

# Democracy North Carolina

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## REPUBLICAN TURNOUT SURPASSED DEMOCRATS IN MOST COUNTIES, BUT BLACK TURNOUT INCREASED MORE THAN WHITES OVER 2006

A new profile of who cast ballots in the 2010 elections explains why Republican candidates for the state legislature were so successful. In addition to the boost they received from [more than \\$2 million](#) in spending by electioneering groups, Republican candidates benefited from their supporters turning out at significantly higher levels than Democrats in dozens of counties, according to an analysis of election data by the nonpartisan watchdog group Democracy North Carolina.

In the 2006 and 2008 elections, registered Democrats and Republicans voted at essentially the same rates; 39% of each party's members voted in the mid-term election of 2006 and 72% voted in the 2008 presidential election. But in 2010, Republicans achieved a 6 point advantage with a turnout rate of 51% statewide, compared to the Democrats' rate of 45%. Only 33% of Unaffiliated voters cast ballots in the November 2010 election; the overall rate for all registered voters was 44%.

The partisan gap between Republican and Democratic turnout climbed to 8 percentage points in Mecklenburg County, 10 points in Brunswick and Guilford and 11 points in Forsyth and Rowan.

The partisan divide among senior citizens is a startling 9 points (66% of Republicans age 66 and older turned out, versus 57% of senior Democrats) and 8 points among men (Republican men: 52%; Democratic men: 44%). Republican women outperformed Democratic women by 4 points, 49% to 45%. Young voters basically stayed home; only 17% of registered voters age 18 to 25 bothered to vote in 2010, or less than one third the 60% voting rate for senior citizens.

“We’re highlighting differences to help understand what happened in 2010, but the numbers also show that nobody can be proud of the voter participation rate for their party or sub-group,” said Bob Hall, executive director of Democracy North Carolina. “The sad truth is that a solid majority of registered voters – 56% – stayed home. Despite, or perhaps partly because of, all the posturing and nasty advertising, most people didn’t bother to vote and that undercuts any claim that the 2010 election was a popular mandate for much of anything.”

Some pundits have suggested that the low turnout among African Americans cost the Democrats their majority control of the General Assembly. But black voter participation actually increased more than white turnout since the last mid-term election in 2006, when Democrats won most General Assembly contests. From 2006 to 2010, black voters increased their turnout rate by 12 points (from 29% to 41%), just as Republicans did (from 39% to 51%), while turnout among white voters gained 7 points (39% to 46%) and Democrats added 6 points (39% to 45%).

Turnout among black voters was especially strong in counties with high-profile local contests involving an African-American candidate. For example, hot elections involving black candidates for sheriff helped push black turnout to 58% in Bladen County, 52% in Pamlico County, 51% in Jones County and 48% in Wilson County, well above the state average. Black state senators Tony Foriest and Don Davis lost reelection despite black turnout rates of 49% in Caswell County and 51% in Greene County. For details, [click here](#) or go to:

<http://www.democracy-nc.org/downloads/TurnoutNov2010SelectedCounties.xls>