions used during the pandemic and their perspectives on such assistance. In total, 407 local jurisdictions responded to our survey, for a weighted response rate of 47 percent. Our survey was composed of closed-ended and open-ended questions. In this appendix, we include all survey questions and results of responses to the closed-ended questions. We do not provide information on responses provided to open-ended questions that required manually entered text responses.

The tables below represent the estimated percentages of the jurisdictions' responses to the closed-ended questions. The estimates we report are rounded to the nearest percentage point and are national-level estimates representing the experiences, views, and opinions of all local jurisdictions nationwide. Because our estimates are from a generalizable sample, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular estimates as 95 percent confidence intervals, which are also provided in the tables. For a more detailed discussion of our methodology, see appendix I.

Background

Table 44: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 1

Did your local jurisdiction conduct a primary election—either a presidential preference primary or a primary for congressional offices—on or after March 13, 2020 when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared?

¹See Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281, 530 (2020).

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	89	85	92
No	11	8	15

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Absentee/Mail Voting

Table 45: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 2

Prior to the 2020 election(s), did your local jurisdiction use an all vote-by-mail system (i.e., send a mail ballot to all registered or active registered voters)?

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	7	4	11
No	93	89	96

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Table 46: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 3

Did your local jurisdiction take any of the following steps in relation to **absentee/mail voting** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your state election office) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions			
	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Used United States Postal Service election mail guidance or resources	57 (51, 63)	26 (20, 31)	11 (7, 15)	6 (4, 10)
b. Consulted with vendors regarding absentee/mail voting	21 (17, 26)	61 (55, 66)	12 (8, 17)	6 (3, 9)
c. Worked with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other election jurisdictions—to revise absentee/mail ballot or envelope designs	17 (13, 22)	64 (58, 70)	14 (10, 18)	5 (3, 8)

**Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local
Election Jurisdiction Survey**

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
d. Consulted with experts about absentee/mail voting processes procedures, strategies, and policies	34 (28, 39)	51 (45, 57)	10 (6, 14)	5 (3, 9)
e. Purchased prepaid postage for voters to return completed absentee/mail ballots	39 (33, 45)	47 (41, 53)	10 (7, 15)	3 (1, 6)
f. Assigned staff to review voter registration rolls prior to sending absentee/mail ballot request forms	37 (32, 43)	38 (32, 44)	21 (16, 26)	4 (2, 7)
g. Assigned staff to review voter registration rolls prior to sending absentee/mail ballots	46 (40, 52)	31 (26, 37)	19 (14, 24)	4 (2, 7)
h. Set up a system to allow voters to track the status of their absentee/mail ballots	33 (27, 38)	43 (37, 49)	22 (17, 27)	3 (1, 6)
i. Installed ballot drop boxes	50 (44, 56)	39 (33, 45)	9 (6, 14)	2 (1, 4)
j. Installed cameras or other security mechanisms to protect ballot drop boxes	23 (19, 28)	53 (47, 59)	20 (15, 25)	4 (2, 7)
k. Purchased equipment to process or tabulate absentee/mail ballots, such as automatic letter openers	26 (21, 32)	63 (58, 69)	9 (5, 13)	1 (0, 4)
l. Reconfigured space or arranged for additional space to facilitate social distancing while processing absentee/mail ballots	72 (66, 77)	19 (14, 24)	8 (5, 13)	1 (0, 4)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 47: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 4

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **absentee/mail voting**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	28 (22, 34)	19 (15, 24)	22 (16, 27)	10 (6, 14)	11 (7, 16)	9 (6, 14)	1 (0, 3)
b. Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	1 (0, 4)	1 (0, 2)	6 (4, 10)	8 (5, 12)	47 (40, 53)	36 (29, 42)	2 (0, 3)
c. Lack of clear guidance from state election officials on absentee/mail voting	6 (3, 9)	9 (5, 14)	13 (8, 18)	11 (8, 16)	42 (36, 49)	17 (13, 23)	1 (0, 3)
d. Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	4 (2, 7)	11 (7, 16)	13 (9, 18)	15 (11, 21)	37 (31, 43)	18 (13, 24)	2 (1, 5)
e. Changes made to state absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	16 (12, 22)	15 (11, 20)	18 (13, 24)	12 (8, 16)	20 (15, 26)	14 (10, 20)	4 (2, 8)
f. Printing more absentee/mail ballots than usual	11 (8, 16)	13 (9, 18)	15 (10, 20)	11 (7, 16)	23 (17, 28)	26 (20, 31)	2 (1, 4)
g. Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	11 (7, 15)	11 (7, 15)	11 (7, 15)	21 (16, 26)	32 (26, 38)	15 (10, 20)	0 (0, 2)
h. Lack of experienced election workers	9 (5, 14)	9 (6, 13)	12 (9, 17)	18 (13, 23)	37 (31, 43)	15 (11, 21)	0 (0, 2)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
i. Insufficient storage space for absentee/mail ballots	2 (1, 4)	7 (4, 11)	11 (7, 15)	14 (10, 20)	48 (41, 54)	18 (13, 24)	1 (0, 2)
j. Insufficient space for absentee/mail ballot processing	2 (1, 4)	5 (3, 8)	14 (9, 19)	14 (10, 19)	49 (42, 55)	17 (12, 23)	0 (0, 2)
k. Other	4 (1, 8)	0 (0, 3)	1 (0, 5)	0 (0, 2)	18 (11, 26)	64 (55, 72)	14 (9, 20)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 48: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 5

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to **absentee/mail voting**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions						
	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Increased volume of absentee/mail voting	27 (21, 32)	23 (18, 27)	19 (14, 24)	11 (8, 16)	11 (8, 16)	7 (4, 12)	2 (1, 5)
b. Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	1 (0, 2)	2 (1, 4)	6 (4, 10)	7 (4, 10)	47 (41, 53)	33 (28, 39)	3 (1, 6)
c. Lack of clear guidance from state election officials on absentee/mail voting	4 (2, 7)	8 (5, 13)	12 (9, 17)	15 (11, 19)	42 (36, 48)	17 (12, 22)	2 (1, 4)
d. Insufficient funding for absentee/mail voting	6 (3, 9)	8 (5, 12)	15 (11, 20)	16 (11, 21)	35 (29, 40)	19 (14, 24)	2 (1, 4)
e. Changes made to state absentee/mail voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	14 (10, 19)	12 (8, 16)	18 (13, 23)	15 (11, 20)	21 (16, 25)	15 (10, 20)	5 (3, 9)
f. Printing more absentee/mail ballots than usual	10 (7, 14)	14 (10, 20)	12 (8, 16)	12 (9, 17)	25 (20, 30)	24 (18, 29)	3 (1, 5)
g. Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	10 (7, 15)	8 (5, 12)	14 (10, 19)	19 (14, 24)	36 (30, 42)	11 (8, 16)	1 (0, 4)
h. Lack of experienced election workers	9 (6, 13)	9 (6, 12)	13 (10, 18)	21 (16, 26)	34 (28, 40)	12 (8, 17)	1 (0, 4)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
i. Insufficient storage space for absentee/mail ballots	5 (3, 7)	10 (7, 15)	8 (6, 12)	12 (9, 16)	48 (42, 54)	16 (11, 21)	1 (0, 4)
j. Insufficient space for absentee/mail ballot processing	4 (2, 6)	10 (6, 14)	10 (7, 14)	11 (8, 15)	50 (44, 56)	15 (10, 20)	1 (0, 4)
k. Other	3 (1, 7)	0 (0, 3)	0 (0, 3)	1 (0, 3)	15 (10, 23)	65 (57, 73)	15 (10, 21)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

In-Person Voting

Table 49: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 6

Did your local jurisdiction take any of the following steps in relation to **in-person voting** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your state election office) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

We will ask in a later section about steps your office took to obtain specific election supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions			
	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Coordinated with state, regional, or local emergency management agencies about in-person voting	55 (49, 61)	38 (32, 44)	4 (2, 7)	3 (1, 6)
b. Coordinated with state, regional, or local public health agencies about in-person voting	56 (50, 62)	37 (31, 43)	4 (2, 6)	3 (1, 7)
c. Consulted with vendors regarding in-person voting	18 (14, 23)	60 (54, 66)	19 (14, 24)	3 (1, 6)
d. Consulted with experts—such as academics, nonprofits, election administration associations, or other election jurisdictions—about in-person voting	37 (31, 43)	49 (43, 55)	9 (6, 13)	5 (2, 8)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
e. Improved ventilation or air quality at voting locations	28 (22, 33)	60 (54, 66)	9 (6, 13)	3 (2, 7)
f. Modified or reconfigured voting locations to facilitate social distancing	88 (83, 91)	9 (6, 13)	2 (1, 5)	1 (0, 4)
g. Added new polling locations or vote centers	14 (11, 18)	79 (74, 83)	6 (4, 10)	1 (0, 4)
h. Held in-person voting at sports arenas or other large venues	8 (5, 11)	84 (80, 88)	7 (4, 10)	1 (0, 4)
i. Installed signs or other reminders for voters and election workers to socially distance	92 (88, 95)	5 (2, 8)	2 (1, 4)	1 (0, 4)
j. Provided personal protective equipment, such as masks or face shields, for voters and/or election workers	94 (90, 97)	3 (1, 6)	2 (1, 4)	1 (0, 4)
k. Installed physical barriers between voters and/or election workers	79 (74, 84)	18 (13, 23)	2 (1, 4)	1 (0, 4)
l. Restricted the number of people allowed inside voting locations at any one time	71 (66, 77)	24 (19, 29)	3 (2, 6)	1 (0, 4)
m. Estimated the number of people allowed inside voting locations at any one time	46 (40, 52)	30 (24, 36)	23 (18, 28)	1 (0, 4)
n. Used a ticketing or reservation system to manage lines at voting locations	2 (1, 5)	87 (82, 91)	10 (6, 14)	1 (0, 4)
o. Gave voters more opportunities for early in-person voting	38 (33, 44)	49 (43, 55)	11 (7, 15)	1 (0, 4)
p. Provided voters with more opportunities for curbside or drive-through voting	49 (43, 56)	44 (38, 50)	5 (3, 8)	1 (0, 4)
q. Prepared alternative in-person voting options for voters with COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms	52 (46, 58)	34 (28, 40)	10 (7, 15)	3 (1, 7)
r. Cleaned and disinfected voting locations following the primary election(s) or general election	94 (90, 96)	5 (2, 8)	1 (0, 3)	1 (0, 2)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 50: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 7

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **in-person voting**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will ask in a later section about challenges related to election supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	1 (0, 4)	2 (1, 5)	5 (3, 9)	11 (7, 15)	56 (50, 63)	22 (16, 27)	2 (1, 5)
b. Lack of clear guidance from state election officials regarding in-person voting	4 (2, 8)	9 (5, 13)	8 (5, 12)	18 (13, 23)	52 (46, 59)	9 (6, 14)	1 (0, 3)
c. Insufficient funding for in-person voting	4 (2, 7)	6 (3, 10)	13 (9, 19)	11 (8, 16)	54 (47, 60)	11 (7, 15)	1 (0, 4)
d. Changes made to state in-person voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	11 (7, 16)	7 (4, 11)	15 (10, 20)	18 (13, 23)	33 (27, 39)	13 (9, 18)	3 (1, 6)
e. Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	6 (4, 9)	11 (7, 16)	10 (6, 14)	20 (15, 26)	46 (40, 53)	6 (4, 10)	1 (0, 4)
f. Lack of experienced election workers	7 (4, 11)	8 (5, 12)	10 (7, 15)	22 (17, 28)	45 (39, 52)	6 (3, 9)	1 (0, 4)
g. Lack or loss of in-person voting locations	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 5)	5 (3, 7)	53 (47, 60)	35 (29, 41)	1 (0, 4)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
h. In-person voting locations were not large enough to facilitate social distancing	2 (1, 4)	3 (1, 6)	9 (5, 13)	16 (11, 21)	53 (47, 60)	16 (12, 22)	1 (0, 4)
i. Long wait times and/or lines at in-person voting locations	2 (1, 4)	4 (2, 7)	8 (4, 12)	16 (12, 21)	57 (50, 63)	12 (9, 17)	1 (0, 4)
j. Voters did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	2 (1, 5)	3 (1, 7)	10 (6, 14)	18 (13, 23)	54 (48, 61)	12 (8, 16)	1 (0, 4)
k. Election workers did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	0 (0, 2)	1 (0, 5)	1 (0, 2)	7 (4, 11)	74 (69, 80)	14 (10, 19)	1 (0, 4)
l. Other	2 (0, 5)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	1 (0, 5)	25 (18, 34)	60 (51, 69)	11 (7, 18)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 51: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 8

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 general election in relation to **in-person voting**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will ask in a later section about challenges related to election supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	1 (0, 3)	0 (0, 2)	8 (5, 13)	11 (7, 16)	60 (54, 66)	17 (13, 23)	2 (0, 4)
b. Lack of clear guidance from state election officials regarding in-person voting	3 (1, 7)	7 (4, 11)	9 (6, 13)	16 (11, 21)	54 (47, 60)	11 (7, 16)	1 (0, 3)
c. Insufficient funding for in-person voting	4 (2, 8)	6 (3, 9)	10 (6, 15)	15 (11, 20)	53 (47, 59)	11 (7, 15)	1 (0, 3)
d. Changes made to state in-person voting process as a result of legislation or court orders	10 (6, 15)	7 (5, 11)	17 (12, 23)	14 (10, 19)	35 (29, 41)	13 (9, 18)	4 (2, 7)
e. Lack of a sufficient number of election workers	7 (4, 10)	8 (5, 11)	11 (7, 15)	27 (21, 33)	41 (35, 47)	7 (4, 11)	0 (0, 2)
f. Lack of experienced election workers	8 (5, 12)	4 (2, 6)	14 (10, 19)	27 (21, 33)	40 (33, 46)	7 (4, 11)	0 (0, 2)
g. Lack or loss of in-person voting locations	1 (0, 3)	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 4)	6 (4, 9)	58 (52, 65)	31 (25, 37)	1 (0, 2)
h. In-person voting locations were not large enough to facilitate social distancing	2 (1, 4)	5 (2, 8)	7 (4, 11)	17 (12, 22)	53 (47, 60)	16 (12, 21)	1 (0, 2)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
i. Long wait times and/or lines at in-person voting locations	2 (1, 4)	4 (2, 7)	9 (5, 13)	15 (11, 20)	56 (50, 63)	14 (10, 19)	1 (0, 2)
j. Voters did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	2 (0, 4)	4 (2, 7)	9 (6, 14)	17 (13, 22)	57 (50, 63)	11 (7, 15)	1 (0, 3)
k. Election workers did not take precautions to reduce COVID-19 transmission at voting locations	0 (0, 2)	1 (0, 4)	1 (0, 2)	5 (3, 9)	76 (71, 81)	15 (11, 20)	1 (0, 2)
l. Other	2 (0, 6)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	1 (0, 4)	25 (18, 35)	63 (54, 72)	9 (5, 15)

GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Election Supplies

Table 52: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 9

Did your local jurisdiction obtain the following **election supplies** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election? For each item, we are interested in the activities your office (not your state election office) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions			
	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Personal protective equipment, such as face shields or non-medical-grade masks, for election workers	92 (88, 95)	5 (3, 9)	2 (1, 4)	0 (0, 2)
b. Medical-grade protective equipment, such as N95 masks, for election workers	43 (37, 48)	55 (49, 61)	2 (1, 4)	1 (0, 2)
c. Hand sanitizer	93 (90, 96)	4 (2, 8)	2 (1, 4)	0 (0, 2)

**Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local
Election Jurisdiction Survey**

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
d. Disinfectant wipes or other cleaning supplies	96 (93, 98)	2 (1, 5)	2 (1, 4)	0 (0, 2)
e. Disposable shared objects, such as pens or sample ballots	82 (77, 86)	15 (12, 20)	2 (1, 5)	0 (0, 2)
f. Signage or other reminders to encourage social distancing among voters and election workers	92 (88, 95)	6 (3, 9)	2 (1, 4)	0 (0, 2)
g. Physical barriers, such as plexiglass	78 (73, 83)	19 (14, 24)	2 (1, 5)	0 (0, 2)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 53: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 10

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 primary election(s) in relation to obtaining election supplies?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	1 (0, 4)	4 (2, 7)	9 (5, 14)	12 (8, 17)	57 (50, 64)	14 (9, 19)	3 (1, 7)
b. Lack of clear guidance from your state government about supplies	1 (0, 3)	5 (3, 9)	7 (4, 12)	20 (14, 26)	54 (47, 60)	11 (7, 16)	2 (1, 6)
c. Insufficient funding for supplies	3 (1, 7)	3 (2, 6)	10 (6, 15)	17 (12, 23)	56 (49, 62)	9 (6, 14)	2 (1, 6)
d. Delays in the delivery of supplies	4 (2, 8)	8 (5, 13)	8 (5, 13)	16 (11, 21)	51 (44, 58)	10 (6, 15)	2 (1, 6)
e. Difficulty determining what supplies were needed	3 (1, 5)	6 (3, 10)	16 (11, 22)	15 (10, 20)	50 (43, 57)	9 (5, 14)	2 (1, 6)
f. Supplies were out of stock or otherwise unavailable	7 (4, 11)	9 (5, 15)	11 (7, 16)	13 (9, 18)	46 (39, 52)	12 (8, 17)	2 (1, 6)
g. Other	0 (0, 4)	1 (0, 5)	0 (0, 2)	3 (0, 9)	26 (17, 35)	60 (51, 70)	10 (5, 17)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 54: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 11

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to **obtaining election supplies**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of access to reliable vendors or suppliers	1 (0, 2)	2 (1, 4)	8 (5, 13)	13 (9, 17)	58 (52, 64)	16 (12, 21)	2 (1, 5)
b. Lack of clear guidance from your state government about supplies	2 (1, 4)	4 (2, 7)	8 (5, 12)	15 (11, 19)	60 (54, 66)	9 (6, 14)	1 (0, 4)
c. Insufficient funding for supplies	4 (2, 7)	4 (2, 7)	10 (7, 14)	16 (11, 21)	56 (50, 62)	10 (6, 14)	1 (0, 4)
d. Delays in the delivery of supplies	3 (1, 5)	7 (4, 11)	9 (6, 13)	12 (8, 16)	57 (51, 63)	11 (7, 15)	1 (0, 4)
e. Difficulty determining what supplies were needed	1 (0, 3)	5 (2, 8)	12 (8, 17)	16 (12, 21)	57 (51, 63)	9 (5, 13)	1 (0, 4)
f. Supplies were out of stock or otherwise unavailable	4 (2, 6)	6 (3, 9)	11 (7, 15)	15 (11, 19)	51 (45, 57)	13 (9, 18)	1 (0, 4)
g. Other	3 (1, 9)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	3 (0, 8)	26 (19, 35)	59 (50, 67)	9 (5, 15)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Election Worker Recruitment

Table 55: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 12

Did your local election office take any of the following steps in relation to election **worker recruitment** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your state election office) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions			
	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Worked with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to recruit election workers	23 (19, 27)	65 (60, 71)	9 (6, 14)	2 (1, 5)
b. Recruited election workers from populations that do not usually volunteer, such as young people	36 (30, 41)	53 (47, 59)	10 (7, 14)	1 (0, 4)
c. Recruited back-up election workers in case others were unable to work	71 (66, 77)	21 (16, 26)	6 (4, 10)	2 (0, 4)
d. Recruited election workers with medical training to assist voters with COVID-19	5 (3, 9)	84 (79, 88)	9 (6, 13)	3 (1, 5)
e. Offered incentives, such as hazard pay, to election workers	16 (13, 21)	75 (70, 80)	7 (4, 11)	2 (0, 4)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 56: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 13

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **election worker recruitment**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance regarding election worker recruitment from your state government	1 (0, 2)	2 (1, 5)	4 (2, 8)	11 (7, 15)	61 (55, 67)	19 (14, 24)	3 (1, 5)
b. Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	3 (1, 6)	3 (1, 7)	6 (3, 9)	12 (8, 17)	60 (53, 66)	15 (10, 20)	2 (1, 4)
c. Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	2 (1, 5)	5 (3, 9)	12 (8, 17)	25 (20, 31)	44 (37, 50)	10 (6, 14)	2 (0, 4)
d. Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	13 (9, 18)	13 (9, 18)	14 (10, 19)	29 (23, 35)	23 (17, 29)	7 (4, 11)	1 (0, 3)
e. Other	1 (0, 4)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	1 (0, 3)	21 (14, 29)	63 (54, 71)	15 (9, 23)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local
Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 57: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 14

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to **election worker recruitment**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions							
	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance regarding election worker recruitment from your state government	1 (0, 2)	2 (1, 5)	5 (2, 8)	8 (5, 12)	63 (57, 68)	19 (15, 24)	2 (1, 5)
b. Insufficient funding for election worker recruitment	3 (2, 6)	4 (2, 7)	7 (4, 10)	14 (10, 19)	55 (48, 61)	16 (12, 21)	1 (0, 3)
c. Difficulty determining how many workers to recruit	2 (1, 4)	7 (4, 11)	13 (9, 18)	25 (19, 30)	43 (37, 49)	9 (6, 14)	1 (0, 3)
d. Potential election workers were concerned about contracting COVID-19	12 (8, 16)	11 (7, 15)	16 (12, 21)	31 (25, 36)	25 (20, 31)	5 (3, 9)	0 (0, 2)
e. Other	1 (0, 4)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	2 (0, 7)	23 (16, 31)	61 (53, 70)	12 (7, 20)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Election Worker Training

Table 58: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 15

Did your local election office take any of the following steps in relation to election **worker training** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your state election office) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

**Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local
Election Jurisdiction Survey**

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Trained election workers on measures to protect themselves from COVID-19	86 (82, 90)	12 (8, 16)	1 (0, 4)	1 (0, 2)
b. Trained election workers on measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission	89 (84, 92)	9 (5, 13)	2 (1, 4)	1 (0, 2)
c. Conducted some or all election worker training online	48 (42, 54)	45 (39, 51)	6 (3, 9)	1 (0, 3)
d. Trained election workers in socially-distanced settings	82 (77, 87)	10 (7, 14)	7 (4, 11)	1 (0, 2)
e. Trained more election workers than usual to perform tasks in relation to absentee/mail voting	46 (40, 52)	42 (36, 48)	10 (6, 14)	2 (1, 4)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 59: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 16

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **election worker training**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance regarding election worker training from your state government	4 (2, 7)	2 (0, 4)	5 (2, 9)	12 (8, 17)	61 (55, 68)	14 (10, 19)	2 (1, 4)
b. Insufficient funding for election worker training	4 (2, 8)	1 (0, 4)	7 (4, 10)	12 (8, 17)	59 (53, 66)	15 (10, 20)	2 (1, 4)
c. Lack of equipment to conduct election worker training remotely	6 (4, 10)	4 (2, 7)	5 (2, 8)	13 (8, 18)	44 (37, 50)	28 (22, 33)	1 (0, 3)
d. Lack of experience in training election workers remotely	5 (3, 8)	5 (2, 8)	8 (5, 13)	13 (9, 18)	38 (32, 45)	29 (24, 35)	1 (0, 3)
e. Lack of staff to train election workers	3 (2, 6)	6 (3, 10)	6 (3, 10)	11 (7, 16)	56 (49, 62)	17 (13, 22)	1 (0, 4)
f. Inability to obtain locations for socially-distanced in-person training	3 (1, 5)	5 (3, 9)	5 (2, 9)	6 (4, 11)	57 (50, 63)	22 (17, 27)	2 (1, 5)
g. Other	0 (0, 2)	1 (0, 4)	0 (0, 2)	1 (0, 4)	26 (18, 36)	61 (52, 70)	11 (6, 18)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Table 60: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 17

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to **election worker training**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions						
	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance regarding election worker training from your state government	3 (1, 6)	2 (1, 5)	6 (4, 10)	9 (6, 13)	65 (60, 71)	13 (9, 18)	1 (0, 4)
b. Insufficient funding for election worker training	4 (2, 7)	4 (2, 7)	3 (2, 6)	13 (9, 18)	59 (53, 65)	15 (11, 20)	1 (0, 3)
c. Lack of equipment to conduct election worker training remotely	6 (3, 10)	5 (3, 9)	5 (3, 8)	10 (7, 15)	46 (40, 53)	27 (21, 32)	0 (0, 2)
d. Lack of experience in training election workers remotely	5 (3, 8)	5 (3, 8)	8 (5, 12)	14 (10, 19)	37 (31, 43)	30 (25, 35)	1 (0, 3)
e. Lack of staff to train election workers	4 (2, 6)	6 (3, 10)	7 (4, 11)	11 (7, 15)	54 (48, 60)	18 (13, 23)	1 (0, 3)
f. Inability to obtain locations for socially-distanced in-person training	4 (2, 6)	4 (2, 8)	5 (3, 8)	6 (4, 10)	59 (53, 64)	21 (16, 26)	1 (0, 3)
g. Other	1 (0, 4)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 3)	0 (0, 3)	25 (18, 34)	65 (56, 73)	9 (5, 14)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Voter Education and Outreach

Table 61: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 18

Did your local election office take any of the following steps in relation to **voter education and outreach** for **either** the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election?

For each step, we are interested in the activities your office (not your state election office) undertook in preparation for or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for either the 2020 primary election(s) or the general election.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions			
	Yes	No	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Provided information on your local elections website to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	63 (57, 69)	20 (15, 25)	16 (12, 22)	1 (0, 3)
b. Used social media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	55 (49, 61)	32 (26, 37)	11 (8, 16)	2 (1, 5)
c. Conducted an outreach campaign using print, electronic, or other media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	38 (32, 43)	49 (43, 55)	11 (7, 15)	3 (1, 5)
d. Engaged with the news media to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	42 (37, 48)	44 (38, 50)	11 (8, 15)	2 (1, 5)
e. Held or attended meetings or other events to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	22 (18, 27)	65 (60, 71)	10 (6, 14)	2 (1, 5)
f. Worked with schools, businesses, charitable organizations, or advocacy groups to educate voters about voting policies and procedures	19 (15, 23)	67 (62, 73)	11 (7, 15)	3 (1, 5)
g. Answered questions about voting policies and procedures from people who contacted your office	92 (88, 96)	2 (1, 5)	4 (2, 8)	1 (0, 3)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 62: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 19

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **primary** election(s) in relation to **voter education and outreach**?

For the purpose of this survey, please only include responses related to primary elections that occurred on or after March 13, 2020, when the pandemic-related national emergency was declared.

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from your state government regarding voter education and outreach	3 (1, 6)	5 (2, 9)	7 (4, 11)	14 (10, 20)	55 (49, 62)	14 (10, 19)	2 (1, 5)
b. Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations such as businesses, charitable organizations, advocacy groups, clubs, or schools	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 4)	5 (3, 9)	11 (7, 16)	40 (34, 46)	37 (31, 43)	3 (1, 5)
c. Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	3 (1, 6)	5 (2, 8)	8 (5, 12)	10 (7, 15)	48 (41, 54)	24 (18, 29)	3 (1, 6)
d. Insufficient staff for voter education and outreach	6 (3, 9)	8 (4, 12)	8 (5, 13)	9 (6, 13)	45 (38, 51)	22 (16, 27)	3 (1, 5)
e. False or misleading information about the safety of voting in-person	13 (9, 18)	6 (4, 9)	17 (12, 23)	17 (13, 23)	35 (29, 41)	10 (7, 14)	2 (0, 5)
f. False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	10 (6, 15)	4 (2, 7)	12 (8, 17)	15 (10, 20)	47 (40, 53)	11 (7, 15)	2 (0, 5)

**Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local
Election Jurisdiction Survey**

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
g. False or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting	23 (18, 29)	11 (8, 16)	17 (12, 22)	14 (10, 19)	24 (19, 30)	9 (5, 13)	2 (0, 5)
h. False or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	16 (12, 21)	9 (6, 14)	14 (10, 19)	18 (13, 24)	31 (25, 37)	10 (7, 14)	2 (0, 5)
i. Other	1 (0, 3)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	23 (15, 32)	68 (59, 77)	9 (5, 14)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 63: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 20

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues for your local election office during the 2020 **general** election in relation to **voter education and outreach**?

Please consider only those challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions						
	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Lack of clear guidance from your state government regarding voter education and outreach	3 (1, 5)	2 (1, 5)	6 (4, 10)	11 (8, 16)	62 (56, 68)	13 (10, 18)	2 (1, 5)
b. Managing the logistics of working with outside organizations such as businesses, charitable organizations, advocacy groups, clubs, or schools	2 (1, 4)	2 (1, 4)	5 (3, 8)	9 (7, 13)	45 (39, 51)	34 (28, 39)	3 (1, 6)
c. Insufficient funding for voter education and outreach	4 (2, 6)	6 (3, 9)	6 (3, 9)	12 (8, 17)	48 (42, 54)	22 (17, 27)	3 (1, 6)
d. Insufficient staff for voter education and outreach	7 (4, 10)	8 (4, 12)	6 (4, 9)	14 (9, 19)	43 (37, 49)	22 (17, 27)	1 (0, 4)
e. False or misleading information about the safety of voting in-person	15 (11, 19)	10 (7, 14)	14 (10, 19)	22 (17, 27)	29 (23, 34)	9 (6, 13)	2 (1, 5)
f. False or misleading information about in-person voting times, locations, or requirements	11 (7, 15)	7 (5, 11)	15 (11, 20)	16 (12, 22)	39 (33, 45)	9 (6, 13)	2 (1, 5)
g. False or misleading information about the security of absentee/mail voting	29 (23, 34)	15 (10, 20)	12 (8, 16)	12 (9, 17)	24 (18, 29)	7 (4, 11)	2 (1, 5)
h. False or misleading information about absentee/mail voting deadlines or requirements	19 (14, 24)	12 (8, 17)	17 (12, 22)	14 (10, 19)	27 (22,33)	9 (6, 13)	2 (1, 5)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
i. Other	2 (0, 7)	0 (0, 2)	0 (0, 2)	2 (0, 5)	25 (17, 33)	62 (54, 71)	9 (5, 15)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

2020 Election Successes

Question 21 (open-ended question): In your view, what aspects of the 2020 primary election(s) and/or the 2020 general election in your jurisdiction went particularly well?

CARES Act Grant Funds

Table 64: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 22

Did your local election office spend CARES Act grant funds on any of the following activities?

		Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions		
	Activities	Yes	No	Don't know
Absentee/mail voting	a. Securing additional locations for absentee/mail ballot processing or storage	6 (4, 10)	88 (84, 92)	6 (3, 9)
Absentee/mail voting	b. Printing absentee/mail ballot applications	20 (15, 26)	72 (66, 77)	8 (5, 12)
Absentee/mail voting	c. Printing absentee/mail ballots	22 (17, 27)	70 (64, 76)	8 (5, 12)
Absentee/mail voting	d. Printing envelopes for absentee/mail voting	30 (24, 36)	62 (56, 68)	8 (5, 12)
Absentee/mail voting	e. Paying for postage to send absentee/mail ballot applications	31 (25, 37)	60 (54, 66)	8 (5, 13)
Absentee/mail voting	f. Paying for postage to send absentee/mail ballots	42 (36, 48)	51 (45, 57)	7 (4, 11)
Absentee/mail voting	g. Paying for prepaid postage for voters to return completed absentee/mail ballots	29 (23, 34)	64 (58, 70)	7 (4, 11)

**Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local
Election Jurisdiction Survey**

	Activities	Yes	No	Don't know
Absentee/mail voting	h. Setting up an electronic system for tracking ballots	5 (2, 8)	88 (83, 91)	8 (5, 12)
Absentee/mail voting	i. Purchasing drop boxes	27 (21, 32)	67 (61, 73)	6 (4, 10)
Absentee/mail voting	j. Installing drop boxes	14 (10, 19)	79 (74, 84)	7 (4, 11)
Absentee/mail voting	k. Hiring additional personnel to monitor drop boxes	3 (2, 6)	90 (86, 93)	7 (4, 11)
Absentee/mail voting	l. Purchasing equipment for absentee/mail voting, such as high-speed scanners, automatic mail sorters, or automatic letter openers	27 (21, 32)	67 (62, 73)	6 (3, 10)
Absentee/mail voting	m. Reconfiguring election office space to accommodate more staff and social distancing	23 (18, 28)	70 (64, 76)	7 (4, 11)
In-person voting activities	n. Securing additional locations for in-person voting	4 (2, 6)	91 (87, 94)	5 (3, 8)
In-person voting activities	o. Purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE)	62 (56, 68)	33 (27, 39)	5 (3, 8)
In-person voting activities	p. Purchasing hand sanitizer	58 (52, 64)	37 (31, 43)	5 (3, 9)
In-person voting activities	q. Purchasing cleaning supplies	62 (56, 68)	33 (27, 39)	5 (3, 9)
In-person voting activities	r. Purchasing physical barriers, such as plexiglass or sneeze guards	59 (53, 65)	36 (30, 42)	5 (3, 9)
In-person voting activities	s. Purchasing signage to remind voters to socially distance, such as floor markings	48 (42, 54)	46 (40, 52)	6 (3, 9)
In-person voting activities	t. Cleaning and disinfecting voting locations following the primary or general elections	51 (45, 57)	43 (37, 49)	5 (3, 9)
Office staff or election worker activities	u. Hiring additional election office staff	24 (19, 29)	71 (66, 77)	5 (2, 8)
Office staff or election worker activities	v. Recruiting election workers	15 (11, 20)	79 (74, 84)	6 (3, 9)
Office staff or election worker activities	w. Hiring additional election workers	34 (28, 40)	61 (55, 66)	5 (3, 9)
Office staff or election worker activities	x. Providing additional pay to election workers	25 (19, 30)	70 (64, 75)	6 (3, 9)
Office staff or election worker activities	y. Training election workers	27 (21, 32)	67 (61, 73)	6 (4, 10)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Activities	Yes	No	Don't know
Voter education and outreach	z. Educating voters about their options for voting	19 (15, 24)	73 (68, 78)	7 (5, 11)
Voter education and outreach	aa. Educating voters about policies and procedures for in-person voting	19 (14, 23)	74 (69, 79)	7 (4, 11)
Voter education and outreach	ab. Educating voters about policies and procedures for absentee/mail voting	18 (13, 22)	75 (70, 80)	7 (5, 11)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Question 22ac (open-ended question): If you spent CARES Act grant funds on anything else, please describe those activities or purchases here.

Table 65: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 23

How challenging, if at all, were the following issues relating to **CARES Act grant funding and reporting** for your local election office during either the 2020 primary or general elections?

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions						
	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
a. Obtaining CARES Act grant funds from your state government	3 (1, 6)	1 (0, 2)	8 (5, 12)	10 (6, 14)	49 (43, 55)	20 (15, 25)	10 (7, 14)
b. Meeting the 20 percent matching requirement, if local jurisdictions were required to fund the match in your state	1 (0, 4)	1 (0, 3)	4 (2, 8)	5 (3, 9)	23 (18, 28)	47 (41, 53)	20 (15, 24)
c. Determining what expenditures were permissible	2 (0, 4)	7 (4, 12)	7 (5, 11)	18 (14, 23)	37 (31, 43)	18 (14, 23)	11 (7, 14)
d. Categorizing CARES Act grant expenditures for reporting purposes	2 (1, 6)	5 (2, 8)	8 (5, 12)	16 (12, 21)	36 (30, 42)	19 (15, 24)	14 (10, 18)

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Extremely challenging	Very challenging	Moderately challenging	Somewhat challenging	Not at all challenging	Not applicable	Don't know
e. Meeting CARES Act grant reporting due dates	4 (2, 8)	4 (2, 7)	4 (2, 7)	11 (7, 15)	43 (37, 49)	21 (16, 26)	14 (10, 18)
f. Other	3 (0, 9)	0 (0, 1)	1 (0, 5)	0 (0, 3)	20 (13, 28)	62 (54, 71)	13 (9, 19)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate. We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Other Grants, Donations, and Assistance

Table 66: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 24

Did your local election office receive grants, donations, or any other form of financial or nonfinancial assistance from any of the following sources for the purpose of conducting either the 2020 primary election(s) or the 2020 general election during the pandemic?

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions		
	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Federal agencies, other than the Election Assistance Commission (EAC, which distributed CARES grants to states)	9 (6, 13)	79 (74, 83)	13 (9, 17)
b. State agencies, other than your state election office	5 (3, 9)	81 (77, 86)	13 (9, 18)
c. Other local government agencies	8 (5, 11)	81 (77, 86)	11 (7, 16)
d. Universities, colleges, schools, or any other educational institutions	1 (0, 3)	91 (87, 94)	8 (5, 12)
e. Private businesses	2 (1, 4)	89 (85, 92)	9 (6, 13)
f. Private individuals	2 (1, 5)	89 (85, 93)	8 (5, 12)
g. The Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) and/or the Center for Election Innovation and Research (CEIR)	26 (21, 31)	65 (59, 70)	9 (6, 13)
h. Other nonprofit organizations	1 (0, 3)	87 (83, 91)	11 (8, 16)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Information Resources and Guidance

Table 67: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 25

Did your **local election office** use EAC information resources or guidance on any of the following topics to administer elections during the pandemic?

“EAC information resources and guidance” includes documents, instructional materials, webinars, video recordings, links to other agency websites, and any other information made available by the Election Assistance Commission about conducting an election during a pandemic.

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions		
	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Absentee/mail voting	25 (20, 30)	57 (51, 63)	18 (13, 23)
b. In-person voting	26 (20, 31)	57 (51, 63)	17 (13, 22)
c. Election worker recruitment and training	18 (14, 23)	64 (58, 69)	18 (14, 24)
d. CARES Act grant funding	23 (18, 29)	55 (49, 61)	22 (17, 27)
e. Election security	26 (20, 31)	57 (51, 63)	17 (13, 22)
f. Other information posted on EAC's COVID-19 resources webpage	22 (17, 27)	58 (52, 64)	20 (15, 24)

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the values for the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimate.

Table 68: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 26

If you answered “no” for any of the topics above, what were the main reasons your local election office did not use EAC's information resources or guidance to administer elections during the pandemic? *Check all that apply.*

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
I was not aware the resources of guidance existed.	37	31	42
The resources or guidance were not available in time to be helpful for my purposes.	2	1	5

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
The resources or guidance were not clearly written or presented.	2	1	5
The resources or guidance were not available in a useful format.	1	0	3
The resources or guidance were not relevant to the topics I was interested in.	3	1	7
I did not need these resources or guidance.	36	30	42
Other	4	3	7

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: We asked respondents who indicated "Other" to provide additional information in a free-form text box.

Table 69: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 27

Overall, how helpful, if at all, would you say that EAC information resources and guidance were for your local election office in preparing for and conducting the 2020 **primary** election during the pandemic?

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Extremely helpful	3	1	7
Very helpful	10	6	14
Moderately helpful	10	6	15
Somewhat helpful	12	7	17
Not at all helpful	3	1	5
Not applicable	63	56	69

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 70: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 28

Overall, how helpful, if at all, would you say that EAC information resources and guidance were for your local election office in preparing for and conducting the 2020 **general** election during the pandemic?

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Extremely helpful	4	2	7
Very helpful	10	6	14
Moderately helpful	12	8	17
Somewhat helpful	12	8	16
Not at all helpful	3	1	6
Not applicable	60	54	66

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Table 71: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 29

Did your local election office request technical assistance or additional guidance from the EAC in response to the pandemic during the 2020 primary or general elections?

	Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	1	0	3
No	84	79	88
Do not know	15	11	20

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Appendix III: Results of GAO's 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey

Table 72: Responses to GAO 2021 Local Election Jurisdiction Survey Question 29 Part II

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of the technical assistance or additional guidance that the EAC provided in response to your request?

Estimated percentage of local election jurisdictions

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not applicable
Timeliness	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Quality	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r

Source: GAO analysis of 2021 local election jurisdiction survey results. | GAO-22-104731

Note: n/r indicates that we are not reporting the estimate because the maximum half-width of the confidence interval is greater than 15 percentage points.

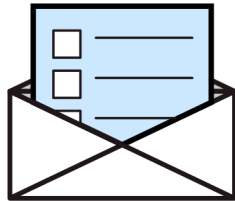
Additional Comments and Survey Contact

Question 30 (open-ended question): If you have any additional comments concerning any of the topics covered in this questionnaire, please use the space below.

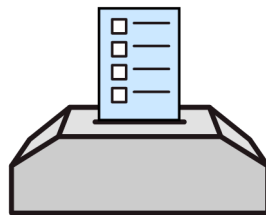
Question 31 (open-ended question): What is the name, title, telephone number, and e-mail address of the primary person completing this questionnaire so that we may contact you if we need to clarify any responses?

Appendix IV: Additional Sources for Images for Images

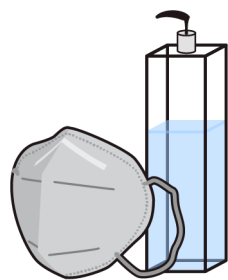
This appendix contains source information for images in this product when such information was not listed adjacent to the image.



GAO.



GAO.



GAO.



GAO.

Appendix IV: Additional Sources for Images



GAO.

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-8777 or gablerr@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Tom Jessor (Assistant Director), Meghan Squires (Analyst-in-Charge), Carl Barden, Brad Crofford, Benjamin Crossley, Susan Czachor, Aaron Gluck, Peter Haderlein, Stephanie Heiken, Serena Lo, Amanda Miller, Jan Montgomery, Heidi Nielsen, Kevin Reeves, and Jeff Tessin made key contributions to this report.

GAO's Mission

The Government Accountability Office, the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony

The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through our website. Each weekday afternoon, GAO posts on its [website](#) newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence. You can also [subscribe](#) to GAO's email updates to receive notification of newly posted products.

Order by Phone

The price of each GAO publication reflects GAO's actual cost of production and distribution and depends on the number of pages in the publication and whether the publication is printed in color or black and white. Pricing and ordering information is posted on GAO's website, <https://www.gao.gov/ordering.htm>.

Place orders by calling (202) 512-6000, toll free (866) 801-7077, or TDD (202) 512-2537.

Orders may be paid for using American Express, Discover Card, MasterCard, Visa, check, or money order. Call for additional information.

Connect with GAO

Connect with GAO on [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).
Subscribe to our [RSS Feeds](#) or [Email Updates](#). Listen to our [Podcasts](#).
Visit GAO on the web at <https://www.gao.gov>.

To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs

Contact FraudNet:

Website: <https://www.gao.gov/about/what-gao-does/fraudnet>

Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7700

Congressional Relations

A. Nicole Clowers, Managing Director, ClowersA@gao.gov, (202) 512-4400, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125, Washington, DC 20548

Public Affairs

Chuck Young, Managing Director, youngc1@gao.gov, (202) 512-4800
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149
Washington, DC 20548

Strategic Planning and External Liaison

Stephen J. Sanford, Managing Director, spel@gao.gov, (202) 512-4707
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7814,
Washington, DC 20548



Please Print on Recycled Paper.