Partisanship of State Primary Election Systems

No updates required since March 5, 2024

Background

- State primary elections determine the candidates that will be on the ballot for the general election. States primary election systems vary widely, with some elections only open to voters registered with a particular party, while other states allow non-affiliated voters to participate as well. While most state primary systems are partisan, a few states have adopted nonpartisan primaries, in which voters cast a ballot in a single primary with all candidates on the same ballot. Nonpartisan primary states receive the highest score as evidence suggests these systems increase voter turnout as well as produce more competitive and less polarized elections. Closed primary states receive the lowest score as these systems completely exclude millions of Independent and unaffiliated voters from participating in primary elections. **Note: This map tracks systems used for state level and congressional primaries. Some states use different rules for presidential primaries.** MAP relied on data from the Unite America Institute and their State of Reform [report](link) for this document

Scoring

- State primary system is nonpartisan (everyone votes in a single primary), 1 point

- State primary system is open to Independents (all voters can choose which primary to vote in without registering with a political party), 3/4 point

- State primary system is semi-open (only Independent voters can choose which primary to participate in), ½ point

- State primary system is semi-closed (state law allows political parties to choose which voters can participate in primaries), ¼ point

- State primary system is closed (voters must be registered with a political party to participate in that primary), 0 points

- States with different rules for presidential primaries are indicated by an asterisk.

Summary Table

Category	Number	List
State primary system is nonpartisan	4 states	Alaska* California* Louisiana* Washington*
State primary system is open to Independents	16 states	Alabama Arkansas Georgia Hawaii* Michigan Minnesota Mississippi Missouri Montana Nebraska* North Dakota* South Carolina Texas Vermont Virginia Wisconsin
State primary system is semi-open	15 states	Arizona* Colorado Illinois Indiana Iowa Kansas Maine Massachusetts New Hampshire North Carolina Ohio Rhode Island Tennessee West Virginia Wyoming
State primary system is semi-closed	2 states	Connecticut* Idaho
State primary system is closed	13 states & D.C.	Delaware D.C. Florida Kentucky Maryland

		Nevada
		New Jersey
		New Mexico
		New York
		Oklahoma
		Oregon
		Pennsylvania
		South Dakota
		Utah

State-by-State Sources and More Detail

Alabama (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Alaska (1)

- State primary system is nonpartisan.

- State presidential primary is closed (Democrats allowing Independent voters to participate in 2024).

Arizona (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

- State presidential primary is closed.

Arkansas (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

California (1)

- State primary system is nonpartisan.

- State presidential primary is closed (Democrats allowing Independent voters to participate in 2024).

Colorado (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Connecticut (1/4)

- State primary system is semi-closed.

- State presidential primary is closed

Delaware (0)

- State primary system is closed.

D.C. (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Florida (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Georgia (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Hawaii (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

- State presidential primary is closed.

Idaho (1/4)

- State primary system is semi-closed.

Illinois (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Indiana (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Iowa (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Kansas (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Kentucky (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Louisiana (1)

- State primary system is nonpartisan.

- State presidential primary is closed.

Maine (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Maryland (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Massachusetts (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Michigan (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Minnesota (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Mississippi (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Missouri (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Montana (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Nebraska (3/4)

- State primary system is open.
- Note: Nebraska conducts nonpartisan primaries for its state legislature.
- State presidential primary is closed (Democrats allowing Independents to participate in 2024).

Nevada (0)

- State primary system is closed.

New Hampshire (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

New Jersey (0)

- State primary system is closed.

New Mexico (0)

- State primary system is closed.

New York (0)

- State primary system is closed.

North Carolina (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

North Dakota (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

- State presidential primary is closed (Democrats allowing Independents to participate in 2024).

Ohio (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Oklahoma (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Oregon (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Pennsylvania (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Rhode Island (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

South Carolina (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

South Dakota (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Tennessee (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Texas (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Utah (0)

- State primary system is closed.

Vermont (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Virginia (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Washington (1)

- State primary system is nonpartisan.

- State presidential primary is open.

West Virginia (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.

Wisconsin (3/4)

- State primary system is open.

Wyoming (1/2)

- State primary system is semi-open.