



# 6,000 Calls and Counting: 2024 NC Election Protection Hotline Preliminary Report

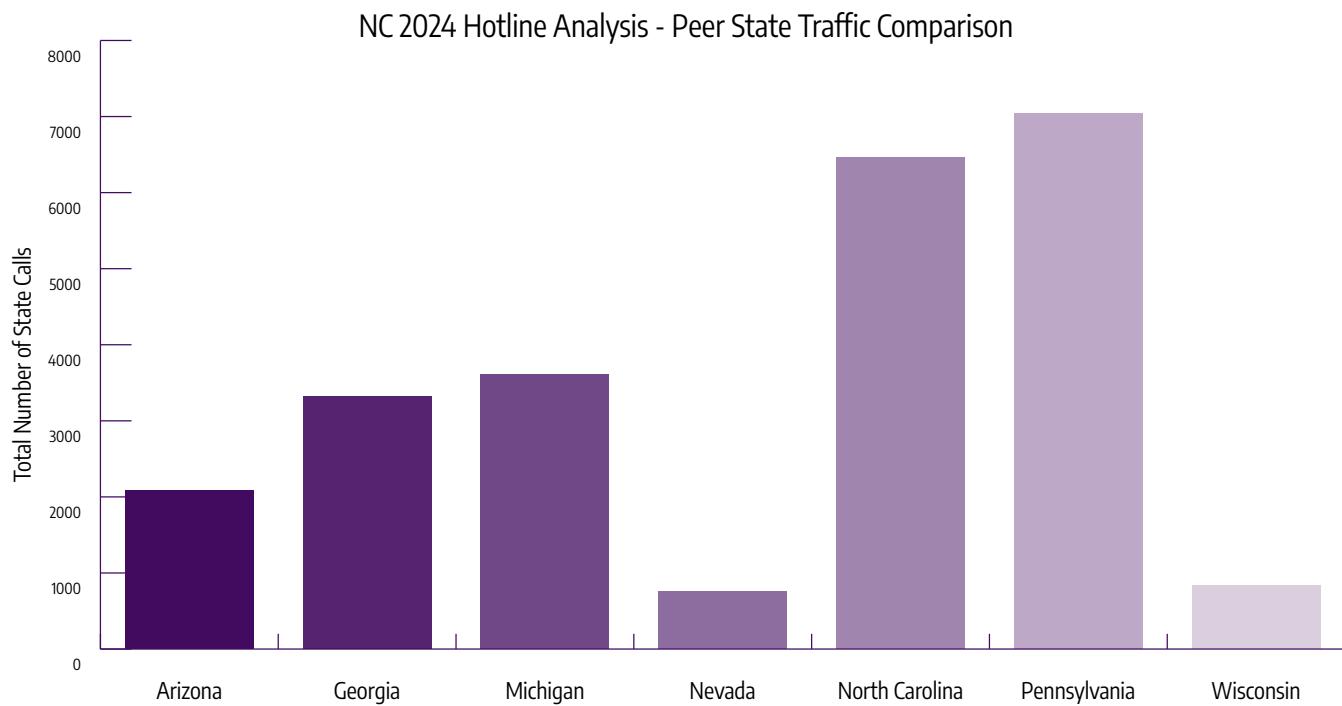
## Background

For over a decade, a coalition of North Carolina advocacy groups has come together to run the North Carolina Election Protection Hotline (**888-OUR-VOTE**), a tool for providing North Carolina voters with real-time assistance navigating the voting process and ensuring that all eligible ballots can be cast and counted.<sup>1</sup> From promotion of the Hotline and recruitment of volunteer legal professionals, to answering the calls from voters and addressing their

problems, our diverse and broad coalition has consistently been a leader in election protection programming and a trusted source for voters in search of reliable, non-partisan support and advocacy.

In 2024, the NC Election Protection team fielded over 6,000 calls from voters in North Carolina. These calls included questions about the basics of voting (e.g. sites and hours), requests for assistance at the polls (e.g. how to prove residence or what to do when poll workers cannot find a voter's registration), reports of voter intimidation, and more.

<sup>1</sup>This work is done in partnership with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, which administers the North Carolina (888-OUR-VOTE) and national (866-OUR-VOTE) hotlines on behalf of the National Election Protection Coalition.



North Carolina received the second highest number of calls among swing states in 2024, just slightly below Pennsylvania's roughly 7,000 calls. (For context, over 7 million voters cast a ballot in Pennsylvania, compared to 5.7 million in North Carolina.)

This short report provides a snapshot of North Carolina Hotline activity during the 2024 General Election cycle based on preliminary analysis of overall call volume, the geographical locations of those calls, and the issues raised by callers.

In the coming months, the NC Election Protection team will be conducting deeper qualitative analysis of the 2024 Hotline data to get a better understanding of callers' voting experiences and to identify patterns, trends, and opportunities for improving North Carolina's election systems and administration. **For more in-depth analysis of key issues faced by voters, stay tuned to DemocracyNC.org and Southerncoalition.org.**

## Call Volume by County

The North Carolina Hotline team received 6,460 calls from August 2024 to November 2024. Roughly half of those calls (49.2%) were made in November, most of which came in during the five-day period leading up to Election Day on November 5th. Most other calls (45.9%) were made in October when absentee-by-mail and in-person early voting were available. Perhaps not surprisingly, the counties with the most calls were also the most populous counties in the state (Mecklenburg and Wake), followed by many "suburban" counties directly surrounding them—such as Gaston, Catawba, Cabarrus, and Union counties (for Mecklenburg), and Johnston, Franklin, Lee, Harnett, and Chatham counties (for Wake).

By contrast, the fewest calls came from our most rural and sparsely populated regions. For example, only 1 call came in from each of Clay, Gates, and Graham counties. Some rural areas did buck this trend however. Although it is home to the city of Asheville in Western North

Carolina, geographically-speaking Buncombe County is a mostly rural, sprawling area, and the Hotline received 199 calls from there. Pitt, Alamance, and Onslow counties—home to substantial rural areas—each made roughly 90 calls to the Hotline, while the next mixed rural/suburban county in the list, Union, made just 64 calls. The figure below ranks the top and bottom counties by call volume.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, the distribution of calls to the Hotline by county mirrors the distribution of ballots cast across the state. However, several counties recorded a higher percentage of calls to the Hotline compared to their share of ballots cast. Mecklenburg County accounted for 12.6% of calls to the Hotline despite making up 10.1% of ballots cast in the General Election. While Buncombe County accounted for 2.8% of ballots cast, it accounted for 3.2% of calls. And on the other side of the state, Cumberland County accounted for 3.5% of calls

despite making up only 2.5% of ballots cast.

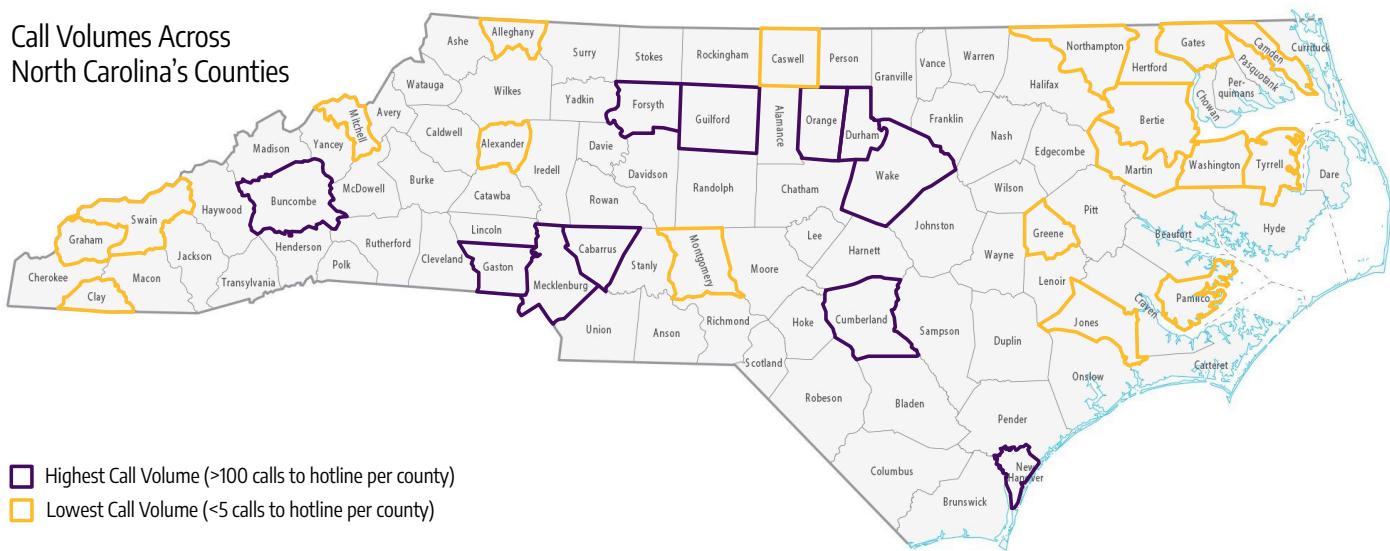
In addition to these population-based call trends, there is also a clear correlation between the counties with the most calls and the counties where our coalition partner organizations are most active. This means that lower numbers in certain counties do not necessarily represent an absence of issues for voters, but rather an opportunity for greater engagement and advocacy by partner organizations.

In addition to supporting voters throughout North Carolina's 100 counties, the Hotline also strives to identify and alleviate racial disparities in voting access. Notably, the five counties that made the most Hotline calls are all home to racially diverse populations. Four of the five have higher percentages of Black and Asian residents than the statewide average (22% and 4%, respectively), and three of them have higher percentages of Latine residents than the statewide average (12%).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>About a fifth of preliminary call records (20.4%) did not identify the caller's county. Further review of these tickets may allow us to identify the counties for more of these calls.

<sup>3</sup> Statewide demographic data is sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau's July 2024 estimates. U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts: North Carolina, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045224>.

### Call Volumes Across North Carolina's Counties



## Summary of Voter Questions and Issues

Looking at the different kinds of questions that came up, nearly half related to voting in person (3,067), followed by questions about registration (about one-quarter of calls, or 1,698) and voting by mail (about one-sixth of calls, or 931). These numbers correspond with voting trends across the state: far more North Carolinians vote during early voting or on Election Day than vote by mail.

Questions about voting in person covered a wide variety of topics, such as seeking information about one's nearest voting location, reporting inadequate polling place standards, or flagging an instance of voter intimidation. Hotline volunteers would provide these callers with individualized guidance on their options for casting a ballot. In cases of high-risk or systemic issues (like long lines, accessibility issues, voter intimidation, and poll worker errors), the Hotline would alert partners who could step in and seek to resolve those issues, including by sending real-time support to the at-issue site or alerting local or state election officials of a need to intervene to resolve the problem.

## North Carolina Voters by Voting Method in the 2024 General Election

Voting Method	Ballots Cast
Early Voting	4,214,782
Absentee By Mail	298,076
In Person on Election Day	1,175,854
Provisional	17,149
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,705,861</b>

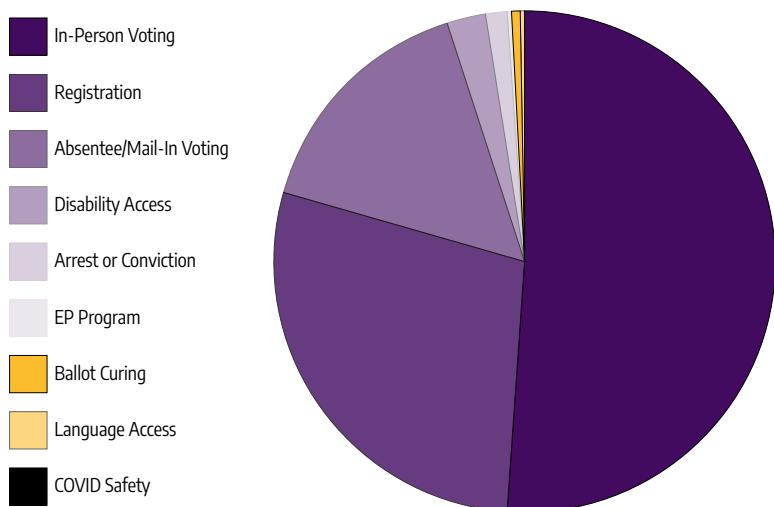
## Top Five Counties by Call Volume, Statewide

County	Calls to the Hotline	% of Total NC Calls	Voter Turnout
Mecklenburg	816	12.6%	68.4%
Wake	644	10.0%	76.1%
Guilford	346	5.4%	71.5%
Durham	301	4.7%	71.6%
Forsyth	245	3.8%	73.3%
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>6,460</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>72.6%</b>

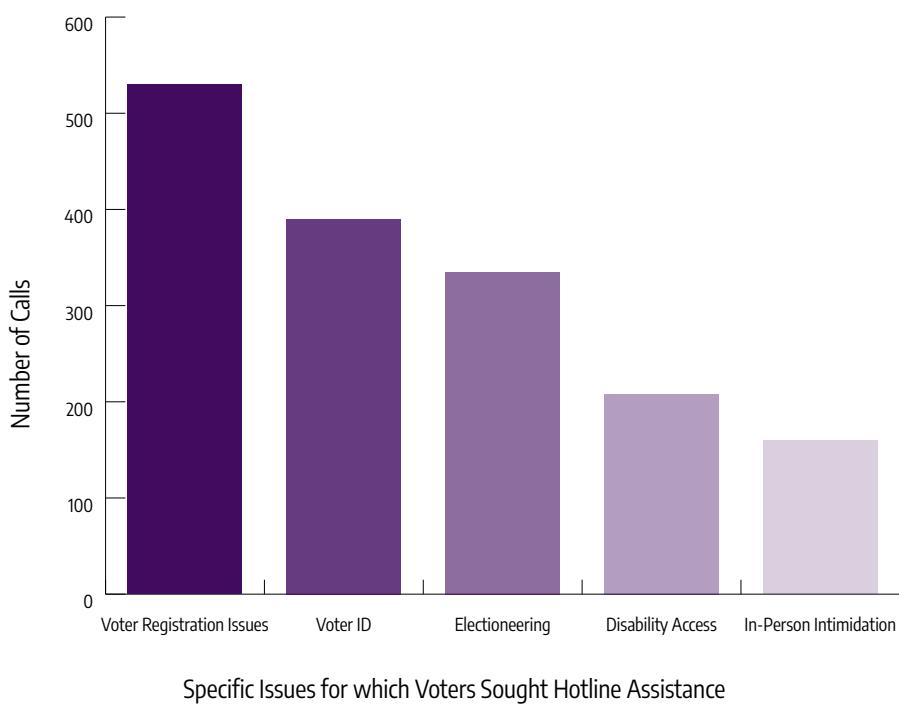
## Bottom Counties by Call Volume

County	Calls to the Hotline (per county)	% of Total NC Calls (per county)	Aggregated Voter Turnout (for county group)
Alexander, Camden, Martin, Montgomery	5	0.1%	74.5%
Caswell, Northhampton, Washington	4	0.1%	72.7%
Alleghany, Greene, Mitchell, Pamlico	3	0.0%	76.4%
Bertie, Jones, Swain, Tyrell	2	0.0%	71.9%
Clay, Gates & Graham	1	0.0%	73.4%

## Election Protection Hotline Question Type by Number of Calls



## Number of Calls by Specific Issues Discussed via Hotline



In Mecklenburg County, which experienced 2-hour wait times at multiple locations on the night of the election, 426 calls raised questions about voting in person. Wake County had the next highest number of calls concerning in-person voting with 307 calls, followed by Guilford (177) and Durham (127). More calls in more populous counties is natural, but these counties are still outliers in the data. Out of all 100 counties in the state, only six made more than 100 calls to the hotline about voting in person. This suggests that despite generally higher funding and resources for elections at the county level, voters are still experiencing enough confusion and challenges to call the Hotline for information about voting. Voting locations in populous areas also experience greater traffic, which may prompt more calls to the Hotline to inquire about other days one could vote, compared to rural counties with lower demand for voting locations.

Turning to specific problems for which voters sought Hotline assistance, the

most common issues were with voter registration (530 calls), demonstrating both the challenges with registration in North Carolina and the importance of being able to register as a voting access issue. The next most frequent problem was with voter ID (390 calls); for many voters, 2024 was the first time they were voting under the state's new voter photo ID requirement, generating confusion for voters and poll workers alike.

The next most common issues

were electioneering (335 calls), disability access (208 calls), and in-person intimidation (160 calls). Meanwhile, the most common vote-by-mail problem flagged to the Hotline was with ballot arrival (155 calls).

**Stay tuned in the coming months for more detailed analyses of these issues experienced by Hotline callers and what they mean for voting rights in North Carolina.**

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**Southern Coalition for Social Justice** partners with communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities in the South to defend and advance their political, social, and economic rights through the combination of legal advocacy, research, and communications.

**Democracy North Carolina** is a statewide nonpartisan organization that strengthens democratic structures, builds power among disenfranchised communities, and inspires confidence in a transformed political process that works for all.