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Democracy NC: Saturday surge results in long lines, strong finish to 2018 Early Voting period

According to data from the North Carolina State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement released on November 4th, over 2 million North Carolinians have already cast ballots— over 1,969,000 at Early Voting sites, and over 69,000 by mail.

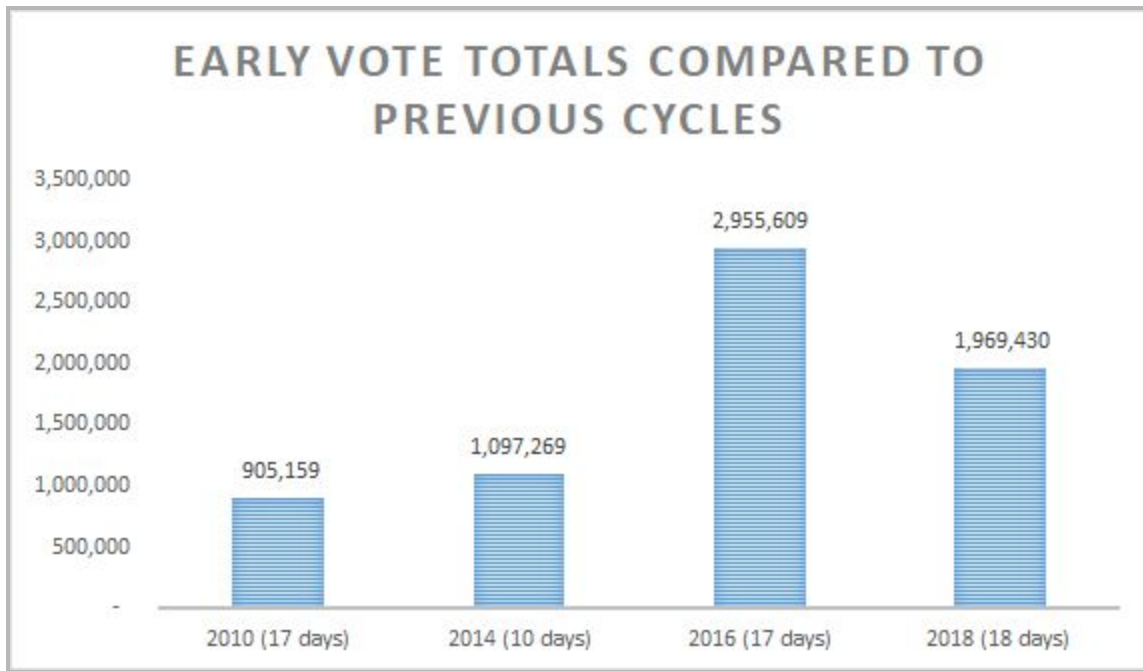
The 2,038,810 ballots represent 28.8% of North Carolina’s registered voters as of November 2nd; this “turnout rate” figure is the number of ballots cast divided by the number of registered voters. At this point in 2014, 17.4% of registered voters had cast ballots, and at this point in 2016, 45.0% had done so.

The last Saturday of Early Voting saw heavy traffic and reports of long lines at numerous polling places across the state —over 2 hours in some cases— reinforcing the need for additional resources on the busiest days of Early Voting, and the importance of the popular last Saturday of Early Voting.

This summer, the General Assembly passed legislation that led the majority of counties to reduce the number of Early Voting sites or reduce weekend hours, or both. That same legislation eliminated the last Saturday of Early Voting this year, but a subsequent bill restored it for 2018 only. As the law stands now, there will be no Early Voting on the final Saturday before Election Day in 2020 or any future election.

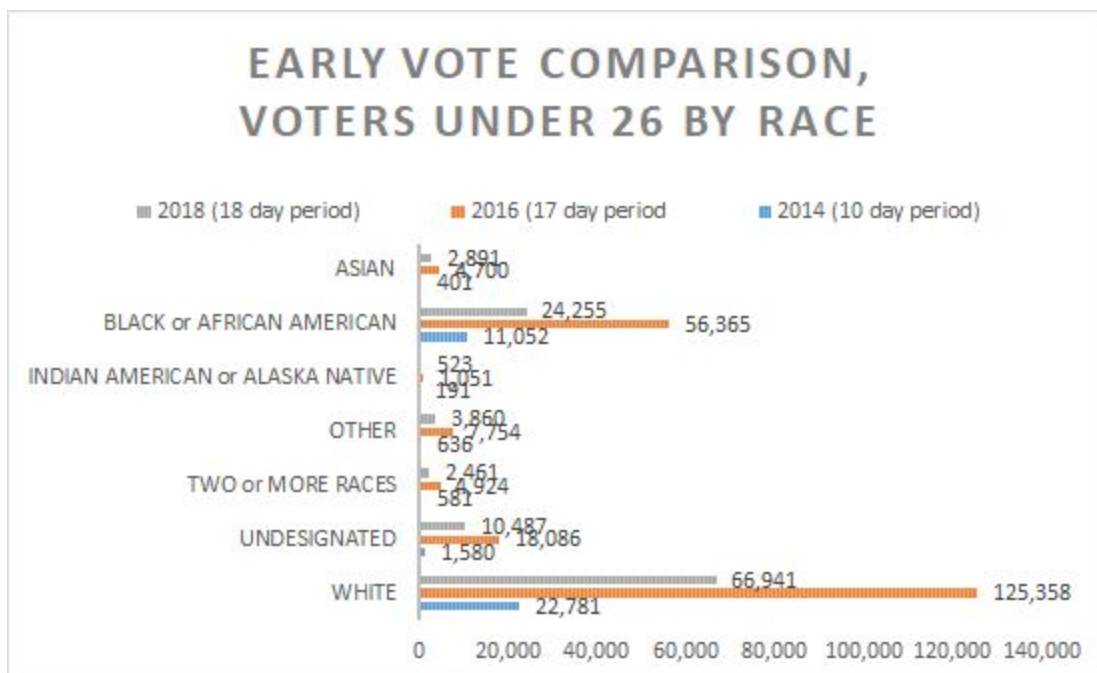
As stated in Democracy NC’s previous analyses of the [2018 Early Voting period](#), there is no perfect election to use for comparison. The chart below compares totals for this year’s Early Voting period (18 days), the entire 2014 Early Voting period (10 days), and the 2010 and 2016 elections (17 days). This year’s period began one day earlier than the 2014 and 2016 windows.

This year’s Early Vote totals represent a 79% increase from the 2014 Early Voting period and double the total from the 2010 Early voting period. Notably, both of those elections had high profile Senate races, which this year does not.



Statewide Trends: Age and Race

- Following reports of spikes in registration among the youngest voters this summer, **voters under 26 cast three times the number of ballots this year (111,418) than during the 2014 Early Voting cycle (37,222)**. In 2014, voters under 26 accounted for 3.4% of the ballots cast during Early Voting. This year, voters under 26 cast 5.7% of all ballots at Early Voting sites.
 - 2018 Early Voting totals and absentee by mail votes to date represent a 13.8% turnout rate for voters under 26.



- Across the state, 80% more white voters (1,398,650) cast ballots at Early Voting locations than during the 2014 Early Voting period (776,581). The number of white registered voters has grown 4% since 2014.
 - White voters under 26 cast almost three times the number of ballots this year (66,941) than during the Early Voting period in 2014 (22,781).
 - 2018 Early Voting totals and absentee by mail votes to date represent a 29.9% turnout rate for registered white voters (number of voters so far divided by the number of registered voters).
- Black voters cast 53% more ballots this year (434,719) than during the 2014 Early Voting cycle (283,264), while the number of Black registered voters has grown 4% since 2014.
 - Black voters under 26 cast more than double the number of ballots (24,255) than during the Early Voting period in 2014 (11,052).
 - Black women cast 54% more ballots than during the 2014 Early Voting period.
 - 2018 Early Voting totals and absentee by mail votes to date represent a 28.5% turnout rate for registered Black voters (number of voters so far divided by the number of registered voters).
- Four times the number of Asian voters cast ballots during Early Voting in 2018 (21,226) than during the Early Voting period in 2014 (5,268). The number of Asian registered voters has increased 42% since 2014.
 - Asian voters under 26 cast seven times the number of ballots in 2018 (2,891) than during the 2014 Early Voting period (401).
 - 2018 Early Voting totals and absentee by mail votes to date represent a 24.5% turnout rate for registered Asian voters (number of voters so far divided by the number of registered voters).
- Double the number of Native American voters cast ballots during Early Voting in 2018 (9,472) than during Early Voting in 2014 (4,030). The number of registered voters who are Native American has grown 8% in that time.
 - Native American voters under 26 cast almost triple the number of ballots this year (523) than during the 2014 EV period (191).
 - 2018 Early Voting and absentee by mail votes to date represent a 16.8% turnout rate for registered Native American voters (number of voters so far divided by the number of registered voters).
- More than triple the number of Biracial and Multiracial voters cast ballots at Early Voting locations (9,605) than during the 2014 Early Voting period (3,106). The number of Biracial and Multiracial registered voters has increased 22% since 2014.
 - Biracial and Multiracial voters under 26 cast four times the number of ballots this year (2,461) compared to the 2014 Early Voting period (581), and make up 26% of 2018 Biracial and Multiracial Early voters.

- 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.

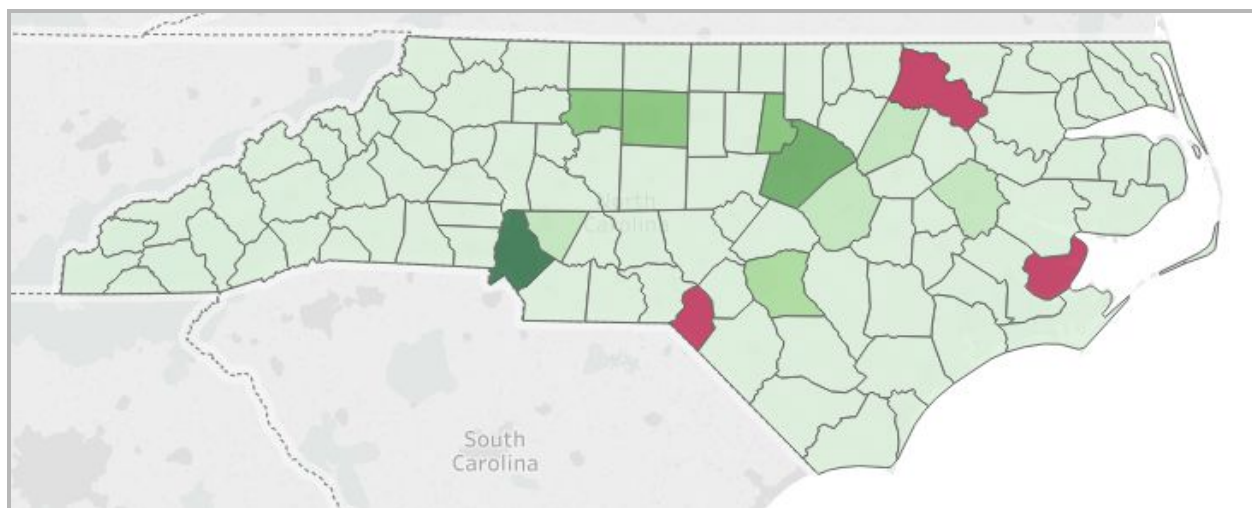
Statewide Trends: Party Affiliation

During Early Voting, 43% of ballots were cast by registered Democrats, 30% were cast by registered Republicans, and 27% were cast by Unaffiliated voters.

The party and demographic subgroups with the highest turnout rates by race, gender, and party are White Democratic Women, with 253,962 ballots for a turnout rate of 35.5%, Black Democratic Women with 245,555 ballots for a turnout rate of 33.6%, White Republican Men with 291,105 ballots for a turnout rate of 30.2%, and White Republican Women with 295,708 ballots, for a turnout rate of 29.7%. These figures reflect the percentage of registered voters in each group that have already cast ballots.

- Democratic voters cast 837,020 ballots during Early Voting, a 57% increase from the 2014 Early Voting period total, 531,503. The number of registered Democratic voters in North Carolina has decreased 3% since 2014.
 - Democratic women cast 60% more ballots this year than during the 2014 Early Voting period.
- Republican voters cast 598,038 ballots during Early Voting, a 75% increase from the 2014 Early Voting period total (341,499). The number of registered Republican voters in North Carolina has increased 5% since 2014.
 - Republican women cast 76% more ballots this year than during the 2014 Early Voting period.
- More than double the number of Unaffiliated voters cast ballots at Early Voting sites in 2018 (528,642), than during the 2014 Early Voting period (222,528), which surpasses the 23% growth in registered Unaffiliated voters in that time.
 - Unaffiliated women cast almost two and a half times more ballots this year than during the 2014 Early Voting period.
- Libertarians cast 5,318 ballots, Green Party voters cast 250 ballots, and Constitution Party voters cast 162 ballots at Early Voting sites this year.

County Highlights



- In the map above, dark green counties have seen the most increases in Black voters compared to the 2014 Early Voting Period, light green had some increase in the number of Black voters from the 2014 cycle, and red counties did not surpass the 2014 Early Voting totals for Black voters.
- All of North Carolina's 100 counties saw more voters this year than during the 2014 Early Voting cycle. Across the state, Wake, Mecklenburg, Durham, Forsyth, Guilford and Buncombe had the greatest increases in the number of ballots cast at Early Voting sites compared to 2014.
 - The following 11 counties doubled their early vote totals this year compared to 2014: Durham, Robeson, Forsyth, Wake, Cabarrus, Davidson, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Avery, Yadkin, Union.
- As demonstrated by the map, almost every county saw an increase in Black voters during the Early voting period compared to 2014-- only Halifax, Scotland and Pamlico Counties saw a decrease. Halifax has only one Early Voting location this year, compared to 3 locations in 2014 and 2016. Scotland and Pamlico had only one Early Voting location in 2014, 2016, and 2018, and are both receiving federal assistance after Hurricane Florence.

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.

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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