

Georgia 2026 Report

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Introduction

As one of the country's most closely watched battleground states—and one of only a few that conducts general election runoff elections—Georgia's election system and the officials who administer it are likely to face national attention and scrutiny throughout the election cycle. In this report, we will discuss recent policy and law changes and the primary election, while highlighting the role that election administration will play this fall. The news is not all peachy: Georgia has faced challenges to its election results from President Donald Trump, had a number of hoax bomb threats in 2024, has had difficulty recruiting poll workers in the past, and has long lines at the polls. Despite these challenges, Georgia remains well-positioned to run efficient and secure elections. The state has a comprehensive spread of data available online, has quickly counted elections in the past, and scores high on most indicators in the [Elections Performance Index](#) (EPI).

General Election Calendar

The dates and deadlines for the 2026 general election calendar are provided by [the Georgia Secretary of State](#). The runoff dates are only relevant if no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote for an office in the general election.

- + **Aug. 17:** First day to request absentee ballots for the general election.
- + **Oct. 5:** Registration deadline for general election.
- + **Oct. 13-Oct. 30:** Early voting period for general election (timing varies by county).
- + **Oct. 23:** Last day to request absentee ballots for general election.
- + **Nov. 2:** Registration deadline for runoff election.
- + **Nov. 3:** General Election Day.
- + **Nov. 20:** Last day to request absentee ballots for runoff election.
- + **Nov. 23-Nov. 25:** Early voting period for runoff election (timing varies by county).
- + **Dec. 1:** Runoff Election Day.

Data Availability

The Georgia Secretary of State provides data on registration, turnout, early voting, absentee voting, and election results through its Election Data Hub. For more detailed information, please see the [Georgia Data Guide](#) or the [Elections Division of the Georgia Secretary of State's Office](#).

Election Administration Landscape

Runoffs

Georgia is [one of nine states](#) that hold primary runoffs and one of only three that may hold runoffs for the general election. Runoffs were first added to Georgia's state law in [1964](#), shortly before the passage of the [Voting Rights Act](#). Historically, runoff elections have had much lower turnout than primary elections. In [the 2022 primary elections](#), for example, 26% of Georgia's 7.7 million registered voters cast a ballot. Yet in the runoff, only 4% of registered voters turned out.

Despite having low turnout, runoff elections may improve perceptions of the electoral process. In a study on election satisfaction, subjects in runoff election scenarios expressed [greater satisfaction](#) with the electoral system than those in plurality-winner or instant-runoff systems. Furthermore, those subjects are more likely to believe their votes will be counted fairly compared to those in a plurality condition. At the same time, runoff elections can introduce logistical and fiscal challenges for election administrators. A 2024 study found that general election runoffs are [positive and significant predictors](#) of higher election administration costs in Georgia counties.

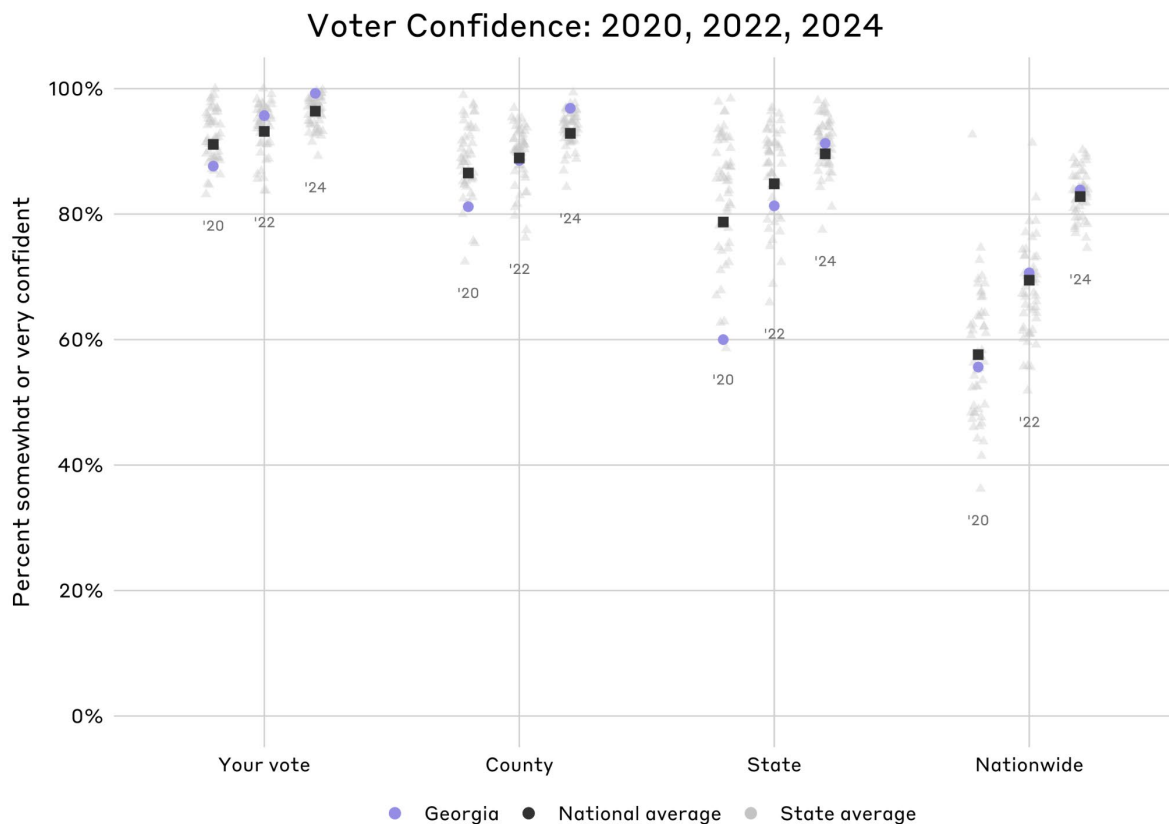
Election Integrity

Following the 2020 presidential election, President Trump and his allies claimed there was [fraud in Fulton County](#), Georgia, an argument that [the courts rejected](#). However, efforts to find evidence of fraud in the 2020 election have continued. In January of this year, federal investigators [seized 600 boxes of ballots](#) from the 2020 election in Fulton County, Georgia. The investigation has since expanded, with the FBI assigning approximately [260](#) analysts nationwide to review hundreds of election-related records. [The Department of Justice](#) (DOJ) has also requested the names and addresses of volunteer poll workers and ballot counters who participated in the 2020 election in Fulton County to question them as witnesses, despite the statute of limitations on any federal crime related to the 2020 election having [already expired](#). The DOJ's actions have led to [pushback](#) from Fulton County's elections office, whose lawyers filed a motion to block the subpoena, claiming that the subpoena is an [effort to terrorize](#) the county's poll workers. In early July, U.S. District Judge William Ray [ruled](#) that the DOJ may not subpoena poll workers' information, saying it was an "[unreasonable](#)" request and the workers' information was "[private and sensitive](#)."

Political messaging about election fraud can directly affect voter behavior. A [2025 study](#) of the 2021 Georgia runoff contest found that the salient messages about the 2020 presidential outcome influenced election denial and voter confidence, shaping political behavior in the election. The study also found that election denial reduced voters'

willingness to participate in the Georgia runoffs, especially among those who voted for Trump. Another study of the 2021 runoff found that following allegations of electoral fraud in the 2020 general election, [voter turnout decreased](#) in the runoff among those who approved of Trump compared with those who disapproved of him, even after controlling for prior turnout history.

Nevertheless, voter confidence in Georgia appears to have increased from 2020 to 2024, both in absolute terms and relative to the national average.



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: SPAE 2020, 2022, 2024

This figure shows the percentage of respondents who reported being somewhat or very confident that votes would be counted accurately in the 2020, 2022, and 2024 elections. Gray triangles represent state averages, purple circles represent Georgia, and black squares represent the national average.

In addition to their effects on voter behavior, beliefs about election integrity may have implications for possible future election interference. The [Voting Rights Lab](#) has

assessed the likelihood that states will experience election crises in 2026, based on factors such as electoral competitiveness, the configuration of state election laws, prior federal intervention, and the presence of elected officials who have cast doubt on past election results. This analysis identifies Georgia as the state most likely to experience an election crisis in 2026, with a risk rating of 98/100.

In 2026, the Georgia secretary of state race is on the ballot. [Current Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger](#), who defended the state's election results against false claims of widespread voter fraud, stepped down in an unsuccessful bid for governor. Since Georgia's secretary of state oversees all election operations, including voter registration and the organization of municipal, state, county, and federal elections, this race will have significant implications for election administration in the state.

Wait Times

According to the [EPI](#), until 2024, Georgia consistently had one of the longest average wait times to vote since the EPI began assessing elections in 2008. In 2022, the average voter waited [9.7 minutes](#), nearly double the national average of 5 minutes. In 2024, Georgia's average wait (11 minutes) was close to the national average (10.4 minutes)—though wait times rose nationally in the higher-turnout presidential election, so Georgia's convergence reflects the national increase more than a Georgia-specific improvement. Because wait times in Georgia have long been controversial, it will be important to follow evidence of long lines in the 2026 general election.

Recent Policy and Law Changes

The Georgia legislature has considered significant election-related legislation since 2020, resulting in a changing legal landscape for election administrators. The laws discussed below have a considerable impact on election administration, with some provisions still being considered by the legislature heading into the general election.

Georgia gained national notoriety in 2021 with the passage of the [Election Integrity Act of 2021](#), popularly known as Senate Bill 202 (SB 202). SB 202 changed Georgia election law by:

- + Replacing signature verification with ID-number verification for absentee voting.
- + Revising the absentee ballot application process and deadlines.
- + Making drop boxes permanent but substantially restricting their number, location, and hours.
- + Expanding and standardizing early in-person voting.
- + Increasing state authority over county election administration through the State Election Board.
- + Shortening the runoff election calendar.
- + Broadening opportunities for voter eligibility challenges.
- + Banning most private funding of election administration.

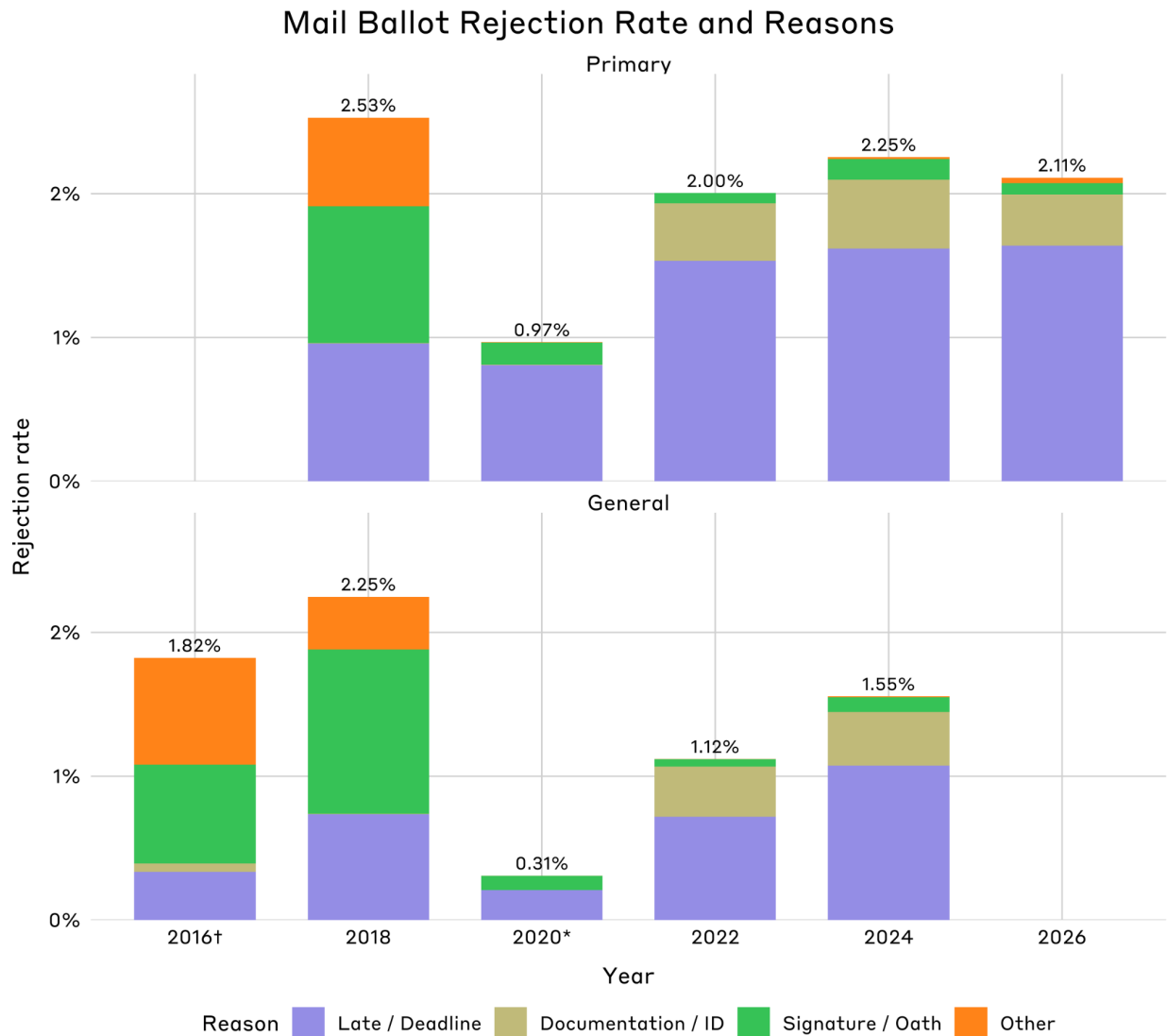
How voters and election officials have adapted to the requirements of SB 202 has become a major topic among followers of Georgia politics and election administration.

Georgia has seen other legislative and policy controversies aside from SB 202. Among these was the passage of SB 189 in 2024, which affected voter list maintenance and the use of QR codes on ballots.

Absentee Ballot Identification Requirements

Prior to SB 202, absentee voter identification was primarily based on signature verification. In the 2021 overhaul, Georgia [eliminated signature verification for absentee ballots](#), and since then, absentee voters have been required to [provide their driver's license number or other specified form of ID](#) on the application and the outer envelope of the returned ballot. The legislation also shortened the window for mail voting. These changes, combined with the added requirements for ballot verification, led critics to argue that it would [make it harder to vote for certain demographics](#), including students, voters of color, and traveling families.

Based on data provided by the Georgia Secretary of State's office, it appears that mail ballot rejection rates have declined compared to pre-pandemic levels, primarily because of the significant decline in rejections due to signature mismatches, which suggests that the ID-number requirement for applications and returned ballots may have benefitted those voting by mail. Even after adding the new documentation/ID rejection category to the signature rejection category to ensure comparability over time, identification-related problems with absentee ballots appear to have been reduced. On the other hand, ballots rejected for arriving late have increased.



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

* 2020 rates diluted by pandemic mail ballot volume
† 2016 primary rejection data not available

This figure shows the rate of mail ballot rejection broken down by reason for primary and general elections from 2016 to 2026. The Georgia Secretary of State categorizes rejections into the following categories: late / deadline (purple), documentation / ID (gold), signature/oath (green), and other (orange).

In a [survey of Georgia voters and election officials](#) following the 2022 election, the first election after the passage of the legislation, most voters reported finding it easier to cast a ballot in 2022 compared to 2020. The same study also reported that a plurality of local

election officials reported that the new absentee ballot verification process was faster and that they did not observe an uptick in absentee ballot rejections.

Early In-Person Voting

SB 202 also purported to increase access to weekend early voting by [requiring “two Saturday voting days and two optional Sunday voting days”](#) as well as providing all voters in Georgia with the [option to “vote in person on the weekend for the first time.”](#) [Prior law mandated one Saturday](#) for early in-person weekend voting. At the same time, the legislation reduced the runoff period and [shortened the early in-person voting period for runoffs](#) from three weeks to one week, with [no mandatory weekend early voting](#) options. Since early voting must now end the Friday before the runoff, a Saturday is no longer guaranteed to fall within the early-voting period as it typically did before.

Changes made by SB 202 to early in-person voting were expected to cut in different directions, with some provisions predicted to increase its use and others to decrease it. We are unaware of any research that has tested these predictions, although it would probably be too soon after passage to draw firm conclusions about its effects.

Line Relief / Line Warming Restrictions

SB 202 also [made it a misdemeanor to give “money or gifts, including, but not limited to, food and drink,”](#) to voters waiting in line within specified areas around a polling place, a practice known as “line relief” or “line warming.” Proponents of the law have argued the restriction [guards against attempts to influence voters](#) just before they reach the ballot box and is consistent with state and federal prohibitions on offering anything of value to voters, while critics point to the [hours-long wait times documented](#) at metro Atlanta polling places during the 2020 election and argue that [line-relief activities constitute expressive conduct protected](#) by the First Amendment.

In August 2022, U.S. District Judge J.P. Boulee [declined to block the ban](#), citing the [Purcell principle](#) that changing election rules too close to Election Day could cause confusion for voters and election administrators, not because the plaintiffs necessarily lacked a likelihood of success on the merits. In an August 2023 ruling, [Boulee upheld the ban](#) within a 150-foot “buffer zone” around the polling place, but enjoined [enforcement](#) of the 25-foot “supplemental zone,” which extends outward from each voter waiting in line. [Boulee concluded](#) that the moving, indeterminate nature of that zone burdened protected expressive conduct in a way that the fixed 150-foot polling-place buffer did not.

In December 2025, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals [vacated the district court’s](#) injunction as to the 25-foot supplemental zone and remanded the case for reconsideration under the framework established in the Supreme Court’s 2024 decision in [Moody v. NetChoice, LLC](#). The panel expressly [declined to address](#) the constitutionality of the restriction, concluding instead that the district court had not conducted the facial-challenge analysis required by *Moody*.

As a result, the injunction against enforcement of the 25-foot supplemental zone was vacated, leaving open the possibility that the full statutory restriction could be enforced during the 2026 election cycle unless the district court again grants relief on remand.

Ballot Drop Boxes

Drop boxes were [introduced in Georgia in 2020 as an emergency measure](#) for voters to deposit absentee ballots during the pandemic. During the 2020 election cycle, counties [commonly located drop boxes outdoors on government property, monitored them by video surveillance](#), and made them available 24 hours a day until polls closed on Election Day. SB 202 permanently codified drop boxes in Georgia law, while imposing restrictions on their number, location, and availability.

Under the revised statute, [every county must have at least one drop box, and the number of boxes in a county is capped](#) at one per 100,000 active registered voters or the number of advance voting locations, whichever is smaller. The drop boxes [must be located indoors at specified locations](#) such as the registrar's office or early voting sites, and are [available exclusively during advance voting hours](#). Proponents framed the changes as [codifying drop boxes into law](#) and bringing security to their use, while critics argued the [restrictions would disproportionately burden](#) Black voters and voters with disabilities.

The drop box restrictions were challenged following the law's passage in a consolidated federal case (*In re: Georgia Senate Bill 202*), which [brought together six lawsuits](#) filed in 2021. Plaintiffs [argued the limits of SB 202 violated](#) the Voting Rights Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and the U.S. Constitution.

In August 2023, [Judge J.P. Boulee declined to block](#) the drop box and absentee ballot provisions for the 2024 elections. Boulee [acknowledged evidence](#) that some voters with disabilities would experience greater difficulty under SB 202 but concluded that, given the availability of alternative voting methods, plaintiffs had not demonstrated a likelihood of success on their ADA claims sufficient to justify preliminary relief. In March 2025, the Department of Justice, which had been [a plaintiff in the consolidated case, voluntarily dismissed](#) its claims challenging SB 202 following the change in presidential administrations. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger [welcomed the decision](#) and had publicly urged the DOJ to withdraw the suit.

State Election Board Rulemaking and Court Repudiation

SB 202 not only altered election procedures but also substantially changed Georgia's election governance. By removing the Secretary of State as chair of the State Election Board and creating a board whose chair is selected through the General Assembly, the legislation established a more independent policymaking body. In the years that have followed, the Board has taken an increasingly active role in interpreting and supplementing Georgia election law through administrative rulemaking, prompting

repeated conflicts with both the Secretary of State and the courts over the scope of its authority.

Ahead of the 2024 elections, the Board approved rule changes that [were controversial in Georgia and nationally](#), including a requirement that poll workers manually count the paper ballots cast at each precinct on Election Day, a requirement that county officials were required to conduct a “reasonable inquiry” before certifying elections, and allowing county election officials “to examine all election-related documentation created during the conduct of elections.” The Fulton County Superior Court subsequently blocked these rules, [stating that they were “illegal, unconstitutional, and void.”](#) In response, the Georgia Republican Party and the Republican National Committee filed an emergency appeal with the state Supreme Court seeking to require enforcement of the rules for the November 5, 2024 election, but [the Court denied the emergency effort to reinstate the rules before the election](#) and only addressed the merits of the ruling after the election. [The Georgia Supreme Court ultimately affirmed most of the Superior Court's conclusions that the challenged rules exceeded the Board's statutory authority.](#)

The Court's June 2025 decision did more than invalidate several election rules. It substantially narrowed the State Election Board's rulemaking authority, emphasizing that administrative agencies possess no inherent lawmaking authority and may exercise only those powers delegated by the General Assembly. As a result, future efforts by the Board to reshape election administration through rulemaking are likely to face substantially greater judicial scrutiny. The decision therefore shifted primary responsibility for major changes in Georgia election administration back to the General Assembly, limiting the State Election Board's ability to alter election procedures through administrative rulemaking alone.

Voter List Maintenance

In May 2024, Governor Kemp signed SB 189 into law, addressing several issues, including voter eligibility and voter record removal. The legislation specifies circumstances that constitute probable cause for voter [eligibility challenges](#), thereby making it easier for county boards to proceed with challenges alleging that a voter is no longer eligible. The statute identifies circumstances that constitute probable cause for a voter eligibility challenge, including evidence that the voter has died or has registered or voted in another jurisdiction.

SB 189 postpones any voter challenge filed within 45 days of an election until after certification. Critics argue that permitting removals based on challenges filed between 46 and 89 days before a federal election conflicts with the National Voter Registration Act's [90-day quiet period](#) for systematic voter-list maintenance.

Opponents of the law have argued that [mass voter challenges threaten democracy](#), since such challenges are often brought forward based on questionable data and could possibly disenfranchise eligible voters.

Several county election boards, including Cobb County, are currently deliberating [whether they should charge for filed challenges](#). This cost would disincentivize members of the public from mass-submitting voter challenges using software programs such as EagleAI, which are controversial because they may erroneously [flag eligible voters](#) for challenge. [Voter challenge proponents oppose the added costs](#), claiming that if election boards successfully maintained accurate voter rolls, there would be no reason for voter challenges. Election administrators have generally responded that maintaining accurate voter rolls is a shared responsibility between the Secretary of State and county election officials and that every voter challenge must still be individually investigated before any voter may be removed from the registration list.

QR Code Ballot Tabulation

[SB 189](#) provided that, beginning July 1, 2026, votes were to be tabulated from the human-readable text on ballots rather than from QR codes, which are machine-readable images encoding a voter's selections. Under [Georgia's current voting system](#), voters make their selections on a [ballot-marking device](#), which prints both a human-readable summary of their vote and a QR code encoding their selections. When the ballot is scanned, the tabulator reads the QR code rather than the printed text to count the vote.

[By June 2026, Georgia had neither selected nor implemented a replacement voting system](#); therefore, the bill's provisions would have left election officials without a legally authorized statewide voting system for the 2026 November midterm elections. To address this issue, Governor Brian Kemp [called](#) a special legislative session beginning June 17, 2026.

The result was the passage of [SB 3EX](#), a bill that pushed back the QR code tabulation prohibition to January 1, 2028. Republican lawmakers also added an amendment to the bill that would require counties to hand-recount ballots in specified statewide contests, but only when the margin is within 0.5%. The measure received overwhelming Republican support. Only a small number of Democrats voted in favor; those who did said they viewed extending the QR code deadline as necessary to avoid disruption to the 2026 election.

Before lawmakers convened for the special session, the Georgia State Election Board had debated how the state should respond to the approaching deadline. An earlier draft of a proposal from the board urged the General Assembly to appropriate funds for counties' transition to a new voting system. Both Democratic appointee Sara Tindall Ghazal and Republican Vice Chair Janice Johnston objected that it was inappropriate for the Board to direct the legislature's policy choices, [and those provisions were ultimately removed](#).

In the days leading up to the special session, the Board's leadership changed: Janice Johnston stepped down as vice chair on June 3 and announced her resignation from the Board the following day, citing family and personal responsibilities. Her successor as vice chair, Janelle King, [introduced a non-binding resolution](#) encouraging a transition to hand-marked paper ballots before the November election, which the Board passed 3–1. This contradicted the Secretary of State's office's [prior guidance to counties](#) to use the state's current voting system.

Following the special session, on July 8, the State Election Board adopted two new rules related to ballot tabulation in the new transitional period. The first [requires](#) that votes be tabulated directly from paper ballots rather than from electronic copies. This requirement effectively [prohibits](#) the use of optical character recognition (OCR) technology, a measure the Secretary of State had proposed as an interim step. The Board also adopted a [rule](#) requiring vote tabulation and consolidation to occur publicly. The tabulation rule is likely to face legal challenges, as Georgia's attorney general [previously](#) advised that the Board lacked the statutory authority to adopt or implement such a requirement.

ERIC Membership

Because Georgia relies on interstate data sharing to help identify voters who have moved or died, continued participation in the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) has become intertwined with broader debates over voter list maintenance and election integrity. ERIC is a nonprofit organization [founded to share voter data among member states](#) and to help identify voters who had moved or died, thereby maintaining more accurate voter rolls. [Georgia became a member of ERIC in 2019](#). Recently, some conservative critics [have accused ERIC of being a conspiratorial tool](#) to help Democrats win elections. HB 397 was introduced in Georgia in 2025 as a bill that proposed [a variety of changes to election administration](#). As amended during the legislative session, HB 397 proposed that Georgia ultimately withdraw from ERIC while

directing the State Election Board to evaluate alternatives. However, the bill was [not passed in the 2025 legislative session](#).

Georgia's continued membership in ERIC remains an issue, one that may come up again following the 2026 election. One reason Georgia has remained a member of ERIC, even as many Republican-governed states have left, is that it has enjoyed the support of the current governor and secretary of state. However, both are stepping down in 2027—Governor Kemp, because he was term-limited, and Secretary Raffensperger, because he ran (unsuccessfully) to replace Kemp. As of this writing, it is unclear whether the Republican nominees for these offices—Rick Jackson for Governor and Tim Fleming for Secretary of State—will seek to leave. Jackson has run on broad conservative themes and has not yet taken a public position to withdraw. However, his alignment with President Trump could make him more sympathetic to leaving ERIC than Kemp. Fleming, who previously served as Deputy Secretary of State, has also not focused on ERIC, choosing instead to emphasize election integrity, voter confidence, and implementation of Georgia election law.

Should Jackson be defeated by the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, Keisha Lance Bottoms, a bill to require Georgia to leave ERIC would likely be vetoed. (Republicans currently do not have veto-proof majorities in either chamber. If Democrats make gains in the General Assembly, the prospect for a veto override would diminish further.) Otherwise, whether ERIC becomes a priority for the General Assembly when it convenes in January 2027 will depend in part on whether Republican legislative leaders prioritize withdrawing from ERIC during the 2027 session.

Redistricting

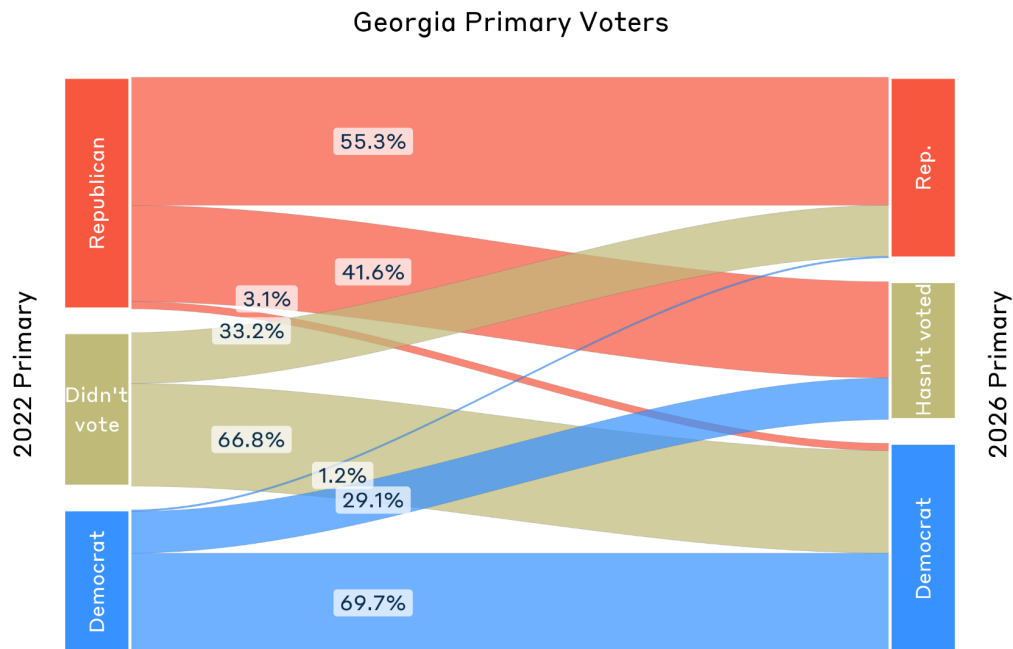
Earlier in 2026, Governor Kemp [called a special legislative session](#) expected to consider redrawing both Georgia's congressional and legislative districts before the 2028 election. This was in the context both of President Trump's call for Republican-controlled states to redraw districts to improve Republican prospects in the upcoming

midterm elections and the Supreme Court's [*Louisiana v. Callais*](#) decision, which substantially narrowed the circumstances in which Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act requires states to create majority-minority districts and expanded states' discretion to draw race-neutral districts. Observers widely expected Republican lawmakers to revisit Georgia's districts to boost Republican congressional prospects in 2028.

However, as lawmakers were arriving for the special session in Atlanta, [civil rights activists and protesters also assembled](#) to oppose the redistricting changes. In addition, Republican leaders and many members of their caucuses [expressed reservations](#) about considering mid-decade redistricting at that time due to pending litigation, insufficient public input, and a compressed timeline. Furthermore, news reports also suggested that Republicans were concerned about the political consequences of reopening redistricting before a competitive election. In the end, Republican leaders announced at the start of the session that redrawing district lines [would not be pursued during that session](#), but indicated that the issue could be revisited during the 2027 regular legislative session or post-election special session.

2026 Primary Election Analysis

Georgia held its primary election on May 19, with early voting beginning on April 27. The 2026 primaries were among the most consequential in recent Georgia history. Because Governor Brian Kemp was term-limited and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger sought the governorship, both offices featured open-seat Republican races with significant implications for the state's future election policies.



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
 Data source: Georgia Secretary of State voter history data

This Sankey graph shows how voters who participated in the 2022 primary chose to participate in the 2026 primary. Most voters who chose to vote in the 2022 Republican primary also voted in the 2026 Republican primary (55.3%), and the same is true for voters who participated in the 2022 Democratic primary (69.7%). To read about advance voting trends and cross-voting in Georgia, check out Charles Stewart III's [Substack](#).

Because Georgia holds open primary elections, voters can request a Republican, Democratic, or non-partisan ballot. Most of the 2022 Republican primary voters chose to participate in the 2026 Republican primary, and the same is true for 2022 Democratic primary voters. However, it is worth noting that 41.6% of the 2022 Republican primary voters chose not to vote in the 2026 primary, while only 29.1% of the 2022 Democratic primary voters did not participate in 2026. This suggests that Democratic engagement may be slightly higher than Republican engagement in Georgia this year. Additionally, 3.1% of 2022 Republican primary voters chose to vote in the Democratic primary this year, which is a higher proportion than the share of 2022 Democratic primary voters who chose to vote in the 2026 Republican primary (1.2%).

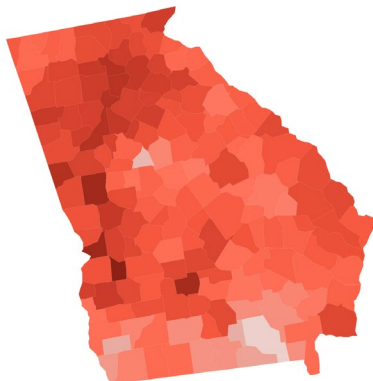
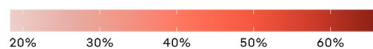
Candidates who receive a majority of the votes in their primary go on to the general election in November. However, if no candidate garners a majority in their primary, the top two candidates appear on the ballot in the primary runoff. Voters who cast a partisan ballot in the primary can only vote in the party's runoff for the party they voted for in the primary; those who did not vote in the initial primary or who voted on a nonpartisan ballot can cast a ballot in [either party's runoff](#). This year, the runoff for the primary election was held on June 16.

Notable Results

As in past years, Georgia's [numerous competitive elections](#) have made it the focus of national attention in 2026. The most closely watched contests included the open-seat gubernatorial race, the U.S. Senate Republican primary, and races for secretary of state, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and several other statewide offices.

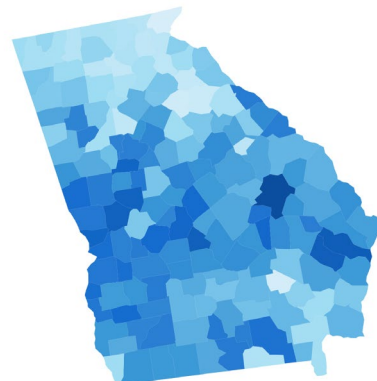
Governor

Rick Jackson Primary Runoff Vote Share by County



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

Keisha Lance Bottoms Primary Vote Share by County

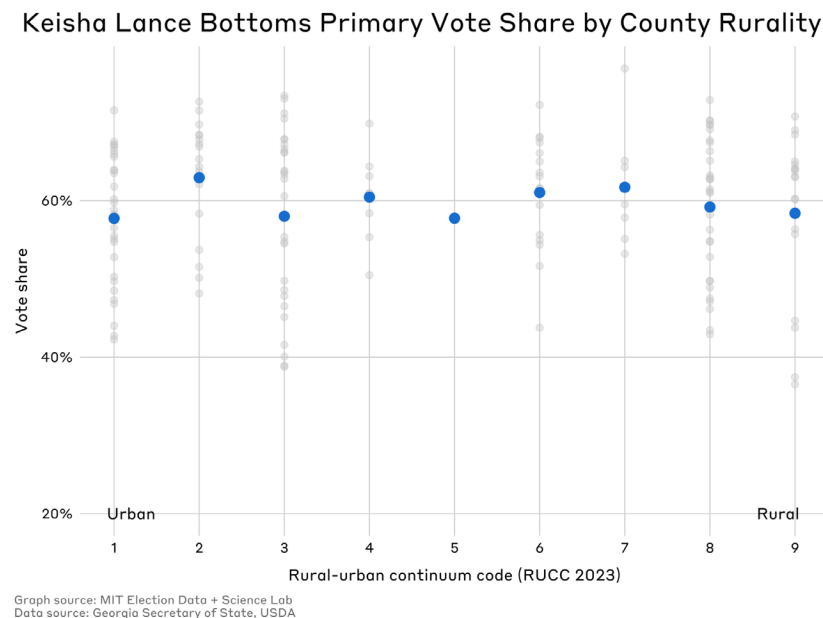
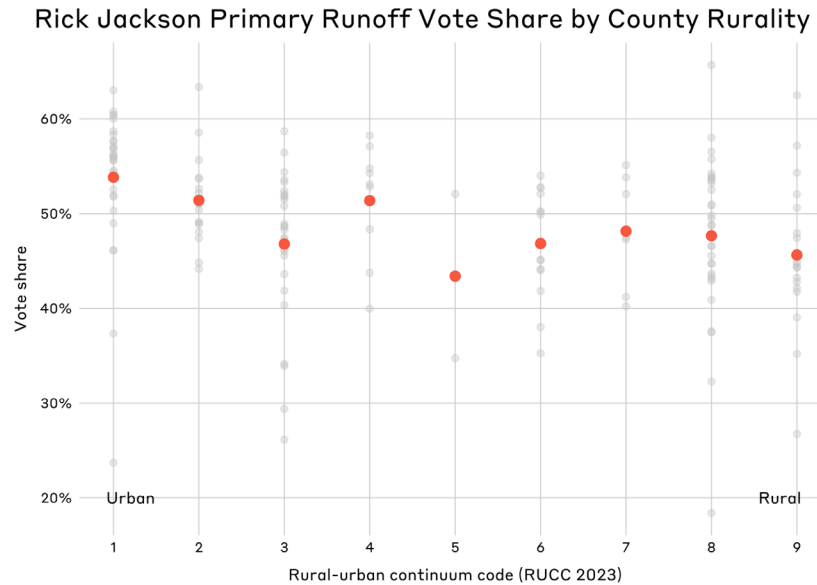


Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

The figure on the left shows the share of votes received in the gubernatorial primary runoff by Rick Jackson (R) in each county; darker red indicates Jackson received a larger share of votes. The figure on the right shows the share of votes received in the gubernatorial primary by Keisha Lance Bottoms (D) in each county, darker blue indicates Lance Bottoms received a larger share of votes.

In the gubernatorial race, Republican Burt Jones advanced to a primary runoff against Rick Jackson. Throughout the campaign, [Jones argued](#) that the 2020 election was marred by fraud and irregularities and continued to question the legitimacy of the outcome. Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who denied Trump's request to "[find](#)" [additional votes](#) in 2020, received only 15% of the votes and did not make it past the first round of voting. Rick Jackson ultimately won the runoff with 52.6% of the vote, making Burt Jones one of only a handful of candidates endorsed by Trump who subsequently [lost in a 2026 primary](#). As shown in the map above, Jackson had the strongest showing in counties in the Atlanta metro in the northern part of the state. As can be seen in the figure below, Jackson performed better in urban counties, averaging 53.8% of the vote in the most urban counties (those with a rural-urban continuum code of 1) versus just 45.6% in the most rural counties (rural-urban continuum code of 9).

In the Democratic primary for governor, Keisha Lance Bottoms advanced to the general election with 56% of the vote, avoiding a runoff. Her largest margins were generally outside the core Atlanta metro area, despite her tenure as Atlanta's mayor from 2018 to 2022. They were concentrated across smaller counties in Georgia, including many central and southwestern Black Belt counties, as well as several counties in south and southeast Georgia. As shown in the figure below, her average vote share was nearly identical across the most urban and most rural county categories, unlike Jackson's.



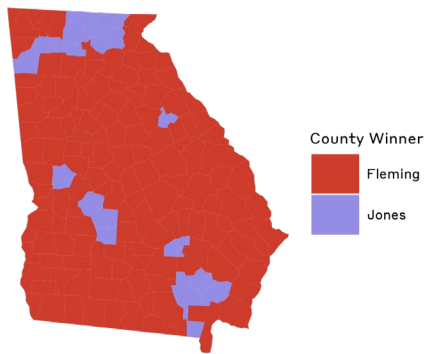
The figures show Jackson's primary runoff vote share (top) and Lance Bottoms' primary vote share (bottom) as a function of county rurality, where 1 indicates the most urban counties, and 9 indicates the most rural. Jackson performed better on average in more urban counties while Lance Bottoms performed similarly across urban and rural counties.

Secretary of State

The general election also will determine Brad Raffensperger's successor as Secretary of State, and there were runoffs on both the Republican and Democratic sides. In the

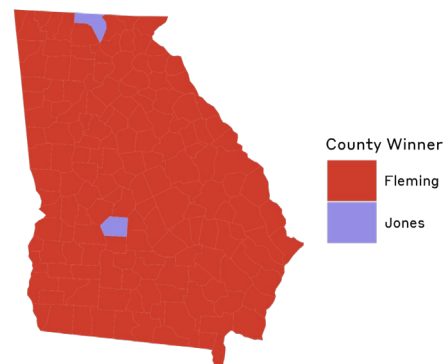
Republican primary runoff election, Vernon Jones, who [claimed the 2020 election was stolen](#), was defeated by Tim Fleming. Fleming has claimed that there were “[irregularities](#)” in the 2020 election, though he stopped short of asserting that the certified outcome should have been overturned. He also supports efforts to move the state toward hand-marked paper ballots. In the general election, Fleming will face Penny Brown Reynolds, who won the Democratic primary.

Georgia Secretary of State Republican Primary Results



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State - 2026 Primary Election Results

Georgia Secretary of State Republican Runoff

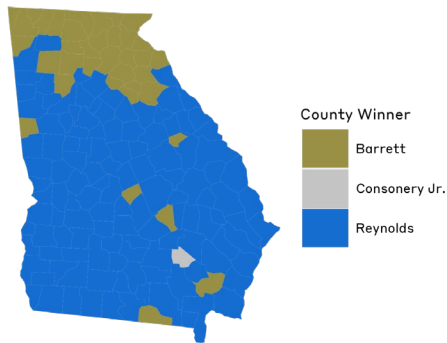


Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Associated Press (Georgia Secretary of State runoff results)

The two figures above show the Republican primary results and runoff results for the Secretary of State contest. Counties won by Tim Fleming are colored in red and counties won by Vernon Jones are colored in purple.

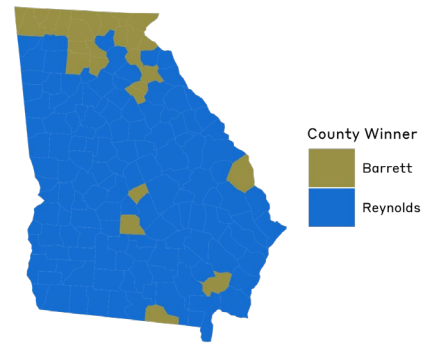
Out of the five candidates who appeared on the Republican primary ballot for Secretary of State, only Fleming and Jones received the most votes in at least one county. Fleming had the highest vote share in most of the counties during the initial Republican primary, and he won all but two in the runoff election. He also received over 50% of the vote in the primary in 11 counties. In the runoff election, [64.5%](#) of the votes went to Fleming.

Georgia Secretary of State Democratic Primary Results



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State - 2026 Primary Election Results

Georgia Secretary of State Democratic Runoff



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Associated Press (Georgia Secretary of State runoff results)

The two figures above show the Democratic primary results and runoff results for the Secretary of State contest. Counties won by Penny Brown Reynolds are colored in blue, counties won by Dana Barrett are colored in gold, and the county won by Adrian Consonery Jr. (the fourth place candidate) is colored in grey.

The Democratic primary for this contest had four candidates. Penny Brown Reynolds received the most votes in the primary (and the majority of votes in 23 counties), and she advanced to the runoff alongside Dana Barrett. Reynolds ended up winning the runoff election against Barrett, winning [63.10%](#) of the vote.

Because the Secretary of State serves as Georgia's chief election official and Democrats have not won the Secretary of State contest in Georgia since 2002, Fleming's victory in the Republican primary significantly increases the likelihood that the state's election policies will evolve after Brad Raffensperger leaves office in January 2027.

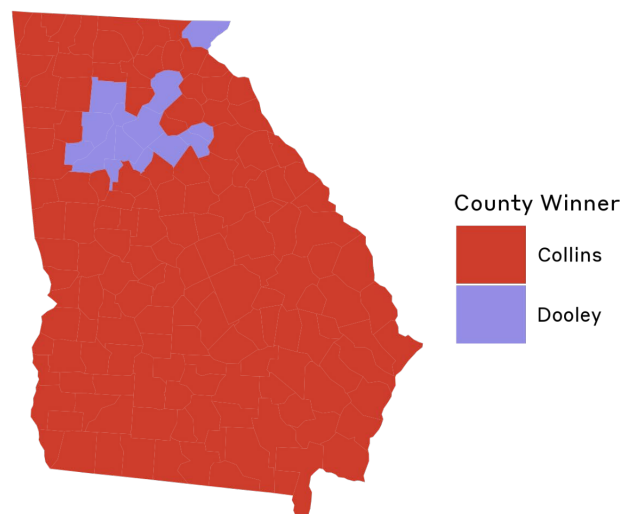
U.S. Senate

Georgia's U.S. Senate race is one of the nation's most closely watched contests because it could affect control of the Senate and potentially boost the 2028 presidential hopes of the incumbent, Jon Ossoff (D). Ossoff will face off against U.S. Representative Mike Collins (R), who defeated Derek Dooley in the Republican runoff. President Trump endorsed Collins [two days](#) before the runoff, while Governor Brian Kemp endorsed

Dooley in [2025](#), making the race a closely watched [test](#) of the competing factions within the Republican Party.

Collins won the runoff with [55%](#) of the vote and carried most Georgia counties, while Dooley's support was concentrated in several counties in the northern Atlanta metropolitan area (see figure below). The geographic distribution of the vote suggests that Collins performed particularly well in rural counties whereas Dooley performed best in more urban counties. Given Governor Kemp's [popularity](#) within the state, Collins' victory following Trump's endorsement was widely viewed as an indication of Trump's continued influence among Republican primary voters in the state.

Georgia U.S. Senate Republican Runoff



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Associated Press (Georgia U.S. Senate runoff results)

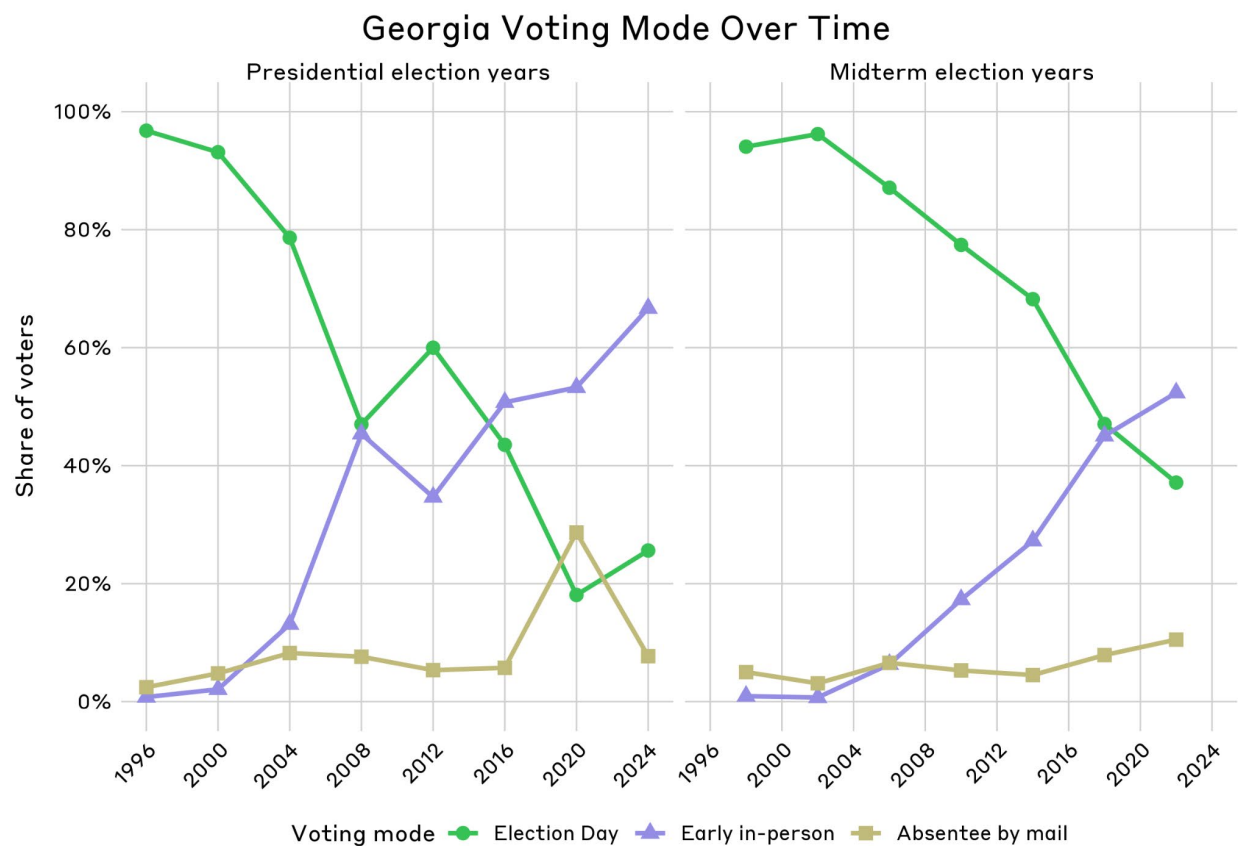
This figure shows the county-level winners in the 2026 Georgia Republican U.S. Senate primary runoff election. Counties won by Mike Collins are shown in red, while counties won by Derek Dooley are shown in purple.

Although the Senate contest has few direct implications for Georgia election administration, it is likely to be one of the nation's highest-profile races and could shape the state's broader election environment. The race is likely to attract substantial [spending](#) from campaigns and outside groups, continuing a pattern of significant

independent [expenditures](#) in recent Georgia Senate elections. Combined with the competitive gubernatorial election, the Senate race is also expected to increase voter turnout and media attention, placing additional demand on election officials.

Voting Modes

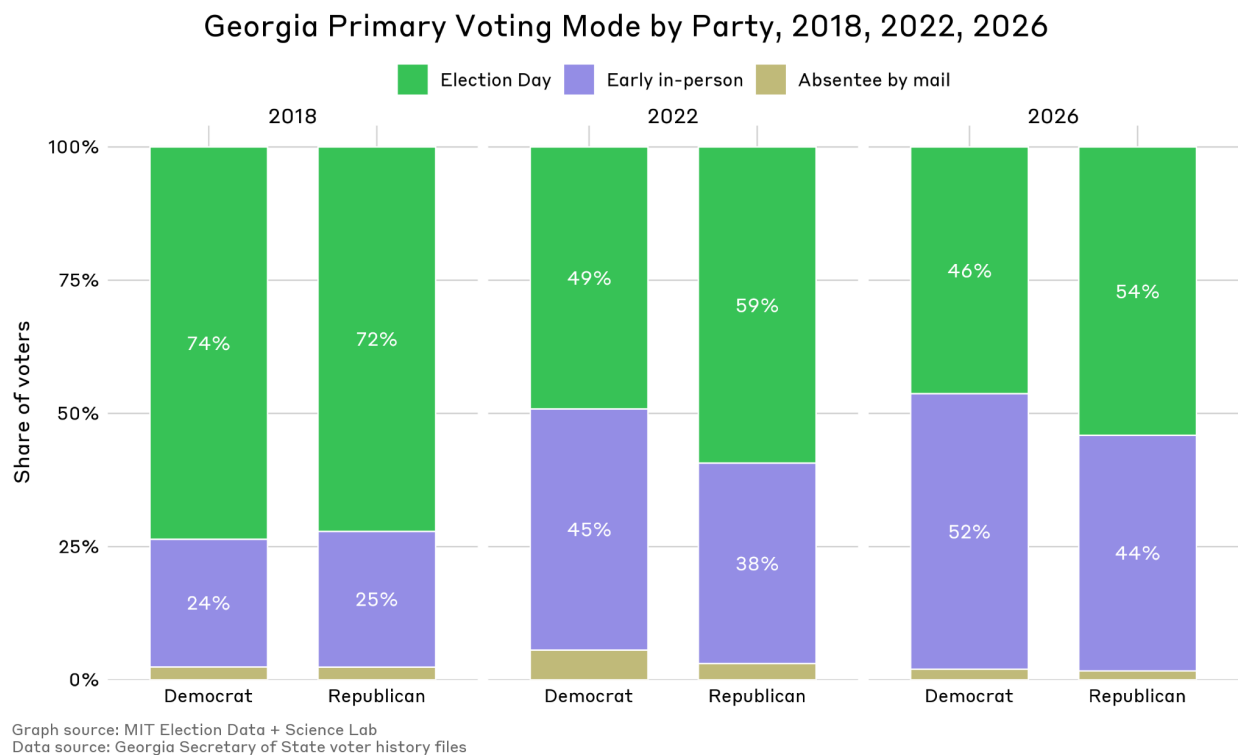
Voting in Georgia is dominated by Election Day and early in-person voting, although [no-excuse absentee voting](#) is also allowed. As shown in the figure below, Georgia voters have been steadily moving away from Election Day voting in both presidential and midterm elections for the past thirty years, opting instead to cast in-person early votes. Election Day voting tends to be more prevalent in midterm election years, while early in-person voting tends to account for a larger share in presidential election years.



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
 Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Voting and Registration Supplement

This figure shows the share of votes cast on Election Day (green), early in-person (purple), and absentee by mail (gold) in Georgia general elections since 1996. The left panel plots presidential election years and the right panel plots midterm election years.

Using the voter history files from the Georgia Secretary of State, the figure below shows the party differential in voting mode for the 2018, 2022, and 2026 primaries. In 2018, voting mode was nearly identical among Democrats and Republicans. In the subsequent elections, a clear pattern emerges: Democrats utilize early in-person voting more frequently than Republicans. In the 2026 primary, 52% of votes cast by Democrats were early in-person compared to 44% for Republicans—a party differential of 8 percentage points, similar to what was observed in the 2022 primary.

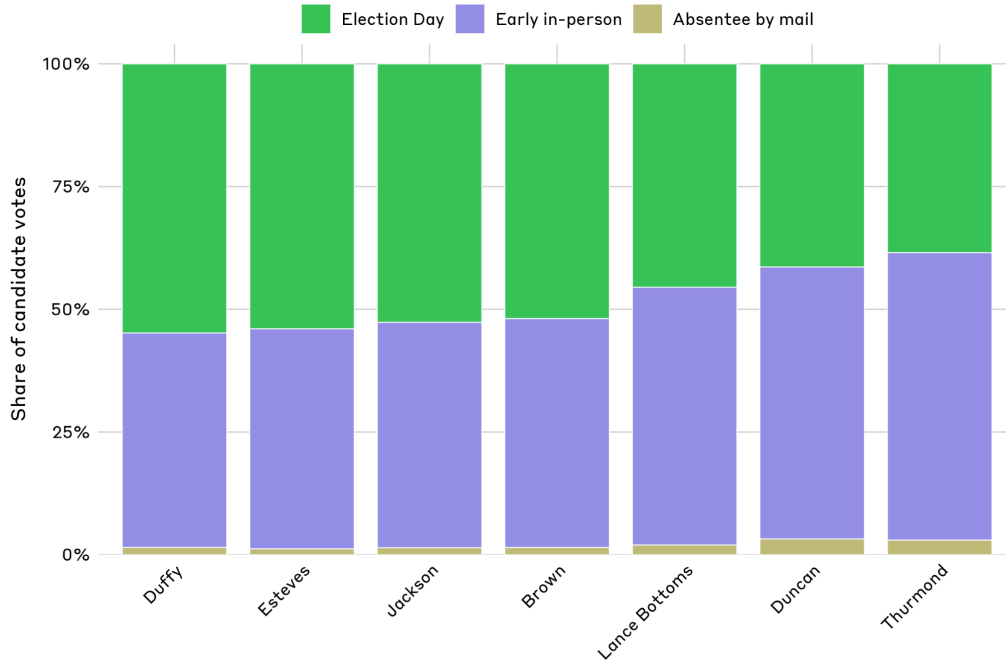


The figure shows the voting mode breakdown for Democratic and Republican primary voters in the 2018, 2022, and 2026 primary elections. Election Day voting is shown in green, early in-person in purple, and absentee by mail in gold.

The change in voting mode occurred along with a shift in the composition of the primary electorate. Total primary turnout increased by just under 5% between 2022 and 2026, but Republican primary participation fell by about 22%, while Democratic primary participation increased by about 46%. As a result, differences in the raw number of early or absentee ballots cast by party reflect both mode choice and changes in each party's primary electorate size.

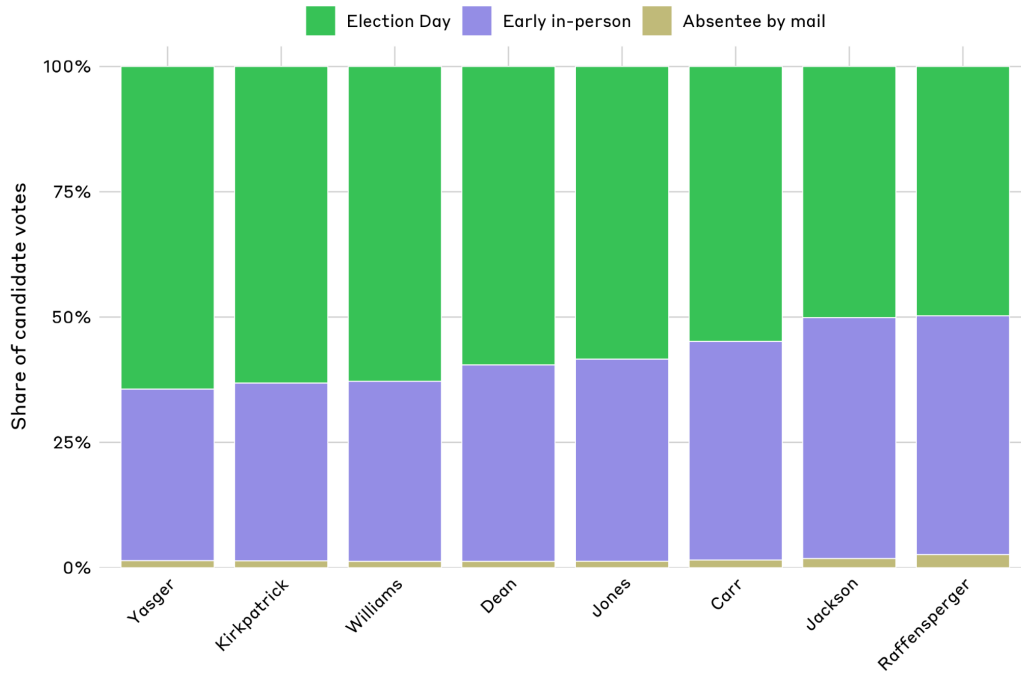
Candidate-level differences also remain visible within-party. In the 2026 gubernatorial primaries, Democratic candidates generally drew less of their support from Election Day voters than Republican candidates did, consistent with the party-level pattern above. But there was also meaningful variation among Republican candidates. Raffensperger had the lowest Election Day vote share among Republican gubernatorial candidates, with just under half of his votes cast on Election Day, while several more Trump-aligned Republican candidates relied more heavily on Election Day voters. This pattern is consistent with the idea that voters most responsive to the "vote only on Election Day" message were more concentrated among those candidates' electorates, while Raffensperger's support came somewhat more from early in-person and absentee voters.

Georgia Democratic Governor Primary Vote Mode



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

Georgia Republican Governor Primary Vote Mode

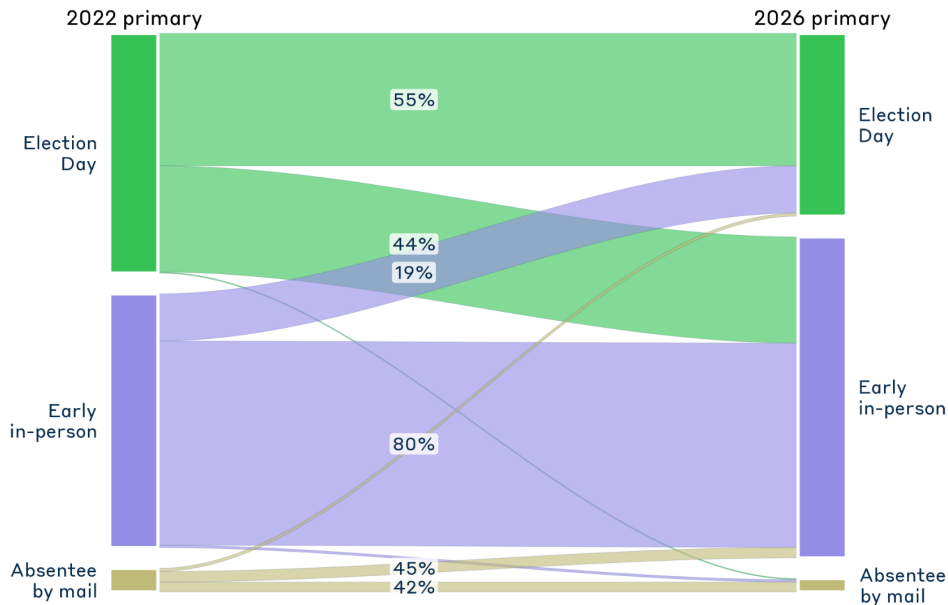


Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

The figures show the share of votes for each candidate by voting mode in the Georgia Democratic (top) and Republican (bottom) 2026 gubernatorial primaries. Election Day voting is shown in green, early in-person in purple, and absentee by mail in gold.

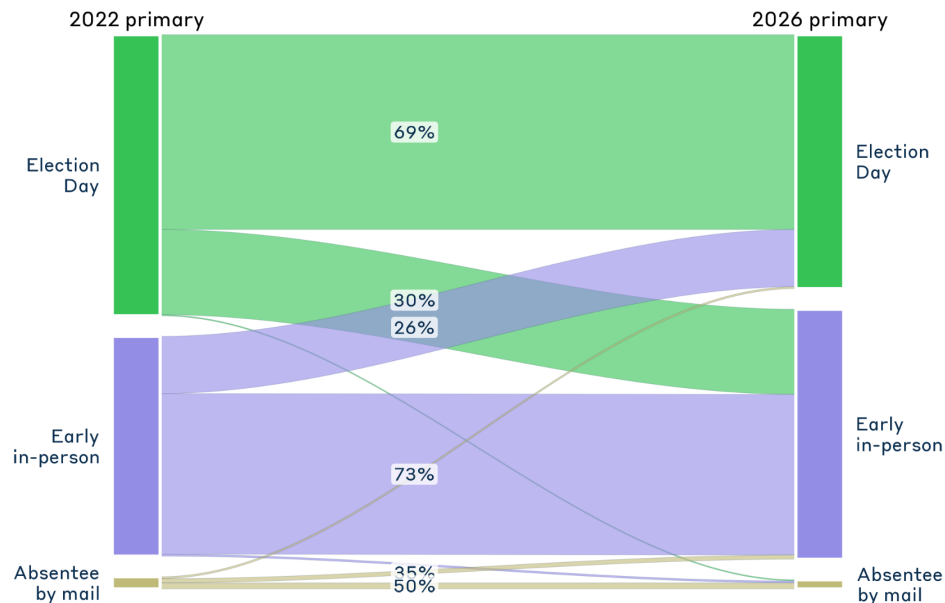
To separate changes in electorate size from changes in individual behavior, we can use the voter history files to track voters who participated in both the 2022 and 2026 primaries. The figures below show how those repeat primary voters moved across voting modes. Voting mode was relatively consistent, especially for early in-person voters, but Democratic Election Day voters in 2022 were more likely than Republican Election Day voters to shift to early in-person voting in 2026. Republican Election Day voters were more likely to remain Election Day voters. Absentee voting remained a small share of the primary electorate, and absentee voters were more likely than in-person voters to switch modes between elections.

Georgia Democratic Primary Voting Mode Changes, 2022 to 2026



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
 Data source: Georgia Secretary of State voter history files
 Note: Flow widths show voters who participated in both primaries; labels show row shares within each 2022 voting mode.

Georgia Republican Primary Voting Mode Changes, 2022 to 2026

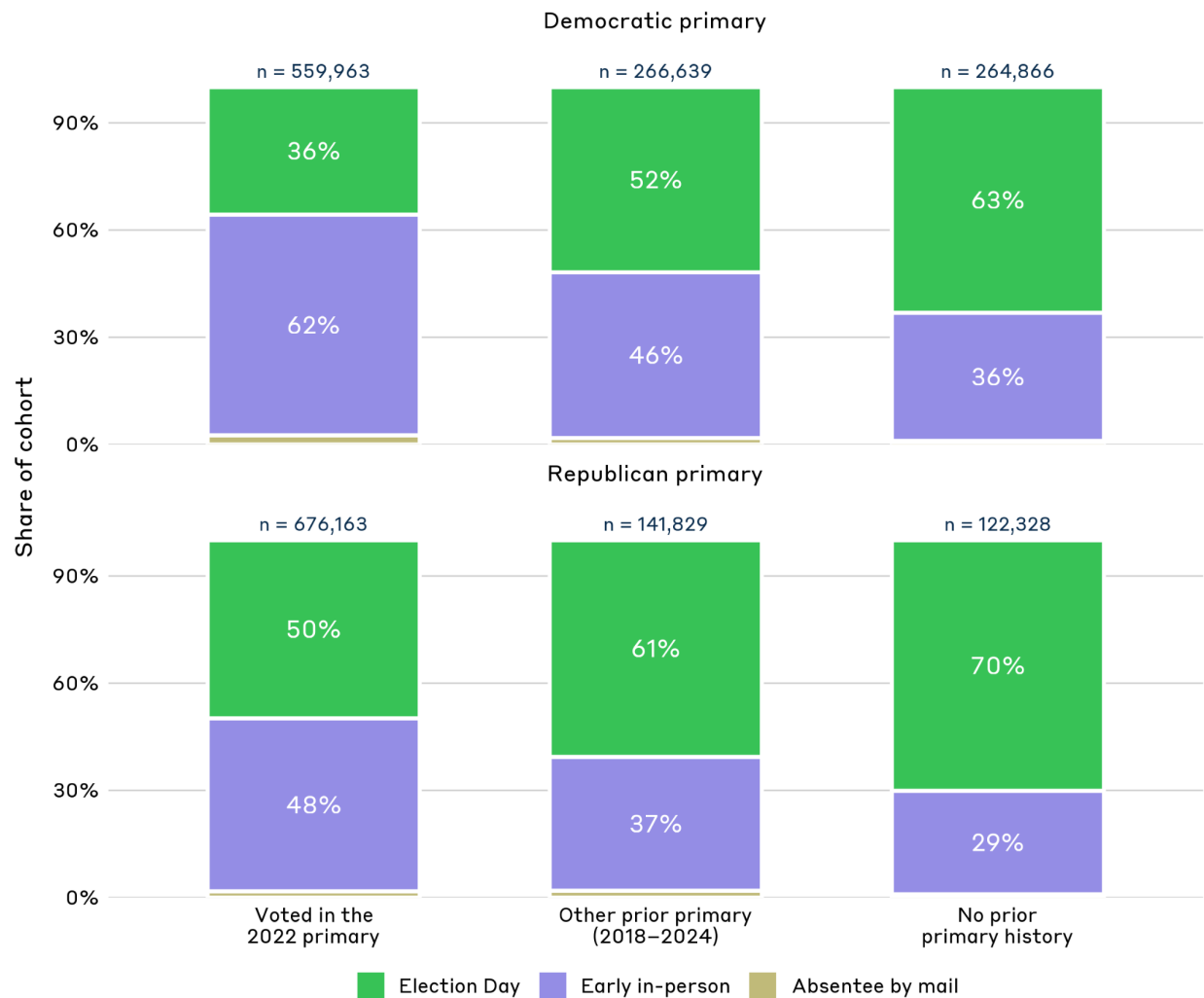


Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
 Data source: Georgia Secretary of State voter history files
 Note: Flow widths show voters who participated in both primaries; labels show row shares within each 2022 voting mode.

The figures show voting mode transitions among voters who participated in both the 2022 and 2026 primaries, separately for Democratic (top) and Republican (bottom) primary voters. Flow widths show the number of repeat primary voters, and labels show the share of voters from each 2022 voting mode who used each mode in 2026. Election Day voting is shown in green, early in-person in purple, and absentee by mail in gold.

The above figures set aside voters who did not cast a ballot in the previous primary—about 39% of the 2026 primary electorate. Nearly half of them, 19% of all 2026 primary voters, had not voted in any primary since 2018. The figure below demonstrates that less habitual voters cast ballots very differently from repeat voters: 63% of Democratic and 70% of Republican first-time primary voters voted on Election Day, compared with 36% and 50% of those who had voted in the 2022 primary. Early voting in Georgia's primaries is concentrated among regular primary participants, and the mode shifts described above reflect the behavior of habitual voters rather than the electorate as a whole.

Voting Mode of First-Time Primary Voters in 2026

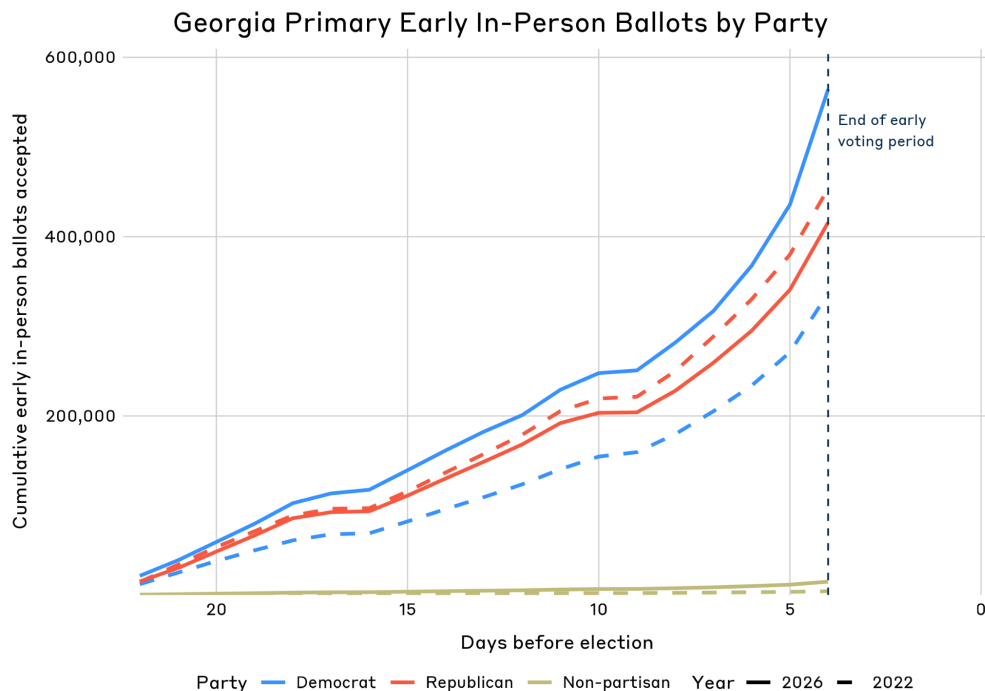


Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
 Data source: Georgia Secretary of State voter history files, 2018–2026 primaries

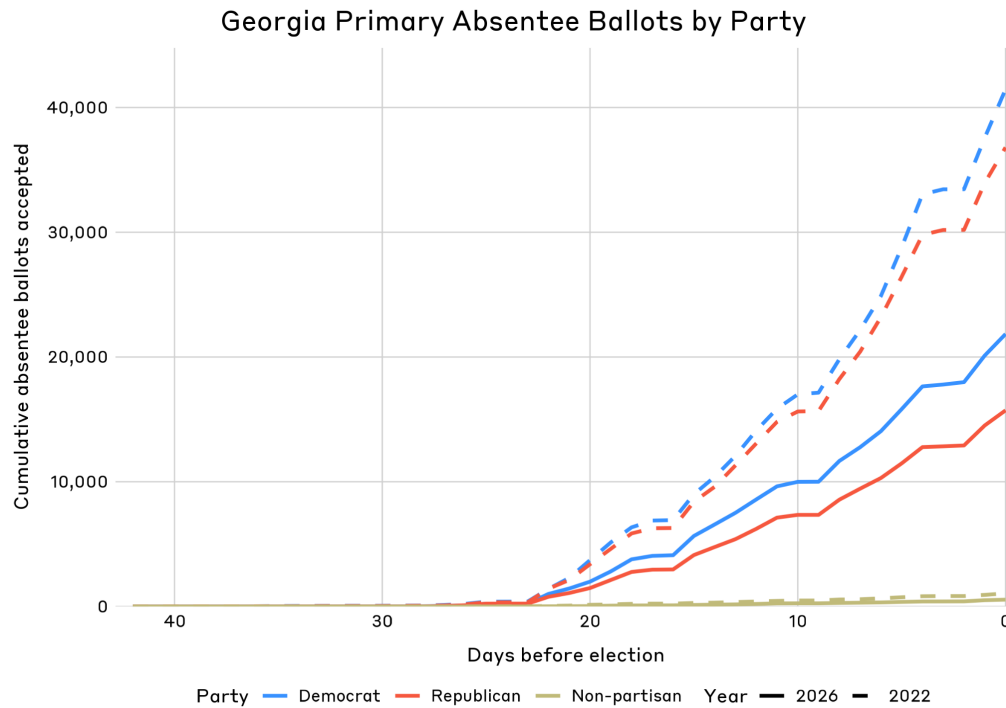
The figure shows the 2026 Georgia primary voting mode of Democratic (top) and Republican (bottom) primary voters, grouped by their prior primary participation: those who voted in the 2022 primary, those who voted in some other primary between 2018 and 2024, and those with no primary participation in that period. Election Day voting is shown in green, early in-person in purple, and absentee by mail in gold.

Finally, the timing of early and absentee voting helps connect these voting-mode shifts to the sequence in which ballots enter the count. The cumulative plots below show that mail ballots arrived at a fairly steady pace throughout the distribution period, while

early in-person voting grew throughout the early voting period and surged in its final week. They also show a shift in the partisan composition of early in-person voting: Republicans cast more early in-person ballots than Democrats in the 2022 primary, but Democrats cast more than Republicans in 2026. Democrats continued to outpace Republicans in the use of mail ballots in both years, although the total number of mail ballots fell substantially from 2022 to 2026. These changes in the timing and partisan composition of early and absentee voting may shape the blue/red shift observed as election results are reported in the hours and days after polls close.



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

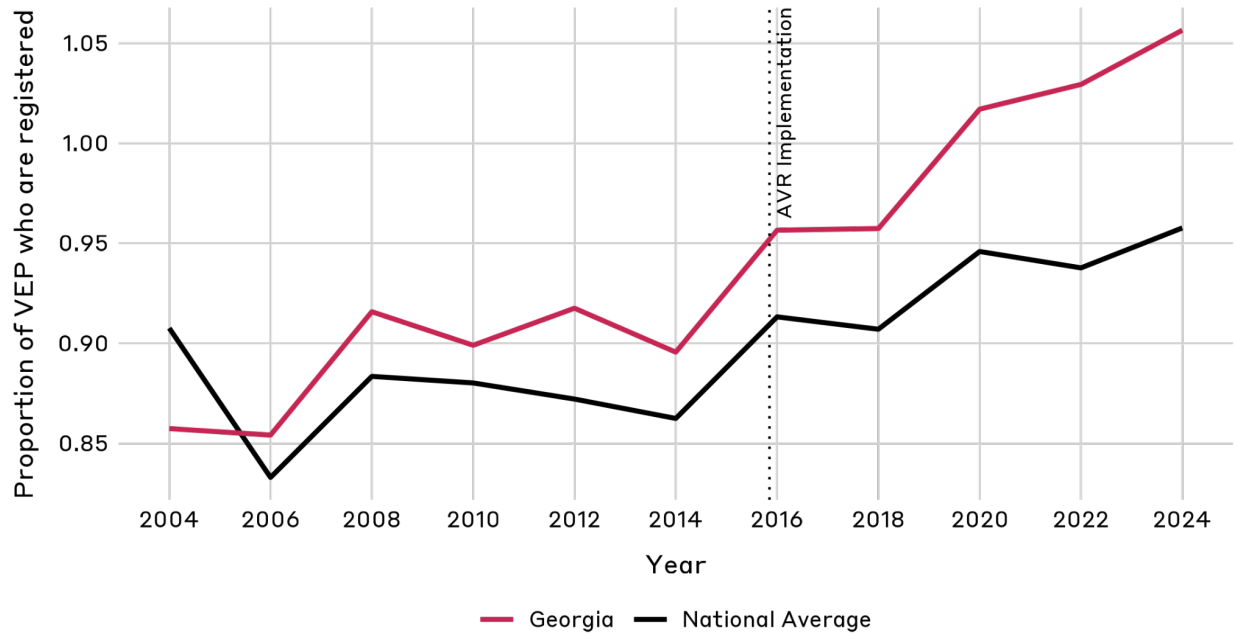


Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

The figures show the cumulative number of accepted early in-person (top) and absentee (bottom) ballots by party and year for the 2022 and 2026 primaries. Early in-person voting increased steadily during the early voting period and accelerated in the final week, while absentee ballots arrived at a more even pace.

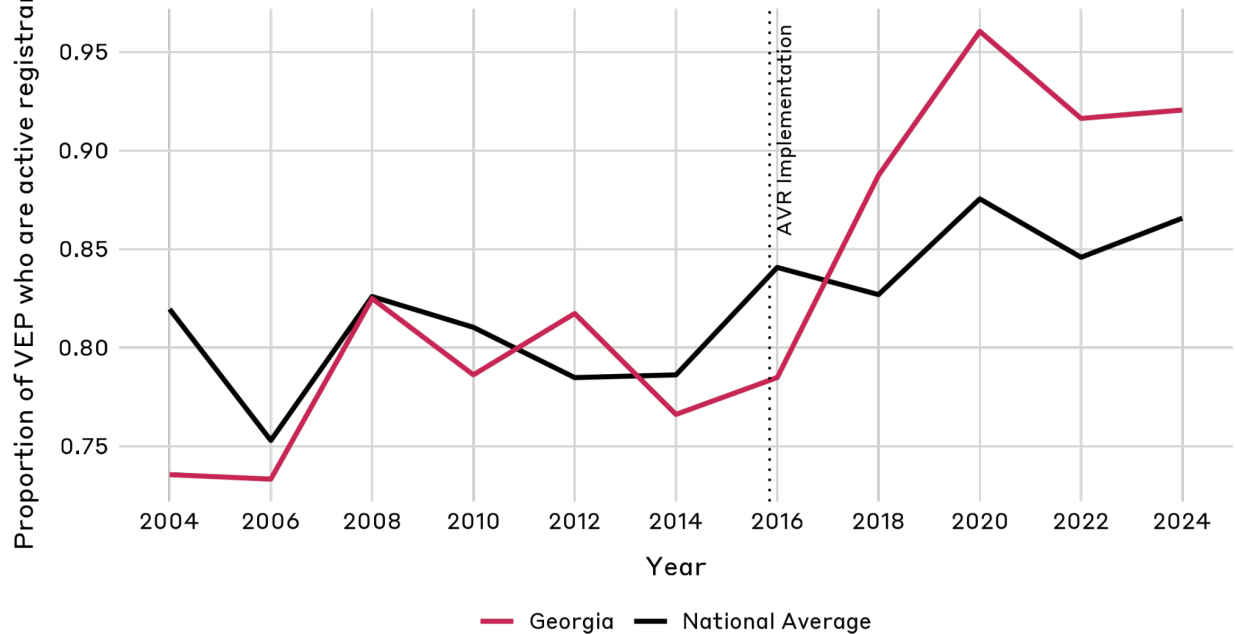
Voter Registration

Voter Registration Rates



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: United States Election Assistance Commission, UF Election Lab

Active Voter Registration Rates



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: United States Election Assistance Commission, UF Election Lab

The two figures above compare Georgia's voter registration rates (top figure shows all registrants and bottom figure is subsetting to active registrants) with the national averages over time. The dotted line shows the September 2016 implementation of automatic voter registration (AVR) in Georgia. Georgia's proportion of voting-eligible citizens (VEP) who are registered is shown by the red line, and the national average by the black line.

In September 2016, Georgia [adopted](#) automatic voter registration (AVR). [The Department of Driver Services](#) and the Georgia Secretary of State have been [providing AVR services](#) since their implementation, with the goal of facilitating the voter registration process. Even before the enactment of AVR, Georgia's voter registration rates were consistently higher than the national average. The proportion of the voting-eligible population in Georgia who are active registrants has also been higher than the national average since 2018, indicating a potential effect of AVR.

Election Reporting Timelines

Election Night:¹

Time	Description
7:00 pm	Polls close.
7:00 - 8 pm	Early and advance absentee results are reported. Under Georgia law, counties must tabulate and publish early in-person votes and pre-processed absentee-by-mail ballots by 8:00 pm, or within one hour of polls closing (whichever is later).
7 pm - Midnight+	Precinct results reported.

¹ based on Georgia Codes [§ 21-2-421](#), [§ 21-2-403](#), [§ 21-2-493](#), and [§ 21-2-499](#)

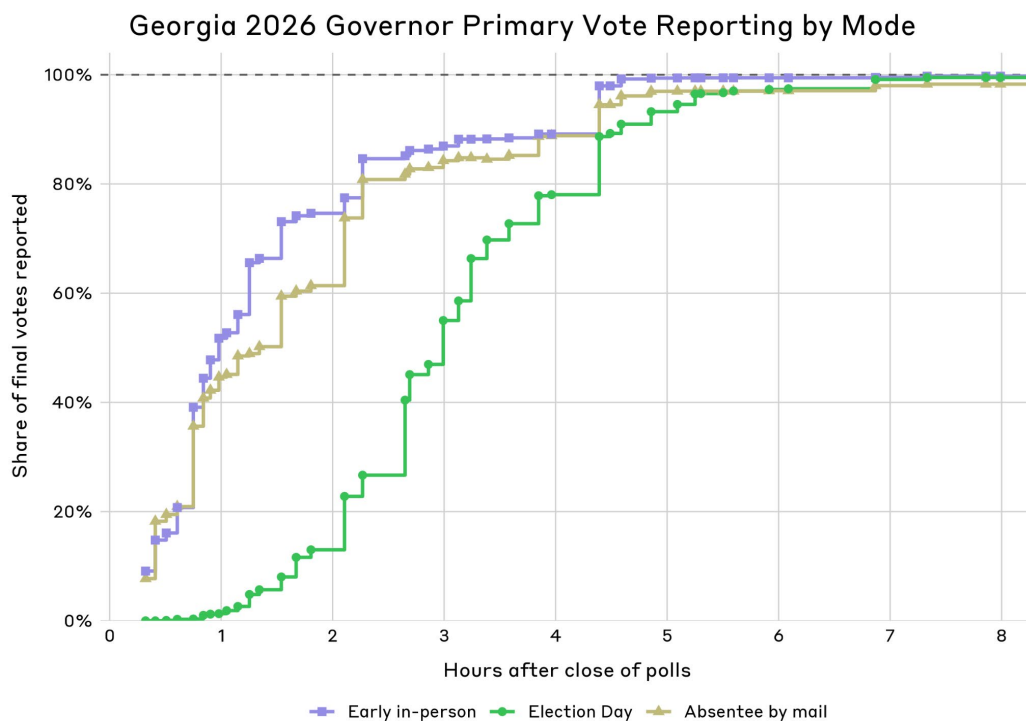
	Results are uploaded dynamically as memory cards are delivered from precincts. By law, county election offices must count continuously overnight and cannot pause until counting is complete.
By 11:59 pm	Total Ballots Cast count is reported.
After election night***	Military and overseas absentee ballots will be added to the results.

*** **After Election Night:**

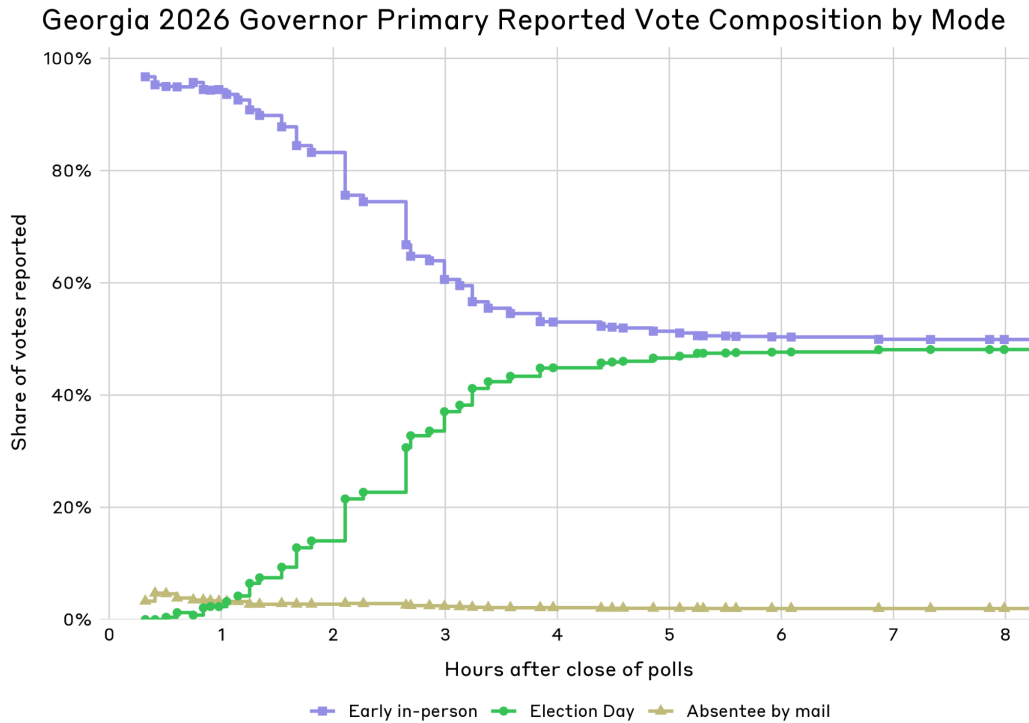
- + Absentee ballots from military and overseas voters (UOCAVA) are counted if they are postmarked by Election Day and arrive at the county elections office within 3 days after the election (by 5:00 pm on the Friday following the election).
- + Curing Absentee and Provisional Ballots: Voters have until 3 days after the election (the Friday following the election) to cure missing/mismatched signatures on absentee ballots or resolve registration/ID issues for provisional ballots.
- + Pre-Certification Audit: Before county results are finalized, election workers and witnesses must reconcile ballot totals against scanner tabulation tapes.
- + County Canvass and Certification: County election superintendents must officially certify their consolidated local returns and transmit them to the Secretary of State no later than 5:00 pm on the Monday following the election.
- + Risk-Limiting Audit (RLA): Before statewide results are certified, the Secretary of State selects a target race for a mandatory statewide audit. Counties must conduct a physical hand count of a random sample of paper ballots to verify machine accuracy.
- + Candidate Recount Requests: If the certified margin of victory in any race is 0.5% or less, a losing candidate has the right to demand a taxpayer-funded recount.

- The recount request must be filed in writing within two business days of the results being officially certified.
- + State Canvass & Certification: The Secretary of State must officially certify the statewide results no later than 5:00 pm on the 17th day following the election.

Georgia [allows election officials to begin preprocessing ballots](#) several weeks before the election, which may be linked to faster [vote reporting](#). Georgia reported votes faster in 2024 than in 2020 (at least at some time points) and was among the fastest 15 states to count [75% and 95% of their votes](#). We can also break down the vote-counting process by mode in two ways. In Georgia, which allows preprocessing, a higher proportion of the total early and election day votes are counted earlier in the process. This shapes the composition of vote totals as they are reported over time: the first results we see are overwhelmingly early votes, but also disproportionately mail votes.

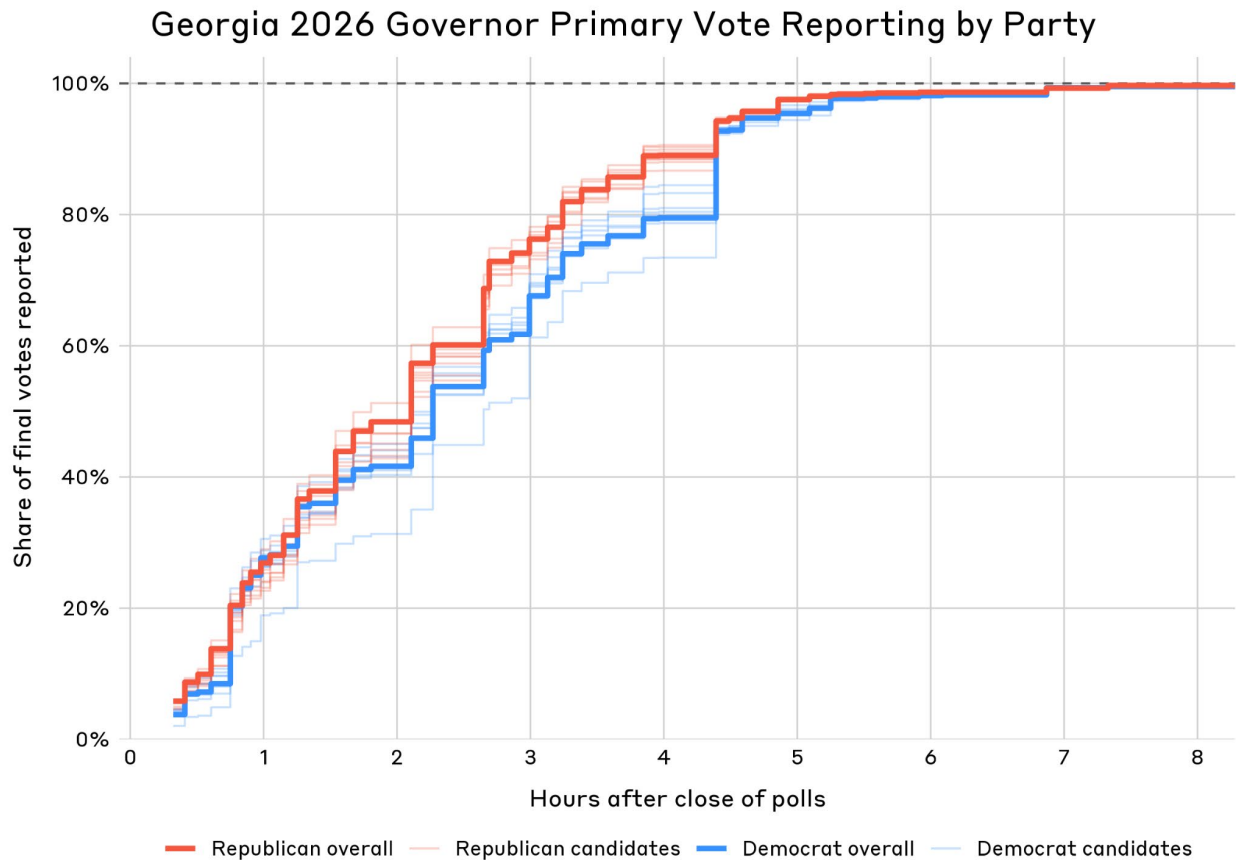


Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
Data source: Georgia Secretary of State



The figures show vote reporting by voting mode in the Georgia 2026 gubernatorial primary. The top figure shows the share of each voting mode’s final vote total reported over time after polls closed, while the bottom figure shows the voting-mode composition of reported votes at each point in the reporting process. Early in-person voting is shown in purple, Election Day voting in green, and absentee by mail in gold.

Splitting the primary votes out by party, we find that Republican votes tend to be counted faster than Democratic ones. This is somewhat surprising: Democrats more frequently vote by mail or early in person, and those modes are counted earlier. That the pattern runs the other way suggests other factors—such as the differential geographic distribution of Democrats and Republicans—also shape observed counting speed. For a more detailed analysis of reporting patterns, see [this paper](#) and [this report](#).



Graph source: MIT Election Data + Science Lab
 Data source: Georgia Secretary of State

The figure shows vote reporting by party in the Georgia 2026 governor primary. The thick lines show the share of each party's final governor-primary vote total reported over time after polls closed, while the thinner lines show the same reporting pattern for individual candidates. Republican votes are shown in red and Democratic votes in blue.

It remains to be seen how quickly results will be reported in the 2026 general election. The evidence above comes from presidential elections and the 2026 primary, which may have reporting patterns different from those of a midterm general election with higher turnout, different contests, and different county-level workloads. Georgia will continue using its current QR code-based voting system for the 2026 midterms after lawmakers delayed the state's QR code tabulation ban until 2028 with [SB 3EX](#). That delay reduces the risk of a major last-minute equipment transition this cycle, but any future shift away from QR code tabulation, or any expansion of hand-count or recount requirements, could affect vote-reporting speed in 2028 and future elections.