

Democracy North Carolina

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Republicans, African Americans, Women and Seniors Post the Highest Voter Turnout Rates in North Carolina

A new analysis of the 4.5 million ballots cast in North Carolina reveals that registered Republicans showed up at higher rates and in larger numbers than in 2008, which contributed to the party's success in the state in 2012.

Data from the State Board of Elections shows that the number of Democrats who voted actually declined by 53,000 over the four years, even though nearly 200,000 more voters cast ballots in 2012 than in 2008.

On the other hand, when the state's 6.6 million registered voters are divided into groups by race, gender and party affiliation, the segment with the best performance was African-American female Democrats – the same group that posted the best turnout rate in 2008, when Democrats voted at a slightly higher rate than Republicans and Barack Obama narrowly won North Carolina.

Overall, 68.3% of registered voters cast ballots in 2012 in North Carolina, down from the modern turnout record of 69.6% set in the 2008 presidential contest.

Black registered voters turned out at a 70.2% rate, exceeding the rates of 68.6% for whites and 54.3% for Latinos (*based on how voters identified their race and ethnicity on their registration forms*).

It's the second presidential election in a row that black voters in North Carolina have outperformed white voters, said Bob Hall of Democracy North Carolina, a nonpartisan voting rights organization. He pointed out that in 2010, when only 44% of registered voters cast a ballot, registered whites outperformed blacks by a 46% to 41% margin; turnout among white Democrats also trailed white Republicans by five percentage points that year.

The 2010 election was one of the rare cases when men outperformed women. In 2012 and 2008, registered women voted at significantly higher rates than men (70% versus 67% in 2012) and because women also register to vote at higher rates, their numbers heavily influence election outcomes, Hall said.

In 2012, the gap between the number of female and male voters exceeded 490,000 out of 4.5 million voters casting ballots (*adjusting for voters who don't mark a gender on the registration form*).

Hall said the lowest turnout rates were among young voters (age 18 to 25) and those who don't choose a party affiliation, reflecting the overall division between voters with strong convictions and those with weak connections to the political process.

"North Carolina has a history of low voter participation that goes back to the Jim Crow era, when the poll tax, literacy test and other tactics told people that politics is for the privileged, the boss man, not for you," he said. "We've made considerable progress and are finally climbing out of the bottom tier of states, but we still have a long way to go to reach the participation levels of many northern states."

A 2012 Voter Turnout Index is provided below as well as a chart with the data.

2012 Voter Turnout Index for North Carolina

Number of registered voters, November 2012: 6,649,188

Number of registered voters who cast ballots: 4,542,488

Statewide turnout rate, Nov. 2012: 68.3 %

Statewide turnout rate, Nov. 2008: 69.6 %

**Turnout rate for voters registered as Republicans, Nov. 2012: 72.8 %
Up 1.3 % from 2008**

**Turnout rate for voters registered as Democrats, Nov. 2012: 69.9 %
Down 2.1 % from 2008**

**Turnout rate for voters registered as Unaffiliated, Nov. 2012: 60.3 %
Down 1.9 % from 2008**

Change in number of Republicans voting, from 2008 to 2012: +62,000

Change in number of Democrats voting, from 2008 to 2012: -53,000

Change in number of black female Democrats voting, 2008 to 2012: +20,000

Change in number of Unaffiliated voters voting, from 2008 to 2012: +164,000

Turnout rate for African-American registered voters, Nov. 2012: 70.2 %

Turnout rate for white registered voters, Nov. 2012: 68.6 %

Turnout rate for Latino/Hispanic registered voters, Nov. 2012: 54.3 %

Turnout rate for African-American female Democrats: 76.4 %

Turnout rate for white female Republicans: 74.2 %

Turnout rate for female registered voters: 69.7 %

Turnout rate for male registered voters: 66.8 %

Increase in number of ballots cast by women over men: 491,000

Turnout rate for voters age 18 to 25, Nov. 2012: 55.1 %

Turnout rate for voters age 18 to 25, Nov. 2008: 60.3 %

Turnout rate for voters age over 65, Nov. 2012: 76.6 %

Turnout rate for voters age over 65, Nov. 2008: 72.4 %

Voter Registration, Ballots Cast and Turnout Data for North Carolina, 2008 & 2012

<i>Compiled by Democracy NC</i>	Voter Registration			Ballots Cast		Turnout	
	Nov. 2008	Nov. 2012	change	Nov. 2008	Nov. 2012	% Turnout 2008	% Turnout 2012
TOTAL	6,259,312	6,649,188	389,876	4,354,571	4,542,488	69.6%	68.3%
DEMOCRATS	2,861,858	2,870,693	8,835	2,060,058	2,007,139	72.0%	69.9%
- Dem White Women	908,893	836,141	- 72,753	646,866	576,222	71.2%	68.9%
- Dem Black Women	687,952	739,433	51,482	526,596	564,752	76.5%	76.4%
- Dem Women	1,671,037	1,672,747	1,710	1,222,257	1,201,164	73.1%	71.8%
- Dem White Men	648,305	581,795	- 66,510	460,774	398,629	71.1%	68.5%
REPUBLICANS	2,002,808	2,052,250	49,442	1,432,280	1,494,643	71.5%	72.8%
- Rep Women	1,016,268	1,040,397	24,130	734,787	764,095	72.3%	73.4%
- Rep Men	977,831	998,699	20,868	691,028	720,834	70.7%	72.2%
LIBERTARIAN	3,950	19,321	15,371	3,322	12,086	84.1%	62.6%
UNAFFILIATED	1,391,262	1,706,924	315,662	864,821	1,028,620	62.2%	60.3%
- Unaffil Women	701,363	851,064	149,701	440,758	518,750	62.8%	61.0%
BLACK	1,349,008	1,492,831	143,823	970,351	1,048,187	71.9%	70.2%
WHITE	4,599,286	4,728,843	129,557	3,192,691	3,244,099	69.4%	68.6%
HISPANIC	68,053	113,782	45,729	40,260	61,795	59.2%	54.3%
WOMEN	3,391,427	3,573,312	181,885	2,395,860	2,488,973	70.6%	69.7%
MEN	2,822,503	3,000,187	177,684	1,926,010	2,003,367	68.2%	66.8%
AGE 18-25	752,238	846,890	94,652	453,534	467,029	60.3%	55.1%
AGE 26-40	1,686,045	1,695,253	9,208	1,056,093	985,673	62.6%	58.1%
AGE 41-65	2,770,570	2,947,751	177,181	2,084,036	2,201,493	75.2%	74.7%
AGE OVER 65	1,050,365	1,159,293	108,928	760,907	888,293	72.4%	76.6%

Source: North Carolina State Board of Elections, analyzed by Democracy North Carolina. Some figures are adjusted to account for differences in time delays in data collection at the Board of Elections and posting in SEIMS and the FTP site.