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Democracy NC: Turnout to Date Exceeds 2014 and 2016, Reflects Weekend Early Voting Changes

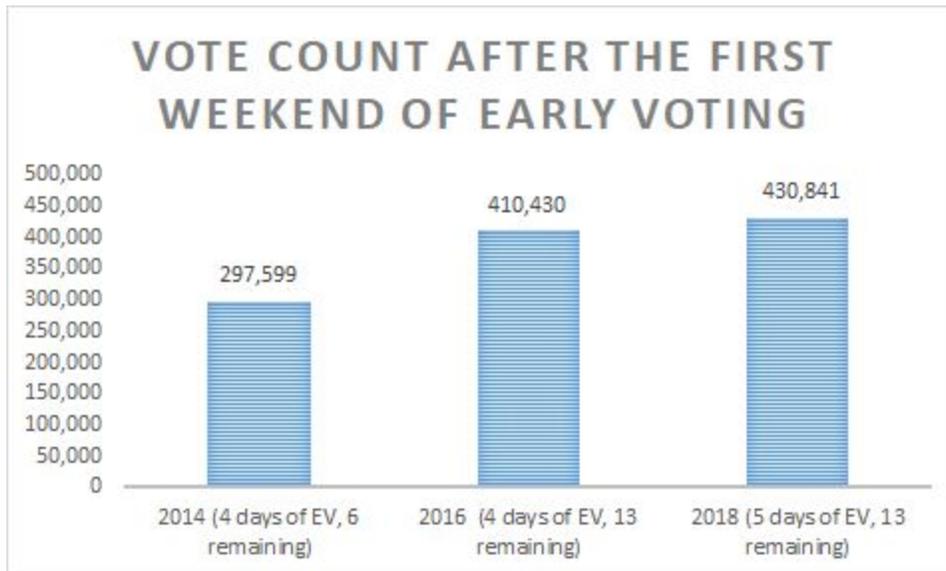
DURHAM, N.C. (October 22, 2018) — According to data from the North Carolina State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement released October 22, voters have cast **430,841** ballots at Early Voting sites since the start of this year's 18-day Early Voting period.

This year, only 27 counties had Early Voting sites open on the first Saturday of Early Voting, compared to 48 counties in 2016, and over 80 counties in 2014 (although there were only two Saturdays total in 2014 due to the shortened EV period, compared to three Saturdays this year and in 2016). On the first Sunday of Early Voting, 9 counties had sites open, compared to 10 in 2014 and 12 in 2016. Turnout patterns over the weekend roughly reflected the pattern of sites open-- with reduced Saturday numbers (27,605) compared to the first Saturday of EV in 2014 (49,996) and 2016 (68,893). On Sunday, more voters cast ballots (13,057) than in 2014 (12,193).

As stated in Democracy NC's [analysis of turnout for the first day of Early Voting](#), there is no perfect election to use for comparison. The chart below compares vote totals after the first weekend. It is important to note, however, that the 2018 total is the result of five days of Early Voting compared to the other years' four days, due to 2018's new Wednesday start.

After the first weekend of Early Voting in 2014, which was only a 10-day period, 297,599 ballots had been cast. In fact, totals for 2018 currently exceed the vote count at the midpoint of the 2014 cycle (428,887), when there had been five days of Early Voting and there were five days of remaining (the large jump is likely due in part to satellite sites opening on that fifth day). Due to this year's 18-day cycle, voters have 13 more days to cast ballots at [Early Voting sites](#).

After the first weekend of 2016's 17-day cycle, 410,430 ballots had been cast.



Democracy North Carolina’s review of the official data also reveals:

- Eighty of North Carolina’s 100 counties have seen more voters this cycle than at this point (after the first weekend) in 2014. Fifty-eight counties have seen an increase in the number of Black voters compared to this point in 2014.
- Across the state, 52% more white voters (322,165) have cast ballots at Early Voting locations than at this point in the 2014 cycle (211,571). **More than double the number of white under 26 (12,139) have cast ballots than at this point in 2014 (5771).**
- Across the state, 9% more Black voters (83,285) have cast ballots at Early Voting locations than at this point in the 2014 cycle (76,218), as have 10% more Black women, and **34% more Black voters under 26.**
- In the 4 of the 8 counties where the majority of registered voters are Black, fewer votes have been cast compared to this point in 2014 - Vance, Edgecombe, Warren and Northampton.
- First weekend turnout for Asian voters, Native American voters, and Biracial voters far outstrips 2014 numbers.
 - So far in 2018, 1903 Native American voters--mostly in Robeson, Wake, and Swain counties-- have cast ballots at Early Voting locations, a 77% increase from this point in the 2014 cycle, which soundly surpasses the 8% growth in voter registration.
 - More than double the number of Biracial and Multiracial voters have cast ballots at Early Voting locations (1,826) this cycle compared to this point in 2014 (867). The number of registered Biracial and Multiracial voters has increased 22% since 2014.
 - More than double the number of Asian voters have cast ballots at Early Voting locations (3,847) this cycle compared to this point in 2014 (1,417). The number of registered Asian voters has increased 42% since 2014.

- The Early Voting data currently available from the State Board of Elections does not include ethnicity information, which precludes a similar analysis for Hispanic or Latino voters.
- **Following reports of spikes in registration among the youngest voters this summer, more than double the number of voters under 26 (18,401) have cast ballots this cycle compared to this point in 2014 (8,785).**
- Democratic, Republican, and Unaffiliated voters are all surpassing 2014 numbers.
 - Democratic voters have cast 186,571 ballots at Early Voting sites so far, compared to 148,125 at this point in 2014, a 26% increase.
 - Republican voters have cast 128,423 ballots at Early Voting sites this cycle, compared to 89,117 at this point in 2014, a 44% increase.
- Almost double the number of Unaffiliated voters have cast ballots at Early Voting sites this cycle 114,834, compared to 59,900 at this point in 2014 – far surpassing the 23% growth in registered Unaffiliated voters in that time.
- Challenges remain for voters in some hurricane-impacted counties, which was recognized by the State Board of Elections last week in an order [which added accommodations for storm-affected voters](#). **The four counties with the greatest percentage decrease in voter turnout on the first weekend from 2014 are all receiving federal assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence.**
- Voter turnout was up from 2014 in all ten counties with the most registered voters. Across the state, Wake, Forsyth, Durham, Buncombe, and Mecklenburg counties saw the greatest increases in the number of first weekend voters from 2014. Forsyth, Durham, and Wake counties saw the greatest increases in the number of Black voters at this point in the Early Voting cycle compared to 2014..
 - In Forsyth, more than five times the voters (14,693) have cast ballots at Early Voting locations this cycle, than at this point in 2014 (2,744). That said, much of the changes in Forsyth are likely due to the fact that the satellite sites were not open on the first weekend of the Early Voting period in 2014, but have been open this cycle. If nothing else, the dramatic change is a testament to the importance of having Early Voting locations open throughout the county.
 - In Durham, more than double the voters (19,835) have cast ballots at Early Voting locations this cycle, than at this point in 2014 (8,800). Like Forsyth, Durham has had more satellite sites open earlier in the cycle this year compared to 2014.

Over the summer, [Senate Bill 325](#) put pressure on counties to reduce the number of Early Voting sites and weekend hours during the Early Voting period. The bill also proposed eliminating the popular last Saturday of Early voting, which is disproportionately used by Black voters. After rigorous advocacy by voter advocates, the legislature added the Saturday back for 2018 only—leading to this year’s 18 day cycle—but **the majority of North Carolina counties cut the number of sites, availability of weekend Early Voting hours, or both.**

Many voters this year will have their first chance since the 2011 redistricting process to elect state legislators from constitutional districts; years of litigation over state legislative maps led to a court order mandating new maps to remedy racial gerrymandering. North Carolina voters also have the opportunity this fall to vote on six proposed constitutional amendments. Democracy NC opposes these amendments as broad, misleading, and harmful.

Since Early Voting is 18-days long this year, **Democracy NC will release in-depth analyses of turnout patterns across the state on Mondays and Thursdays throughout the remainder of the Early Voting Period. These analyses are based on one-stop absentee ballot data available from the North Carolina State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement.**

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Democracy North Carolina is a statewide nonpartisan organization that uses research, organizing, and advocacy to increase civic participation, reduce the influence of big money in politics, and remove systemic barriers to voting and serving in elected office.

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