

# Georgia 2024 State Report

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## Introduction

As in 2020 and 2022, Georgia is expected to be a critical battleground this November. While there are no marquee Senate contests on the ballot this year, the state’s 16 electoral votes have the potential to decide who wins the presidency in what was the closest state of the 2020 election, decided by just 0.23 percent—or 11,779 votes.

Four years later, Georgia’s elections are particularly steeped in controversy, and concerns about election integrity, voter suppression, and the autonomy and safety of poll workers continue to dog the election process. Two dozen new election laws have been enacted, changing how elections are conducted in Georgia. These two contests gave us insights into—and data on—the inner workings of Georgia’s 2024 election process, and serve as a useful guide to the November election.

## Election Calendar

Like many Southern states, Georgia has two-round elections for all congressional, state row office, and state legislative elections: if no candidate wins a majority of the votes in the first round, then the two highest vote-getters face off in a second round. This led to a saturated election calendar in 2024. So far, [four elections](#) (including primaries and runoffs) have taken place, with the November 5 general election and potential runoffs still ahead. With a potential runoff still penciled in on the calendar, “Election Day” may be a six-time occurrence in Georgia this year.

March 12 featured the state’s presidential preference primary (PPP), and some municipal contests. Runoffs for those latter races were scheduled for April 9.

The state’s general primary, including contests for Congress, the Georgia General Assembly, and the state Supreme Court, took place on May 21. Runoffs for three congressional districts and eight legislative districts were held on June 18.

As is the case in the rest of the country, the general election will be held on November 5. The state’s 16 electors will be awarded to the plurality winner of the presidential contest, while candidates in other contests require a majority to prevail. In 2020, this resulted in two separate runoff election dates: State races were initially scheduled to be resolved on

December 3, while the two decisive U.S. Senate races were contested on January 5. After the adoption of [Senate Bill 202](#) in 2021 consolidated congressional and state runoff elections, runoffs for all congressional and state races without a majority winner will be held on the same day in 2024: December 3.

## Legislation and Policy Shaping Georgia Elections

Following the 2020 election, many state legislatures throughout the nation passed laws aimed at reshaping the way their elections are conducted. Georgia was no exception, with over two hundred election-related bills proposed in the past four years; 25 were enacted, according to a [database](#) collected by the National Conference of State Legislatures. The table below summarizes them. A mix of provisions are included: some expand voting access, others restrict it, and yet more are designed to improve or standardize elections procedures.

Bill	Summary
2021 HB 8	Reconstitutes Floyd County Board of Elections and Registrations
2021 HB 9	Amends HB 8 and provides for dissolution of the board
2021 SB 202	<p>Provisions <a href="#">include</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Voters can request a mail-in absentee ballot 11 weeks before an election, instead of 180 days (nearly 26 weeks)</li> <li>+ Mail voting applications must be returned by the Friday before the election, instead of two Fridays before the election</li> <li>+ Requesting, returning mail-in absentee ballots will be subject to ID rules</li> <li>+ State and local governments cannot send unsolicited mail ballot applications</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Third parties sending unsolicited applications must follow new restrictions</li> <li>+ UOCAVA voters will receive ranked-choice ballots (for runoffs)</li> <li>+ Runoffs will be four weeks long, instead of nine</li> <li>+ Every county must have a secure vote drop box, but there can be no more than one for every 100,000 active voters or one per early voting site</li> <li>+ Added a Saturday of early voting and made a Sunday optional</li> <li>+ Mobile voting buses will be discontinued</li> <li>+ Restrictions on handing food and water to voters waiting in line</li> <li>+ Mail ballots can be processed beginning two weeks before the election</li> <li>+ Ballots must be counted by 5pm on the day after the election</li> <li>+ Officials must post the number of ballots cast via each vote mode by 10pm</li> <li>+ Election offices cannot receive direct outside funding</li> <li>+ Poll workers can serve adjoining counties</li> <li>+ Ballot records are subject to transparency disclosures</li> <li>+ Established a hotline for complaints about voting activity</li> </ul>
2021 HB 682	Reconstitute Pickens County Board of Elections and Registrations
2021 HB 683	Provides for the abolition of Pickens County Board of Elections and Registration
2021 HB 684	Replaces the current Troup County Board of Elections and Registration

2022 SB 472	Relates to the electing members of the Public Service Commission
2022 HB 907	Relates to special elections and sale/use tax questions
2022 HB 1015	Creates a board of elections and registration for Montgomery County
2022 HB 1368	Creates a board of elections and registration for Miller County
2022 HB 1432	Relates to Dawson County's Board of Elections
2022 HB 1432	Relates to Sumter County's Board of Elections
2023 SB 129	Expands voting leave for Georgia employees
2023 SB 222	Local election officials cannot accept donations to fund election administration
2023 HB 540	Creates a board of elections and registration for Wilkes County
2024 SB 189	<p>Provisions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Presidential candidates on the ballot in at least 20 other states gain Georgia ballot access</li> <li>+ Makes it easier to file voter challenges</li> <li>+ Removes the Georgia Secretary of State from the State Election Board</li> </ul>

2024 HB 504	Creates a board of elections and registration for Warren County
2024 HR 577	Recognizes GoVoteGA Day
2024 HB 710	Creates a board of elections and registration for Schley County
2024 HR 806	Sets the nomination and election of a chairperson of the State Election Board
2024 HB 974	Clarifies post-election audit policies and requires online posting of scanned ballots
2024 HB 1063	Creates a board of elections and registration for Chattooga County
2024 HB 1207	Gives elections supervisors the power to determine how many voting machines to use at polling places in statewide elections; strengthens rights of poll workers but prohibits noncitizens from volunteering
2024 HB 1448	Creates a board of elections and registration for Dodge County

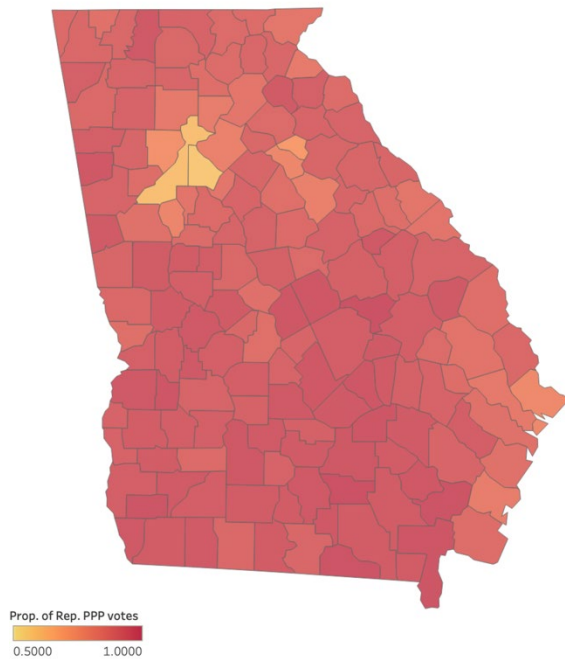
## Primary and Turnout Results

As in many other states, turnout in Georgia’s March 12 Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) this year was very low. Turnout clocked in at less than [13 percent](#) of active voters, with 17 percent of white active voters, 9 percent of Black active voters, and 3 percent of Hispanic active voters casting ballots. There is a ready explanation for the low turnout rate: the contests were only nominally competitive. Incumbent Joe Biden faced only token

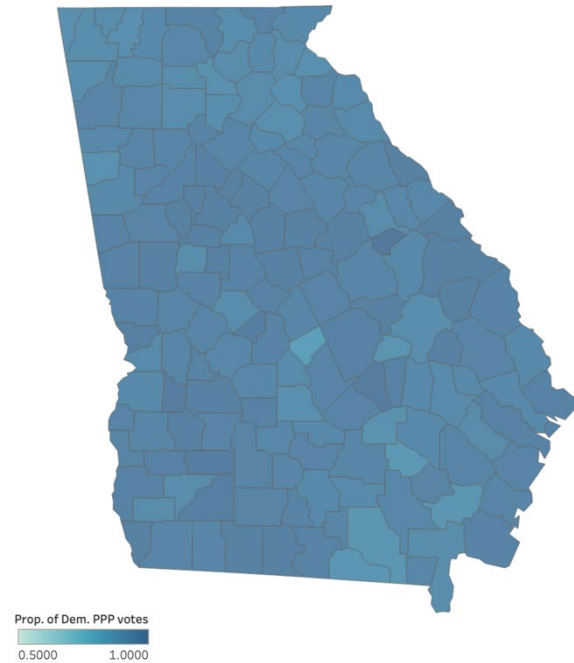
opposition, and Donald Trump’s only serious competitor, Nikki Haley, exited the race prior to Georgia’s primary but after early voting had begun. Biden ended up sweeping the Democratic contest with 95 percent of the vote, whereas Trump trounced Haley by 71 points.

The maps below illustrate where each candidate had the most support. Trump performed best in rural Georgia, especially in the southern two-thirds of the state. In those counties, he routinely surpassed 90 percent of the vote. He performed notably worse in the Atlanta metropolitan area—even earning less than 60 percent of the vote in Fulton and DeKalb counties, home to Atlanta. He won close to 75 percent of the vote in the Athens and Savannah areas. Haley’s support, by contrast, proved the deepest in denser, more educated parts of the state, with her vote share approaching 40 percent in Fulton and DeKalb counties and closer to 20 percent in other suburban counties, near Savannah, and in Athens. Joe Biden’s sweep of the Democratic primary led to vote shares above 90 percent in most counties across the state, though the incumbent’s performance lagged a little in Northern Georgia and in the state’s inland south.

*Figure 1: Trump’s Vote Share  
(prop. of Rep. PPP votes)*



*Figure 2: Biden’s Vote Share  
(prop. of Dem. PPP votes)*



Republican turnout exceeded that among Democrats in most of the state, with around two-thirds of votes cast in the Republican primary. Republicans dominated in the northern part of the state and much of south-central Georgia. Democratic primary votes were more common in the Atlanta metropolitan area and the state's other major cities.

Turnout was notably higher in the May 21 state primary, with over 1.2 million votes cast (versus about 880,000 in the presidential preference primary), but still low, for a total of [18 percent](#) of active voters. Twenty-two percent of white active voters cast ballots, alongside 18 percent of Black voters and 5 percent of Hispanic voters. This time, there were competitive races up and down the ballot, including highly salient Republican congressional primaries, an important tax referendum in Gwinnett County, numerous competitive state legislative races, and a higher-profile election for state Supreme Court. Turnout rose substantially from March to May throughout much of the Atlanta area while declining slightly in North Georgia.

The Supreme Court race, between Republican incumbent Andrew Pinson and former Democratic Congressman John Barrow, ended up being fairly competitive and was contested on top national partisan priorities, such as abortion rights. Pinson won with around 55 percent of the vote, outperforming typical Republicans in the Atlanta metropolitan area, while Barrow posted unusually strong performances in more traditionally Republican and rural areas of the state. Figure 5 displays a scatterplot showing the proportion of the vote received by Pinson against that earned by Republicans in the PPP. Counties are colored according to type: Atlanta and its suburbs are in blue, Atlanta exurbs are in green, other urban counties are in orange, and all remaining counties are in gray. Classifications are based on the Census' designation of metropolitan areas and on the Atlanta Regional Council's determinations. The plot shows that most small counties, as well as those in exurban Atlanta and outside the major urban centers, had lower vote shares for Pinson than for presidential primary Republicans. The primary urban and suburban counties were more split, with more Democratic counties voting more for Pinson than expected.



Figure 3: Republican prop. of PPP vote

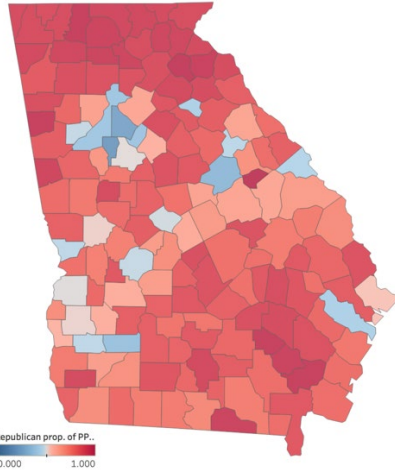


Figure 4: Pinson (R) prop. of Supr. Court votes, state primary

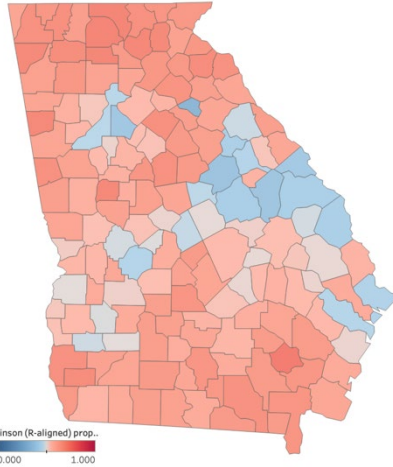
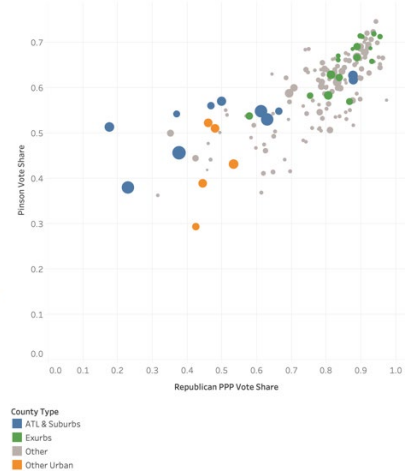


Figure 5: Pinson's vote share against Republican PPP vote share, sized by number of registered voters in June



Turnout was low and Republican-leaning in both primaries, as shown by the plots above and below; still, turnout rose significantly from the effectively uncontested March presidential primary to the highly competitive May state primary—and especially among Democrats and in Democratic-leaning counties. The maps above illustrate the Republican proportion of votes in each county in the PPP contest and Republican-aligned candidate’s proportion of the vote in the May Supreme Court contest, respectively. While about 55,000 more votes were cast for the Republican-aligned Supreme Court candidate in May than in the Republican PPP in March, the Democratic-aligned candidate earned nearly 240,000 more votes in the Supreme Court race than were cast in the Democratic PPP.

The below maps more simply show turnout by county (out of the number of registered voters in June 2024) in the March primary and the May primary, as well as the change between them. Turnout was low throughout almost the entire state in March, though it was particularly low in the Atlanta metropolitan area, near Columbus, and near Savannah. In May, turnout increased dramatically in those regions but still lagged behind the state as a whole. Southern and Eastern Georgia generally had the highest turnout in the state primary.

Figure 6: Turnout by county, presidential preference primary (out of June 25 registration total)

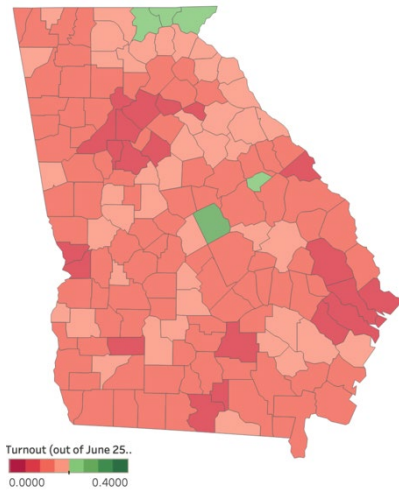


Figure 7: Turnout by county, state primary (out of June 25 registration totals)

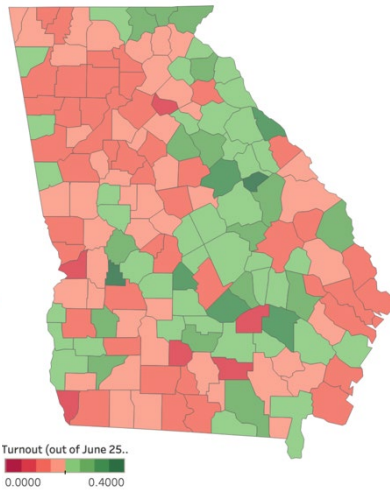
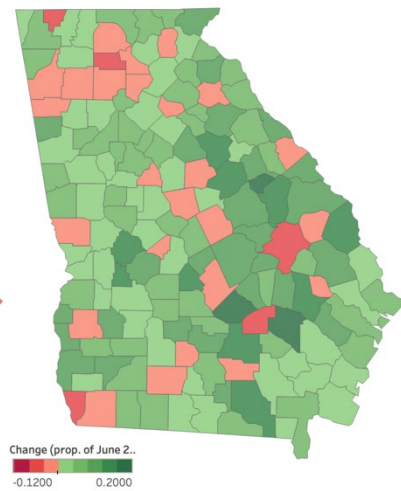


Figure 8: Change in votes, PPP to state primary (as a proportion of June 25 registration totals)



## Vote Mode and Tabulation

Partisan divides and controversies surrounding vote mode are central to Georgia politics, and the state's two 2024 primaries provide some data and background on Peach State voting patterns ahead of the November general election.

First, absentee or mail votes comprise only a small sliver of votes cast in either primary: around 3.3 percent of votes in the [presidential preference primary](#) and 3.7 percent of those cast in the [state primary](#), according to data released by the Georgia Secretary of State's office. This is a notable decline from the combined state and presidential primary in June 2020, conducted during the height of the pandemic, when [47 percent](#) of votes were cast via mail. Absentee voting is particularly controversial in the wake of Donald Trump's [claims](#) about the risk of voter fraud with mail ballots, which politicized the use of vote modes. In the presidential preference primary, 2.6 percent of Republican primary votes were cast by mail, versus 4.9 percent of Democratic ballots. A similar asymmetry appeared in the June primary, with 3.3 percent of votes for GOP-aligned Andrew Pinson being cast via mail, versus 4.1 percent of votes for Democrat John Barrow.

Figure 9: Prop. of absentee/mail votes, Republican PPP

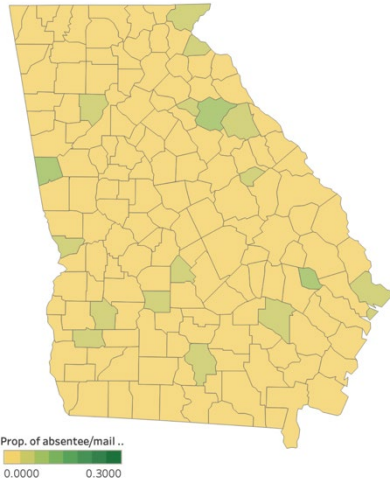


Figure 10: Prop. of absentee/mail votes, PPP

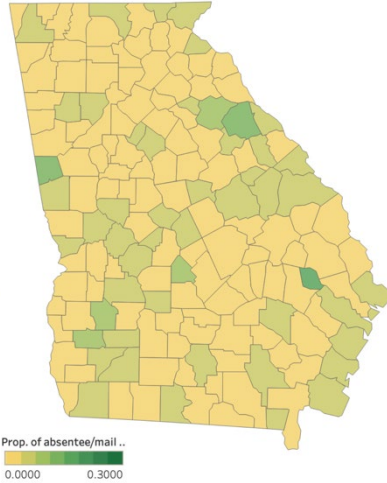
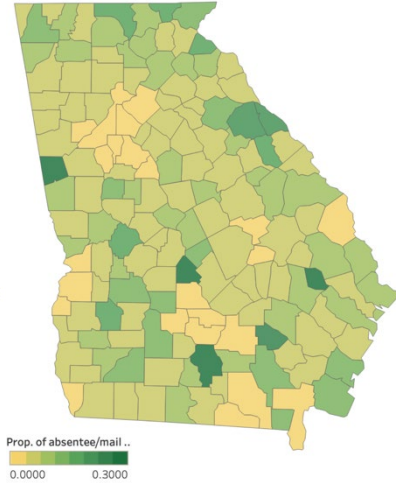


Figure 11: Prop. of absentee/mail votes, Democratic PPP



Far more common was early in-person voting, also known as advance voting. This comprised about 46 percent of presidential preference primary votes, and around 40 percent of state primary ballots cast, compared to [13 percent](#) in the June 2020 combined primary. There were not substantial differences between the frequency of Democrats and Republicans utilizing early voting options during the state primary, though, in the presidential preference primary, Democrats were two to three percent more likely than Republicans to vote early. Early voting was the most common vote mode in a few parts of the state, namely the southeastern coast and near the Blue Ridge Mountains in the state's northeastern corner.

Figure 12: Prop. of early/advance votes, Republican PPP

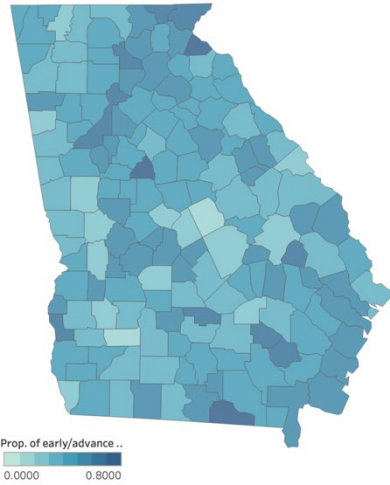


Figure 13: Prop. of early/advance votes, PPP

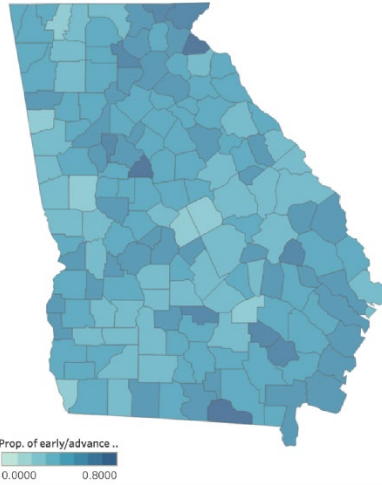
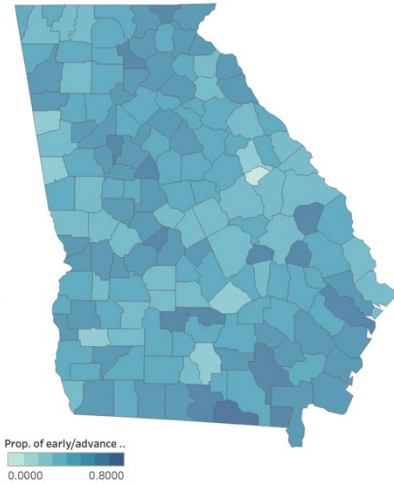


Figure 14: Prop. of early/advance votes, Democratic PPP



In-person Election Day voting comprises the last significant vote mode option available to Georgia voters; most votes in the two primary elections this year were cast in this manner. (Just [39 percent](#) of votes were cast on Election Day in the June 2020 primary.) During the presidential preference primary, 46 percent of Democratic ballots and 54 percent of Republican ones were cast in person on Election Day, or 51 percent overall. In the state primary, 56 percent of ballots were cast in person on May 21, with nearly equivalent proportions on both sides of the aisle.

Figure 15: Prop of Election Day votes, state primary

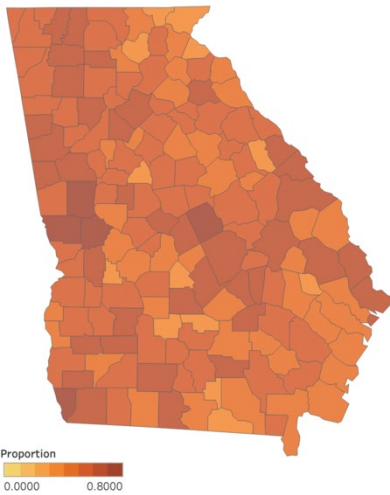


Figure 16: Prop. of mail votes, state primary

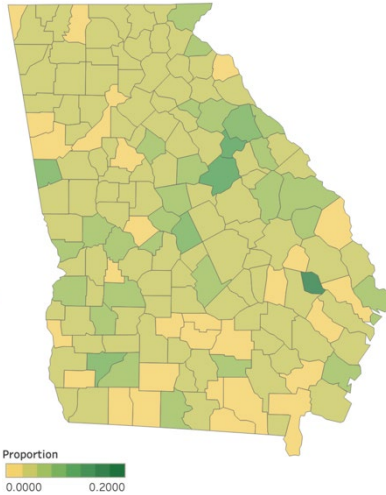
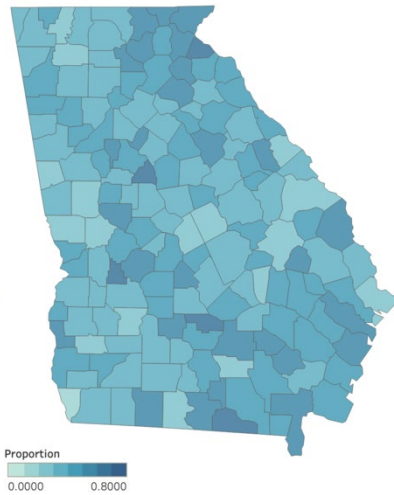


Figure 17: Prop. of early in-person votes, state primary



Not all ballot modes result in equally efficient tabulation, so a voter's choice to cast their ballot via mail or on Election Day could influence the speed with which results become clear on November 5. We scraped election returns on the night of the March 12 presidential preference primary to see how results trickled in over time, and the three charts below display these data.

A few observations stand out. First, over 99 percent of votes ultimately cast were recorded by 11:30pm for each vote mode and in each primary. Early votes were reported very quickly, with the vast majority reported by 8:30pm, while Election Day votes lagged behind and came in gradually as the night wore on. Comparing this to our [report](#) on the “blue shift” that occurred in November 2020, we see that votes were reported more quickly in the March 2024 primary; this could be a result of changes to Georgia's vote counting processes or simply a consequence of having fewer votes to count in the primary compared with a presidential election.

While we do not know *ex ante* what proportions of early, Election Day, and absentee votes might be cast by Republicans or by Democrats, the 2022 election gives us useful heuristics to keep in mind for November. While 2022 was a midterm election with different turnout dynamics than a presidential-year contest, it was still a federal statewide election with a high-profile contest on the ballot (the Georgia Senate race), and occurred in a purely post-pandemic environment. In that contest, Republican Senate candidate Herschel Walker earned 56 percent of Election Day votes, 30 percent of absentee votes, and 46 percent of early in-person votes cast.

If this partisan asymmetry with vote mode choice continues in November 2024, and if results reporting by vote mode stay similar to the March presidential preference primary, a few expectations can be inferred. First, results during the initial hours after polls close at 7:00 pm will likely be dominated by early voting ballots, which will skew slightly Democratic. This will create a [blue mirage](#) that will die down as heavily Republican Election Day votes are counted and added to the mix. Absentee votes will trickle in gradually as well and tend to be overwhelmingly Democratic; however, they only amount to a small proportion of ballots cast (just six percent in 2022).

Figure 18: Number of ballots reported over time by party, PPP

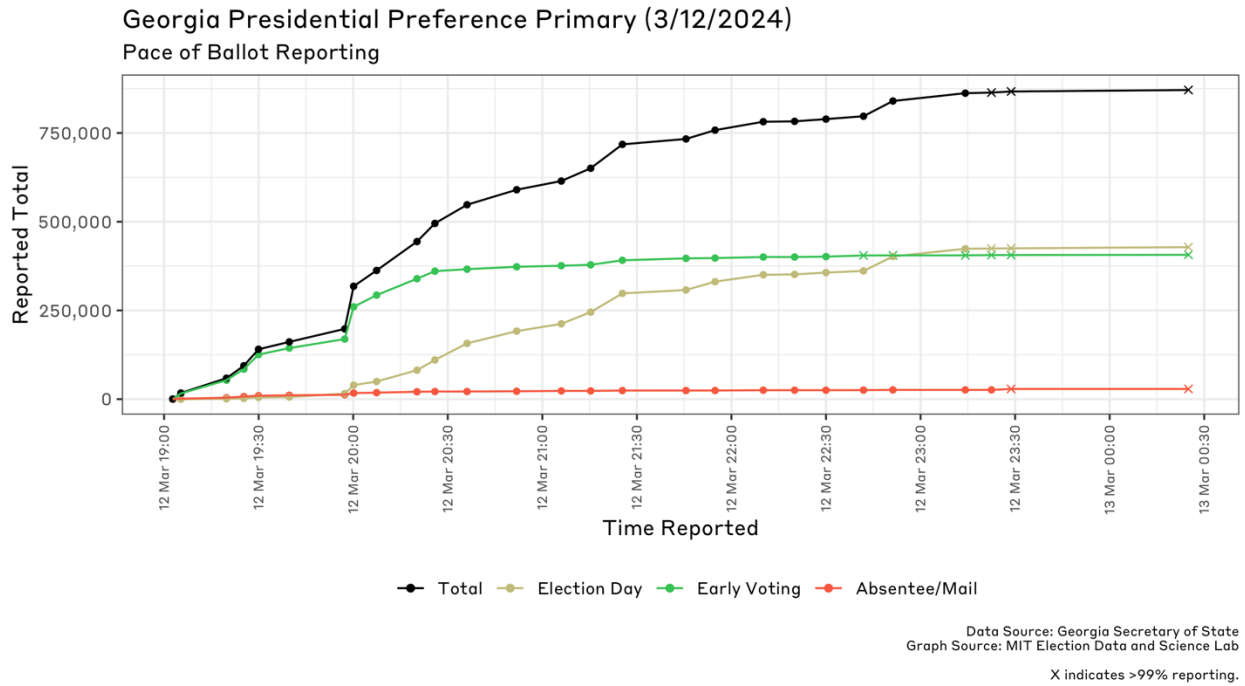
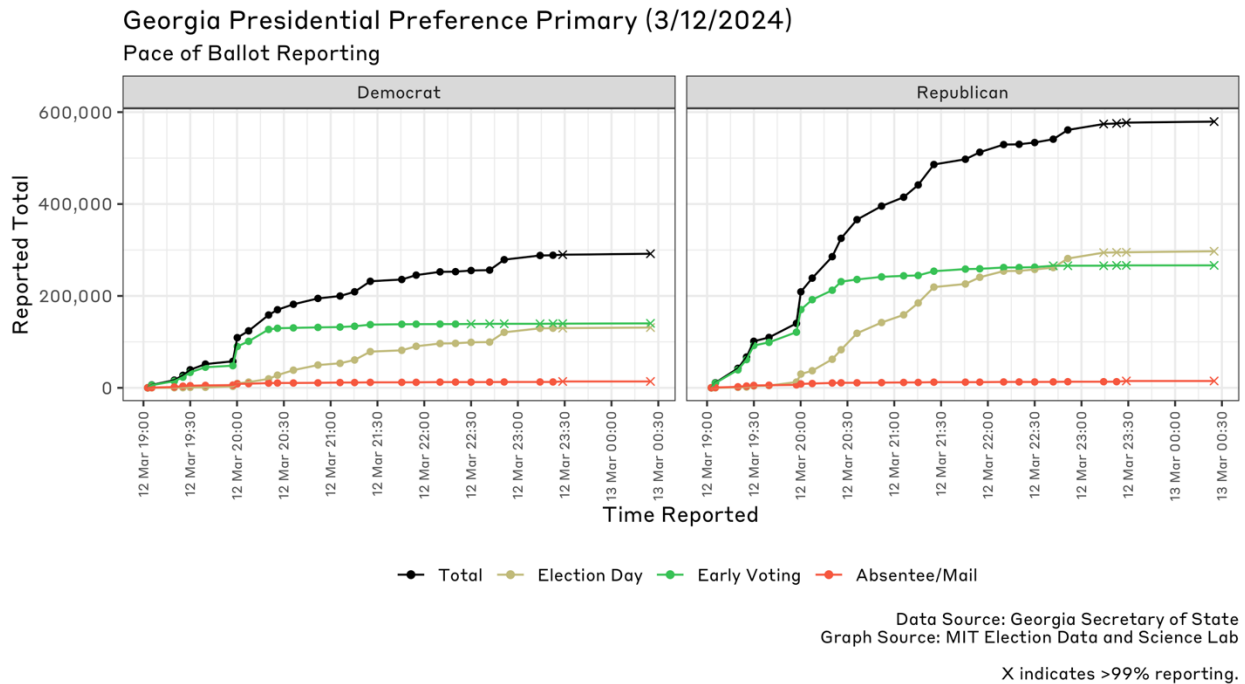


Figure 19: Number of ballots reported over time by party, PPP



## Conclusion

In 2020, Georgia surged into national prominence from being a solidly red state to being a decisive battleground, and arguably received the most attention during the aftermath of that contentious election. Indeed, it was not only home to the closest presidential contest—Joe Biden won the state’s 16 electoral votes by just 0.23 percent (famously, 11,779 votes)—but was also home to two marquee Senate contests, both of which went to January runoffs and decided control of a 50–50 Senate. In 2022, the state remained in the spotlight with another decisive Senate race, which also went to a runoff.

While no U.S. Senate race is on the ballot to decide Senate control this year, Georgia remains a pivotal state, and its 16 electoral votes might still bring Joe Biden or Donald Trump to the 270-vote victory threshold. Fortunately, this year’s two statewide primaries (and some runoffs) have given election officials and voters a chance to familiarize themselves with the Peach State’s elections landscape after a flurry of legislation in recent General Assembly sessions, establishing a track record of successful administration.