

# Florida Update Report

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Author(s): Zachary Djanogly Garai

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## Introduction

Florida held its biennial state primary—including contests for Senate, the federal House of Representatives, the state legislature, and local offices—on August 20. Unlike the March 19 presidential preference primary, state primaries were held for both major parties, and over three million voters showed up to the polls to make their voices heard. In this brief update to our mid-August Florida report,<sup>1</sup> we first discuss the three major headlines from the election, explain what the data show us about turnout in the state primary, and provide an update on Florida voter registration.

## Election Headlines

- + While the election itself generally ran smoothly, the election followed significant changes to Florida’s voter roll maintenance and voter registration policies. These changes coincide with a drop in voter registration rates, especially among Democrats.<sup>2</sup>
- + Surges in online traffic to county election results pages caused a minor glitch just after polls closed in the state primary last month, overwhelming the servers of the state’s main election website vendor. This issue did not impair tabulation and did not affect the election results.<sup>3</sup>
- + Six candidates for county supervisor of elections whose campaigns prominently featured skepticism about the legitimacy of contemporary U.S. elections lost their primaries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zachary Djanogly Garai, “Florida State Report,” Stanford-MIT Elections Performance Central, [https://www.elexcentral.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Florida-State-Report\\_2024.pdf](https://www.elexcentral.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Florida-State-Report_2024.pdf) (https://web.archive.org/web/20240904203305/https://www.elexcentral.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Florida-State-Report\_2024.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Joanne HANer, Ana Claudia Chacin, and Max Greenwood, “A fast-growing GOP shift in Florida or voter suppression? Here’s what the numbers show,” *Miami Herald*, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article291363080.html>

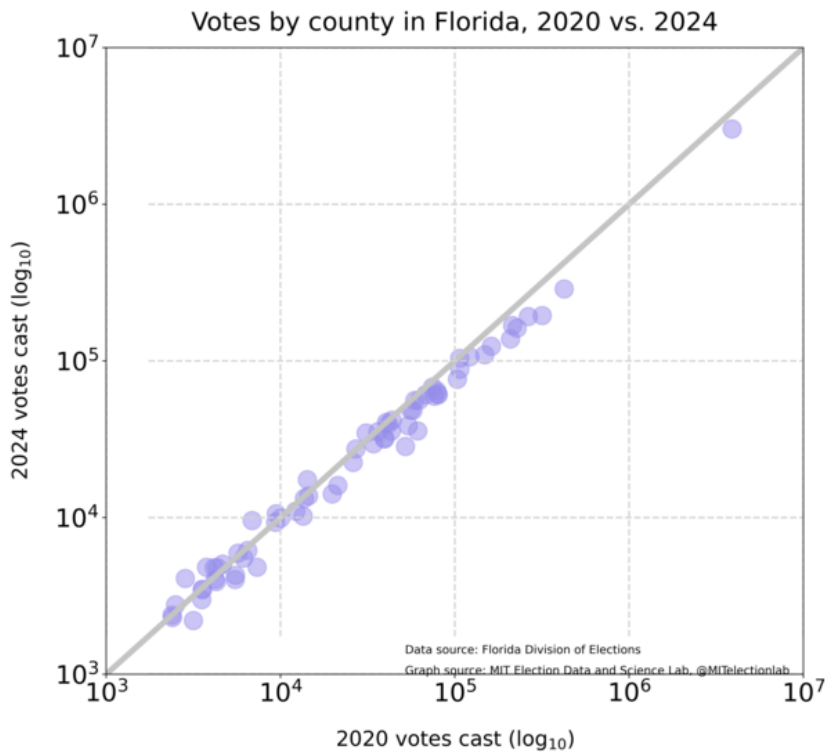
<sup>3</sup> Susannah Bryan, Anthony Man, Abigail Haserbroock, Ron Hurtibise, Lisa J. Huriash, and Jessica Abramsky, “Technical glitch delays election results across state,” *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2024/08/20/its-august-but-tuesday-is-election-day-heres-what-you-need-to-know/>

<sup>4</sup> Tracey McManus and Justin Garcia, “Florida voters reject election denial candidates in 2024 primary,” *Tampa Bay Times*, <https://www.tampabay.com/news/florida-politics/elections/2024/08/21/florida-voters-reject-election-denial-candidates-2024-primary/>

## State Primary Turnout

Turnout in the state primary was low, at 22.39% of registered voters, with 3,029,269 votes cast.<sup>5</sup> This is a decline from the 2020 state primary when 3,896,493 voters participated.<sup>6</sup> This decline is particularly notable for two reasons. First, the 2020 state primary was conducted amidst a public health crisis; the 2024 primary was not. Second, this year’s contests included primaries for U.S. Senate at the top of the ticket (although those primary contests were not highly competitive). At the same time, there were no federal, statewide races on the 2020 ballot to draw voters to the polls. The plot below shows changes in the votes cast in each county between the two state primaries.

Figure 1: Comparison of votes cast by county, 2024 state primary versus 2020 state primary



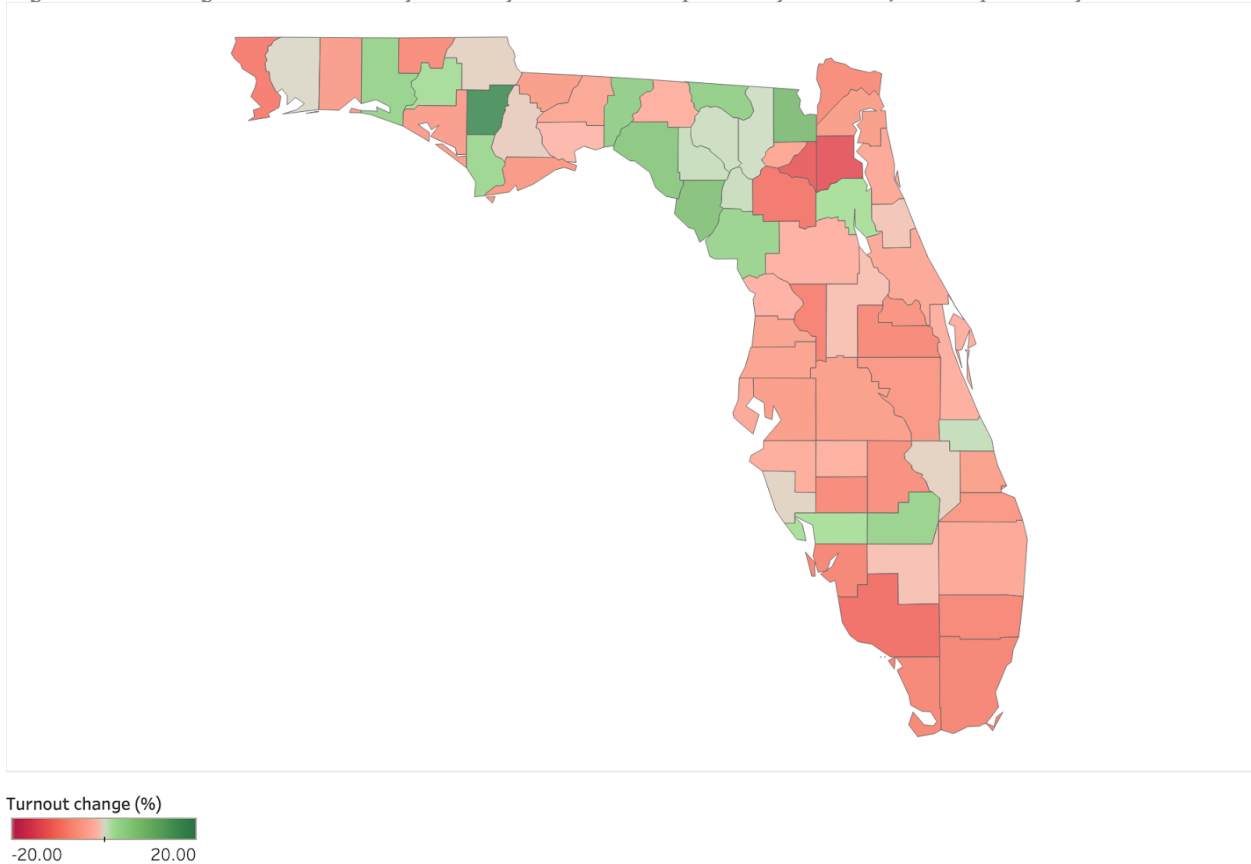
The county map below shows where turnout changed from the 2020 state primary to the 2024 state primary. It increased the most in some smaller North Florida counties. However,

<sup>5</sup> County Reporting Status, Florida Election Watch, Florida Department of State Division of Elections, <https://floridaelectionwatch.gov/CountyReportingStatus>

<sup>6</sup> County Reporting Status, Florida Election Watch, Florida Department of State Division of Elections, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201023013959/https://floridaelectionwatch.gov/CountyReportingStatus>

the more populous counties in this region—including Escambia (home to Pensacola), Leon (Tallahassee), and Duval (Jacksonville)—featured substantial declines, which was also seen in more populated counties in the peninsula. Turnout decreased broadly across the rest of the state as well, with the largest declines in South Florida and more modest changes in Central Florida. This pattern is quite different from that found in the turnout changes between the 2020 and 2024 Republican presidential preference primaries, where South Florida had some small increases, while most of the rest of the state posted decreases.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 2: Change in turnout by county, 2020 state primary to 2024 state primary



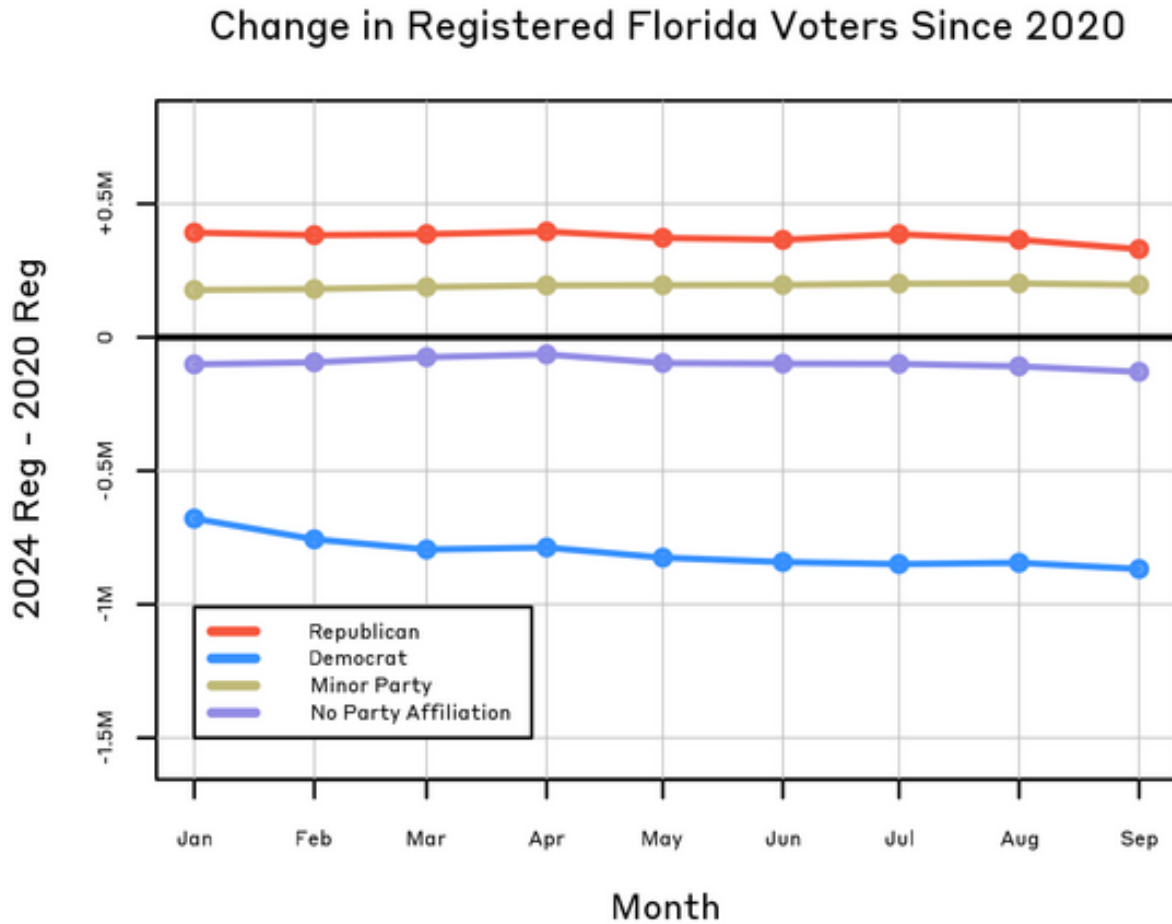
## Voter Registration

Trends in voter registration in Florida are unusually sizeable this year. Republicans continue to gain registered voters, while the number of Democrats has decreased in most months this year. Growth was the slowest in May and has rebounded quickly in the subsequent months. These changes come as Florida experiences a surge in domestic migration and population growth. Compared to 2020, Florida is recording fewer

<sup>7</sup> Zachary Djanogly Garai, “Florida State Report,” Stanford-MIT Elections Performance Central, [https://www.elexcentral.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Florida-State-Report\\_2024.pdf](https://www.elexcentral.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Florida-State-Report_2024.pdf)

registrations through most methods except registrations at the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. The plot below shows the change in registered voters by party from month to month, beginning in January 2024, and compared to party registrations in 2020. It shows a substantial and continuing decline in the number of registered Democrats in the state that outpaces the growth in Republican and unaffiliated voters.

Figure 3: Change in Florida voter registration totals, compared to 2020



Data Source: Florida Department of State, [dos.flgov/elections](https://dos.flgov/elections)  
 Graph Source: MIT Election Data and Science Lab, @MITelectionlab

## Conclusion

Florida enters the final stretch of the 2024 general election season with an interesting year in election administration behind it. First, after low turnout in the presidential primary (due in part to a lack of competition and affected by the outright cancellation of the Democratic primary), the state primary in August also posted low turnout, especially compared to 2020. Second, the state’s voter registration trends feature consistent increases in Republican registrants and decreases in new Democrats.