

 Decision Desk HQ

US Elections Review & Analysis

September 2025



Prepared by Decision Desk HQ Data Science Team

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REDISTRICTING SEASON IS UPON US

As November 2026 approaches, and pundits, political analysts, and the media begin predicting which party will win control of the chamber, it is essential to remember that both the national composition of the House and especially the composition of each state's congressional delegation do not necessarily reflect the number of voters voting for each party.

Instead, the way congressional districts are drawn in a given state can often lead to vastly disproportionate outcomes, where one party is overrepresented in the state's congressional delegation at the expense of the other party. Two main factors frequently contribute to this imbalance:

1. The political geography of a state, including where the voters for each party tend to live, can make it difficult, if not impossible, to draw a truly proportional map.
2. **Gerrymandering** - the practice of intentionally drawing electoral boundaries to favor one party, allowing it to win more seats than it would otherwise.

There are two primary reasons a state might redistrict now, outside of the decennial redistricting process:

Because they're ordered to. In some cases, State and Federal courts ordered the state to redraw its maps, declaring the current boundaries illegal. Pennsylvania in 2018, Alabama in 2024, and Louisiana in 2024 are good examples.

Because they want to. In the absence of a court ruling forcing a state to redraw its districts, states can decide to redraw the districts in the middle of the decade simply because. This is typically done to provide partisan gains for the party in control of the state legislature.

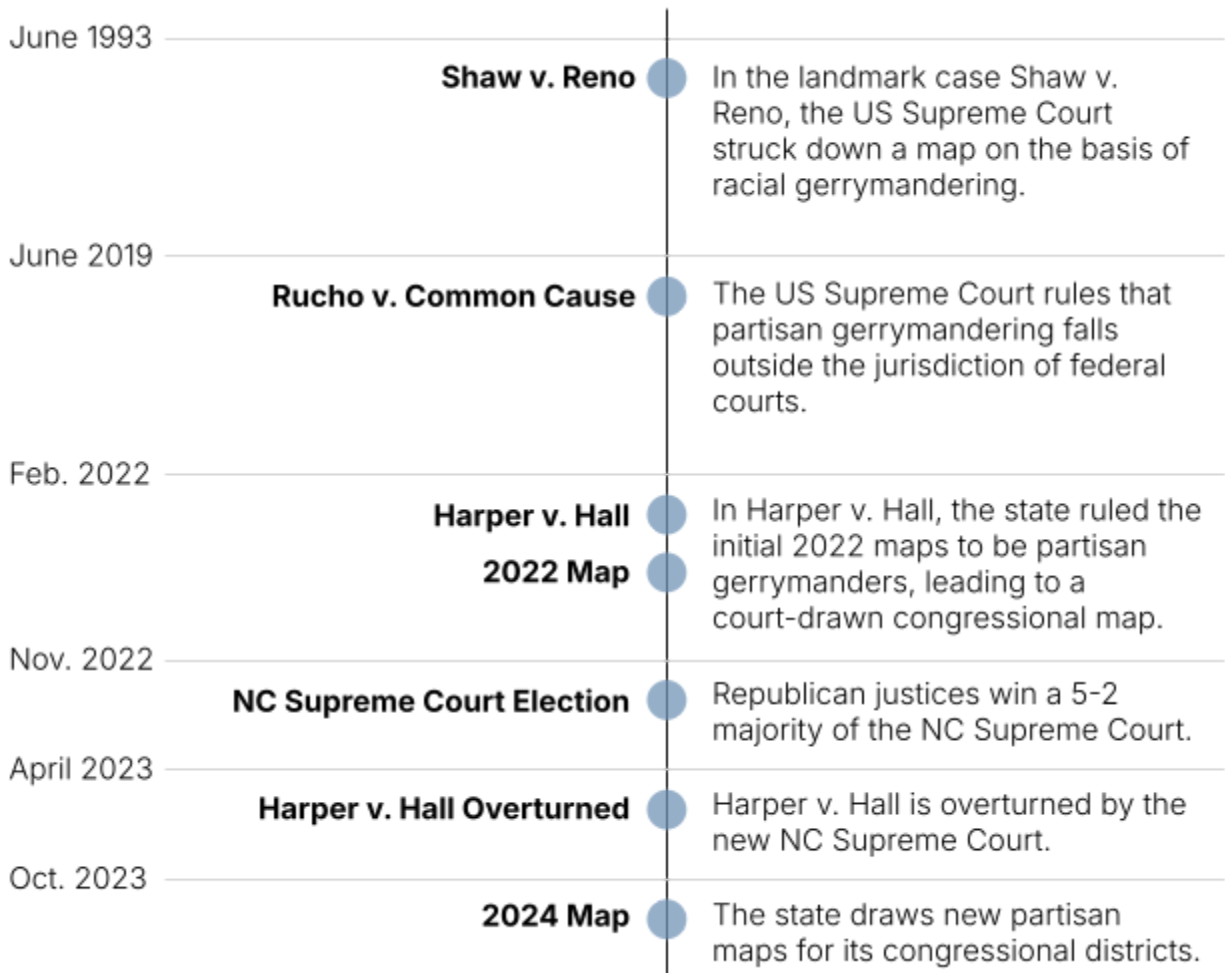
A primary example includes Texas's 2003 mid-decade redistricting, which led to Republicans picking up five House seats in the 2004 elections.

Let's dive into how North Carolina set the table for Republican House control in 2024 and how Texas could do the same for them in 2026 and, how California could prevent a GOP win.

HOW NORTH CAROLINA DELIVERED THE HOUSE FOR THE GOP IN 2024

Background

North Carolina has a history of partisan and racial gerrymandering. The development of NC redistricting and jurisdiction over partisan and racial gerrymandering is shown in the timeline below.



With *Rucho v. Common Cause* placing rulings on partisan gerrymandering in the hands of the states and the NC Supreme Court's Republican majority allowing maps with partisan gerrymandering to pass in 2023, the landscape of NC congressional districts has changed dramatically over the past several years.

Analysis of Changes

North Carolina Congressional Districts Before and After

CD	'24 Pres Margin, '22 Districts	'24 Pres Margin, '24 Districts	% CD Pop. Maintained
1	-2.9%	3.2%	70.6%
2	-27.5%	-33.4%	78.9%
3	29.2%	21.7%	79.3%
4	-33.9%	-44.6%	62.9%
5	22.4%	17.9%	46.2%
6	-10.3%	17.2%	31.8%
7	15.8%	13.6%	90.8%
8	34.4%	19.1%	58.1%
9	11.1%	15.3%	61.9%
10	40.0%	17.6%	60.4%
11	8.7%	9.4%	95.9%
12	-28.7%	-45.4%	52.4%
13	-0.9%	16.2%	53.6%
14	-15.1%	14.9%	43.7%

Table: Decision Desk HQ

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As shown in the chart above, four competitive districts saw significant changes: NC-01, NC-06, NC-13, and NC-14.

- The three districts that were the most Democratic in 2022 became significantly more Democratic following the 2023 redistricting, "packing" Democratic voters in.
 - NC-14 lost most of its Democratic Charlotte voters to solidly Democratic NC-12.
 - NC-13 lost its Democratic portions in Wake County to the deep blue NC-02 and NC-04.

- The four districts that were the most Republican in 2022 also became more Democratic in the 2023 redistricting, but not enough to become remotely competitive.
 - NC-01 lost Democratic voters from Greenville to NC-03
 - NC-06 lost deep blue Greensboro voters to NC-05.

Voter Continuity Across North Carolina's 2022 and 2024 Congressional Districts

Each pie chart shows the approximate % of registered voters that comprise North Carolina's new 2024 Congressional Districts and where they came from. For example, NC-11 now contains 96% of its 2022 voters + 4% of NC-05's 2022 voters.

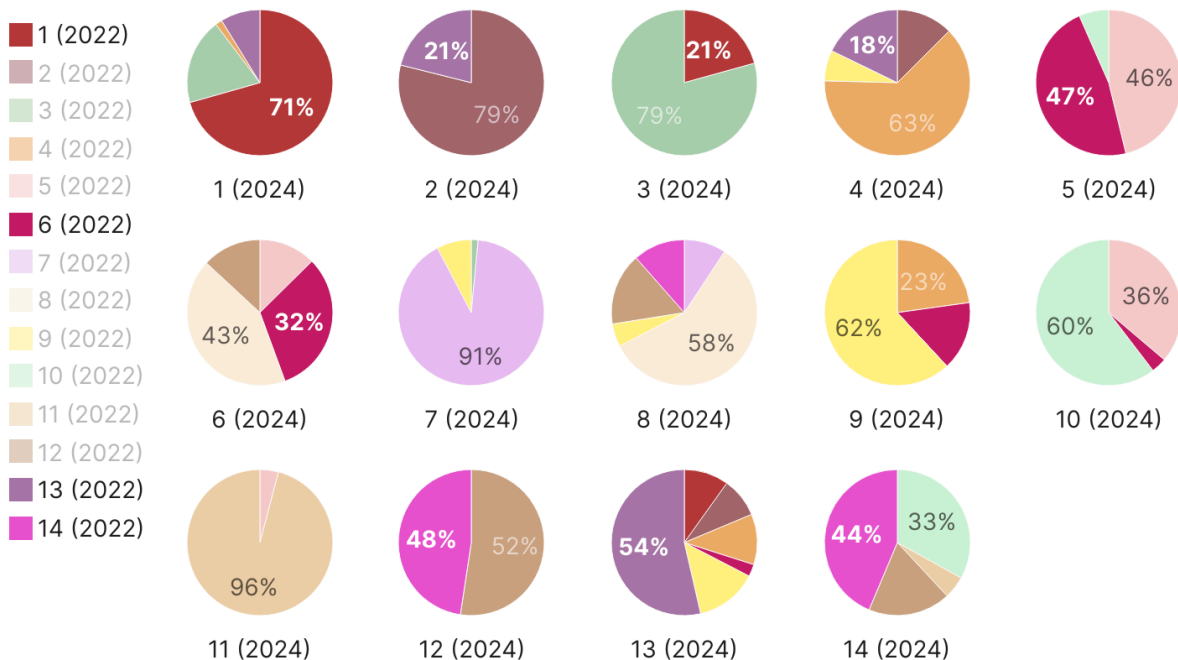


Chart: DecisionDeskHQ

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NC-01 is protected under the Voting Rights Act, making it difficult for Republicans to move it solidly to the right.

- NC-01 is now only a majority-minority district by a very slim margin, with 49% of the population identifying as white and 39% identifying as black, based on [Census Bureau estimates](#).

- Even with the 6% Republican swing from the old district to the new, Democrat Don Davis won reelection in 2024.

NC-06, as shown in the figure above, experienced the most dramatic changes with only 32% voter continuity.

- While the district still includes High Point and a small portion of Greensboro, it extends across central North Carolina, taking in deep red Davidson and Rowan counties.
- Leftward-trending Cabarrus County is split across NC-06 and NC-08 to mitigate the impacts of these blue shifts.
- Despite being won by a Democratic candidate in 2022, NC-06 was not even contested by a Democrat in 2024.

NC-13, once the most competitive congressional district in the state, shifted 17 points to the right.

- The new NC-13 includes a significantly smaller portion of deep-blue Wake County, instead picking up several solidly Republican rural and exurban counties.
- NC-13, previously represented by Democrat Wiley Nickel, who did not run for reelection in 2024, would likely have had a very close election under 2022 district lines.

NC-14 had the largest partisan swing of any district and only 44% voter continuity.

- Formerly primarily composed of Mecklenburg County, the new NC-14 has dropped more than half of these voters, taking in several solidly Republican rural and suburban counties.
- NC-14's former representative, Democrat Jeff Jackson, ran for (and won) North Carolina Attorney General rather than run for reelection in this new, solidly Republican district.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US HOUSE CONTROL

- Republicans currently (September 2025) only hold a three-seat majority nationwide in the House of Representatives.

- The Democratic Party would have been heavily favored to win Districts 6 and 14 under the 2022 district lines.
- In this hypothetical scenario, the race for NC-13 would have been close, but incumbent Wiley Nickel would have been favored to pull off a narrow victory for the Democratic Party.
- If the Democratic Party held all 3 Districts (6, 13, and 14), holding all else equal, the Democratic Party would have won control of the United States House of Representatives with a 218-217 majority, denying the Republican Party a trifecta.
- With narrow Democratic control of the House, bills would not be able to pass on strict party-line votes.

REDISTRICTING IS BIGGER IN TEXAS

In July 2025, President Trump urged Texas to redraw its congressional maps to help Republicans gain up to five U.S. House seats. Initially, Governor Greg Abbott and several Texas GOP lawmakers were hesitant. But after Trump personally called Abbott and members of the state's congressional delegation, Texas decided to proceed. Abbott then added redistricting to the state's special legislative session agenda.

A major trigger of this decision was a Justice Department letter sent in early July, arguing that Districts 9, 18, 29, and 33 were unconstitutional racial gerrymanders. This came after the 5th Circuit Court ruled that minority coalition districts were no longer protected under the Voting Rights Act.

In response, many Democratic state House members [fled to California, New York, and Illinois](#) to block a quorum. Their goal: encourage Democratic-led states to gerrymander in return. They remained out of state for two weeks, despite threats from Republicans, including a lawsuit from Attorney General Ken Paxton to remove 13 Democrats from office.

Eventually, Texas Dems returned after California released a proposed map that heavily favored Democrats, countering Texas's expected GOP-leaning redraw. On August 29th, 2025, [Governor Abbott signed the new maps into TX law](#).

Key TX Redistricting Patterns

- Nearly every district changed - 28 of 38 have less than 80% Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) - continuity, meaning over 20% of voters shifted districts in the redrawing.
- Six Democratic-held districts saw significant changes (less than 40% CVAP continuity). Of these:
 - Three became solidly Republican by adding rural/exurban areas.
 - Three remained heavily Democratic, with two becoming even more Democratic (over +10%), effectively packing blue voters.

Some districts changed their voter makeup significantly but experienced minimal partisan shifts (less than 3%).

- Despite the changes, most GOP districts remain very safe:
 - Twenty-six districts went to Trump by over 15%.

- Even if Democrats win all four closer districts, Republicans still gain one seat, minimizing the risk of a failed gerrymander (a "dummymander").

Regionally, the most significant shifts occurred in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and the Rio Grande Valley. Each of these areas saw at least one Democratic district redrawn to favor Republicans.

The five seats Republicans are targeting

The congressional districts currently represented by House Democrats in Texas analyzed by their 2024 presidential vote margin compared with the new district's 2024 vote and share of the incumbent's current district population.

Old map			New map	
CD	Incumbent	2024 Pres.	% Current CD pop.	2024 Pres.
9	Al Green	D+44.1	3%	R+19.9
32	Julie Johnson	D+23.8	41%	R+17.7
35	Greg Casar	D+33.6	10%	R+10.4
28	Henry Cuellar	R+7.3	54%	R+10.4
34	Vicente Gonzalez	R+4.4	62%	R+10.1
16	Veronica Escobar	D+16.0	96%	D+16.4
7	Lizzie Fletcher	D+20.8	75%	D+23.4
20	Joaquin Castro	D+21.3	61%	D+28.4
29	Sylvia Garcia	D+20.4	37%	D+30.4
33	Marc Veasey	D+33.8	33%	D+32.6
30	Jasmine Crockett	D+47.0	69%	D+47.0
18	(Turner successor)*	D+39.8	26%	D+54.9
37	Lloyd Doggett	D+49.3	68%	D+56.2

*Rep. Sylvester Turner died, leaving the current 18th District vacant. The special election to fill the remainder of Turner's term is set for Nov. 4, 2025.

-Analysis of "Plan C2333" proposal signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott on Aug. 29, 2025.

Source: Dave's Redistricting App, The Downballot, Texas Capitol Data Portal



DALLAS METRO AREA

Significant changes are occurring in and around Dallas, with a focus on TX-32 & TX-33.

- TX-32, held by Democrat Julie Johnson, retains a Democratic stronghold in Dallas County but loses many of its previous areas. A new extension east through deep-red rural counties like Rains, Wood, and Upshur makes the district solidly Republican.
- TX-33 remains Democratic but no longer includes parts of Fort Worth or the majority-minority precincts it once did. It is now entirely based in Dallas County.

Expected outcomes & demographics:

- TX-24 (Representative Beth Van Duyne, R) is very likely to stay Republican in 2026.
- TX-32 is expected to flip Republican due to its new makeup, likely replacing Johnson with a GOP candidate.
- TX-33 shifts from a minority coalition district to one that is barely majority Hispanic by Voting Age Population.

This change in TX-33 demographics appears intentional, likely designed to sidestep legal challenges, which recently signaled that minority coalition districts are no longer protected under the 5th Circuit's interpretation of the Voting Rights Act.

HOUSTON METRO AREA

In the Houston metro area, the most significant change was the complete overhaul of TX-09. Once a plurality-Black district covering parts of Fort Bend and Houston, it is now a majority-Hispanic district centered in eastern Harris County.

Even without adding deep-red Liberty County, the new TX-09 would have voted for Trump by 12%, reflecting a broader shift of Hispanic voters toward the GOP—even outside South Texas. For comparison, the district would've gone for Trump by 8% in 2020 and just 3% in 2016.

No districts in the region are expected to be competitive in 2026. TX-09, currently held by Democrat Al Green, may be the closest—though it's still likely to flip Republican with room to spare.

SAN ANTONIO - AUSTIN CORRIDOR

The San Antonio–Austin corridor highlights how Texas's congressional districts, already gerrymandered, have become even more so.

- TX-10 continues to snake into Austin's suburbs and even parts of the city itself.
- TX-35, formerly the "Austin-to-San Antonio" district, now pairs parts of San Antonio with three more Republican-leaning rural and exurban counties.

Electoral notes & changes:

- Travis County (Austin) is actually split into fewer districts under the new map—4 instead of 5, though its population could fit into just 2.
- Representative Lloyd Doggett retired to avoid a primary challenge from Greg Casar, who then shifted to run in the now-safe Democratic TX-37.
- TX-35 is now an open, competitive seat. Trump won it by 10%, making it a tough—but not impossible—hold for Democrats in 2026, especially if the national climate favors them.

Despite being competitive, TX-35 is an unusual mix of areas that don't naturally belong together—typical of a gerrymandered map.

SOUTH TEXAS

South Texas is poised to be the most competitive region in Texas for the 2026 elections, with two key battleground districts: TX-28 (represented by Henry Cuellar) and TX-34 (represented by Vicente Gonzalez). Both became more Republican in the new maps—but both incumbents also won in districts that Trump won in 2024, demonstrating their ability to outperform the top of the ticket.

For context, TX-28 went from a Clinton +36 margin in 2016 to a Trump +10 margin in 2024, reflecting the region's sharp rightward shift.

Race outlooks:

- Cuellar (TX-26) remains a narrow favorite in 2026, thanks to his strong 2024 performance and conservative positions on immigration and abortion—stances that likely help him in his increasingly red district.

- Gonzalez (TX-34) also overperformed in 2024 but faces a more challenging road ahead. He'll face former Representative Mayra Flores again, making this a relative toss-up.

BOTTOM LINE ON TEXAS

The new Texas maps are very favorable to Republicans. The "tipping point" seat for Democrats is in a Trump +16% district, meaning that if Democrats ever win enough to flip that seat, they'd likely already have a national House majority regardless of redistricting.

There's little risk of a dummymander here, and the GOP is very likely to flip at least two Democratic-held seats.

2024 Trump-won seats would go from 27 to 30

Texas congressional districts categorized by their 2024 presidential vote margin under the old and new district lines

Districts by 2024 pres. vote			
District margin	Old	New	Change
Trump won by 30+	9	4	-5
Trump won by 20-30	12	18	+6
Trump won by 10-20	4	8	+4
Trump won by 0-10	2	0	-2
Harris won by 0-10	0	0	0
Harris won by 10-20	1	1	0
Harris won by 20-30	4	2	-2
Harris won by 30+	6	5	-1

Data based on analysis of "Plan C2333" map signed into law on Aug. 29, 2025.

Source: Dave's Redistricting App, The Downballot, Texas Capitol Data Portal

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For Democrats to outperform this expectation, they'd need to win statewide or see a significant shift back among Hispanic voters.

Legal challenge ahead

- The maps still face a major legal hurdle: a federal court case alleging racial gerrymandering.
- [A preliminary injunction hearing is set for October 1st](#), which could determine whether these maps are blocked or used in the 2026 election.

CALIFORNIA'S BALLOT MEASURE GAMBIT

In response to Texas's mid-decade redistricting, California is considering redistricting that favors Democrats. Spearheaded by Governor Gavin Newsom, this push for redistricting is a move not only to bolster Democratic power in Congress but also to improve Newsom's national profile ahead of a potential 2028 presidential run.

To bypass the [independent commission](#) California typically uses to draw district lines, Newsom and his legislature have approved a [referendum](#) that, if approved by voters in November, will allow them to draw new district lines for the 2026 midterm elections.

Key CA Redistricting Patterns

- In comparison to TX, fewer districts have changed. While 28 of 38 TX districts had less than 80% of their Census Designated population stay the same, only 22 of 52 CA districts had this same low level of continuity.
- Only five Republican-held districts saw significant changes in CD population (50% or less continuity). Of these:
 - Four became solidly Democratic by extending or shifting to metro areas.
 - One competitive district, CA-40, became more Republican by "packing" in Republican voters from the current CA-41, shifting the margin 10 points to the right.

Most solidly Democratic districts experience minimal change under the new maps.

- Of the 27 Districts that Harris won by 20% or more in 2024, 21 had a CD population continuity of at least 75%.
- In addition to maximizing partisan gain, a key goal of CA's redistricting seems to be protecting incumbents.

Several districts that are redrawn to be more Democratic leaning, such as Districts 13, 22, 45, and 48, could still be highly competitive.

The five seats Democrats are targeting

The congressional districts currently represented by House Republicans in California by their 2024 presidential vote margin, compared with the proposed district and its share of the incumbent's current district population and proposed 2024 vote margin

Current map			Proposed map	
CD	Incumbent	2024 Pres.	% Current CD pop.	2024 Pres.
41	Ken Calvert	R+5.9	0%	D+14.2
1	Doug LaMalfa	R+24.9	44%	D+12.2
3	Kevin Kiley	R+3.8	47%	D+10.2
48	Darrell Issa	R+15.3	32%	D+3.4
22	David Valadao	R+5.8	84%	R+1.8
40	Young Kim	R+2.3	32%	R+12.2
23	Jay Obernolte	R+16.9	91%	R+19.4
5	Tom McClintock	R+17.7	73%	R+20.5
20	Vince Fong	R+30.3	80%	R+32.2

Data based on analysis of proposed congressional map released on Aug. 15, 2025. Margins for the proposed 5th and 22nd districts include approximated data for Madera County.

Source: California State Assembly, UC Berkeley Statewide Database, The Downballot



Redistricting shifts, which Democrats hope will lead to a 5-seat gain, differed in tactic and outcome in Northern California, the Central Valley, and Southern California.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Potential Partisan Impact of Proposed Northern California Redistricting

CD	% Current CD pop.	24 Pres Margin, Current Map	24 Pres Margin, Proposed Map
1	45%	25.0%	-12.2%
2	69%	-45.2%	-24.7%
3	50%	3.8%	-10.2%
4	54%	-31.2%	-14.6%
5	74%	17.7%	20.7%
6	54%	-13.8%	-8.4%
7	73%	-29.8%	-12.8%
8	75%	-43.6%	-34.1%

Source: Dave's Redistricting App & DDHQ

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In Northern California, Democrats dismantled Republican districts 1 and 3, splitting their Republican base across several other districts.

- Solid Republican CA-01 is divided between CA-02 and CA-04 while incorporating large swaths of the deep-blue Mendocino and Sonoma counties, making it a likely flip.
- CA-03, another likely Democratic flip, is extended into Sacramento to pick up more Democratic voters, while shedding parts of its existing territory into five other districts.
- Even in Democratic districts that maintain only slightly more than half of their existing population, such as Districts 6 and 4, a Democratic margin of 8 points or more is typically maintained, thereby protecting these seats.

CENTRAL VALLEY

Potential Partisan Impact of Proposed Central Valley Redistricting

CD	% Current CD pop.	24 Pres Margin, Current Map	24 Pres Margin, Proposed Map
5	74%	17.7%	20.7%
6	54%	-13.8%	-8.4%
7	73%	-29.8%	-12.8%
8	75%	-43.6%	-34.1%
9	71%	1.8%	-11.4%
10	84%	-33.8%	-33.6%
13	82%	5.3%	-0.5%
20	82%	30.3%	32.2%
21	85%	-3.8%	-6.0%
22	83%	5.8%	1.8%

Source: Dave's Redistricting App & DDHQ

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Compared to other regions, the Central Valley is characterized by more subtle shifts to the left.

- Competitive Districts 13, 21, and 22 are solidified for Democrats, while maintaining essentially the same electorates, retaining over 80% of their current population.
- CA-09 sheds its Republican rural areas to CA-05, CA-07, and CA-08, protecting incumbent Democrat Josh Harder from a flip in 2026.
- With the addition of Stockton to CA-13, freshman Democrat Adam Gray would start as a favorite for reelection. However, if the Democratic Party continues to struggle with Hispanic voters, this district could still fall to the Republican Party.

- Represented by incumbent David Valadao, a noted moderate Republican, CA-22 is a highly competitive toss-up, despite its 4% shift to the left under the proposed lines.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Potential Partisan Impact of Proposed Southern California Redistricting

CD	% Current CD pop.	24 Pres Margin, Current Map	24 Pres Margin, Proposed Map
35	66%	-10.3%	-7.8%
38	43%	-16.1%	-12.3%
40	34%	2.3%	12.2%
41	0%	5.9%	-14.1%
42	33%	-32.5%	-13.1%
45	86%	-1.5%	-3.9%
47	44%	-4.1%	-10.1%
48	33%	15.3%	-3.4%
49	71%	-7.8%	-12.1%
50	45%	-29.6%	-18.3%
51	55%	-23.5%	-18.3%

Source: Dave's Redistricting App & DDHQ

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Southern California includes the most dramatic changes of the newly proposed map, largely thanks to the creation of an entirely new District 41.

- Proposed CA-41, a new solidly Democratic Los Angeles County district, shares absolutely no territory with current CA-41, a competitive Republican-leaning district in Riverside County.
- Subsequently, several other districts in the region have had to absorb large amounts of new territory, but Democratic incumbents remain protected from both Democratic and Republican challengers.

- CA-45, where Democrat Derek Tran narrowly defeated Republican incumbent Michelle Steele, shifts slightly towards the left under the proposed maps. Tran would start as a moderate favorite for reelection under the new lines, but the district is by no means out of reach for Republicans.
- Taking in deep blue city from Palm Springs and several Democratic leaning suburbs, CA-48 shifts nearly 19 points to the left under the proposed map. Currently represented by Republican Darrell Issa, CA-48 will be closely contested in 2026.

CA-40 is the only competitive district that actually becomes more favorable for Republicans under the new maps. A 10-point shift to the right under the proposed map, combined with Republican Young Kim's history of overperformance, makes CA-40 a safe Republican district in 2026.

KEY CALIFORNIA TAKEAWAYS

California's proposed redistricting could flip three congressional districts to the Democrats (Districts 1, 3, and 41). Two more (Districts 22 and 48) are considered toss-ups, and another two or three (Districts 13, 21, and 45) are likely to stay Democratic but competitive.

Overall, this would likely improve the Democrats' position compared to the current map. But the gerrymander itself is relatively weak. Despite spending political capital to pass it—especially given their usual stance against gerrymandering—Democrats aren't guaranteed to flip all five seats they're targeting to offset Republican gains in Texas.

Interestingly, both the California and Texas maps include two districts that lean toward the party in control but could be won by the other side due to incumbency. However, the Republican-leaning districts in Texas are more strongly Republican than the Democratic-leaning ones in California.

Because of this, and the fact that some Democratic-held seats remain competitive, California's gerrymander isn't as aggressive as it could have been.

One reason for the milder approach comes from Paul Mitchell, the lead map designer. He says nonpartisan factors were still considered—like keeping racial

communities and cities intact. The NAACP initially opposed the maps but later supported them, believing key communities weren't split up.

Mitchell also points out that most voters won't see changes under the new map, which is supported by independent analysis.

Finally, Democrats may have intentionally softened the gerrymander to win public approval. The plan must pass as a Constitutional Amendment on the November 4th ballot. Expect significant spending from both sides. Democrats may be betting that voters are more likely to support a map that doesn't push partisan advantage to the extreme.

POTENTIAL FOR MORE REDISTRICTING

In addition to California and Texas, several other states may attempt mid-decade gerrymanders before the 2026 elections. However, neither the California nor the Texas maps are finalized. If California's maps are rejected by voters—or Texas's by the courts—the gains for each party could vanish.

The chart below outlines which states might undergo redistricting, the number of seats each party could gain, and potential obstacles that might prevent these changes. States with no realistic chance of redistricting—like New York, due to its constitutional rules—are not included.

Remaining 2026 Redistricting Possibilities

This chart shows remaining states that have not yet conducted mid-decade redistricting as of September 9, 2025, and which could legally and plausibly redistrict in time for the 2026 midterm elections.

State	Party in Control	Likelihood	Limited scenario	Most likely scenario	All-out scenario
Florida	Republican	Uncertain	0	1.5	4
Indiana	Republican	Likely	0	1	2
Kansas	Republican	Unlikely	0	0	1
Kentucky	Republican	Unlikely	0	0	1
Missouri	Republican	Very Likely	1	1	1
Nebraska	Republican	Unlikely	0	0	1
Ohio	Republican	Certain	2	2	3
Utah	Republican	Certain	0	-0.5	-1
Maryland	Democratic	Uncertain	0	-0.5	-1

Estimated average scenario methodology - For uncertain states, the number equals half of the most likely seat number if redistricting happens.

Table: Decision Desk HQ



Looking beyond California and Texas, every realistic redistricting scenario benefits the Republican Party.

- **Minimal scenario:** If only Missouri and Ohio redraw their maps, Republicans could gain three seats.
- **Average scenario:** If Missouri, Indiana, and Ohio redistrict, and Maryland and Florida are uncertain, Republicans could gain five seats.
- **Maximal scenario:** In the most extreme case, Republicans could gain up to 11 seats—a significant shift.

THE DEMOCRATIC COALITION IN CRISIS

Democrats start from behind in American politics: [according to Gallup](#), 37% of Americans identify as conservative or very conservative, while only 25% identify as liberal or very liberal. To win nationally, Democrats have long followed what might be called the *100-60-10 strategy*—securing the vote of nearly all liberal voters, around 60% of moderates, and roughly 10% of conservatives. This coalition endured through the Obama era, driven by strong support from White moderates, dominant margins among non-White moderates, and even a significant share of non-White conservatives.

The 2024 election results have exposed fundamental fractures in the Democratic Party's electoral foundation that extend far beyond a single campaign cycle. Donald Trump made historic inroads with nonwhite voters, particularly among voters who self-identify as moderate and conservative, reshaping the Democratic coalition and throwing longstanding assumptions into question.

There are several patterns and trends key to contemporary politics:

- **Racial depolarization:** Trump increased his support with nonwhite voters from previous cycles, with >20 and >10 point gains among Latino and Asian American communities from 2020 to 2024, fundamentally challenging the assumption that immigration and demographic change favor Democrats
- **Geographic inversion:** Trump made his most significant gains (10+ points) in traditionally blue metropolitan strongholds like New York City, Los Angeles, and Miami, while Harris held the most solid in less dense areas that have historically been overwhelmingly Republican
- **Educational polarization:** The diploma divide has become a more and more predictive factor in voting behavior, with Trump enjoying 10-point higher gains in the least educated precincts than average precincts
- **Ideological polarization:** Self-identified political ideology (liberal, conservative, etc.) is becoming more predictive of Americans' voting behavior at the cost of other factors, such as race
- **Generational upheaval:** Generation Z is currently the most pro-GOP generation alive, with young men of all racial backgrounds moving towards the GOP in large numbers. White men born in 2006 have a 2-party party registration breakdown of 71% Republican.

Registration data paints a challenging long-term picture for Democrats among young voters. The party faces the prospect of rebuilding its entire electoral

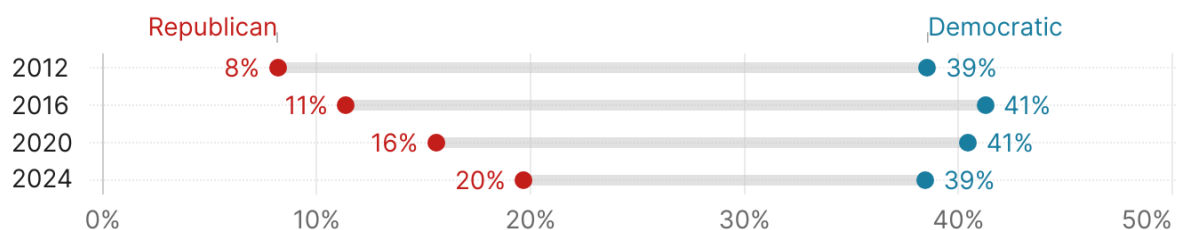
strategy around a shrinking base of Black and college-educated White voters. At the same time, Republicans expand their appeal across traditional Democratic strongholds.

RACIAL DEPOLARIZATION

Data has shown that the Republican Party's coalition has shifted since Mitt Romney's loss in 2012. **8% of Mitt Romney's voters were nonwhite. By 2024, that number had more than doubled as 20% of Donald Trump's supporters were nonwhite.**

Racial Composition of Political Coalitions (2012-2024)

This plot displays the percentage of each party's voters who are nonwhite across recent presidential elections. Red dots represent the proportion of Republican voters who are nonwhite, while blue dots show the same measure for Democratic voters.



Source: Catalist and Geographic Kernel EI Estimates

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From 2020 to 2024, Donald Trump's share of the national two-party vote increased from 48% to 51%. But his gains were even more pronounced among nonwhite voters. This change is called **racial depolarization**, because race is becoming a much less important predictor of candidate vote choice in national elections.

The final swing estimates by race in 2024 clarify the shift over the previous 15 years:

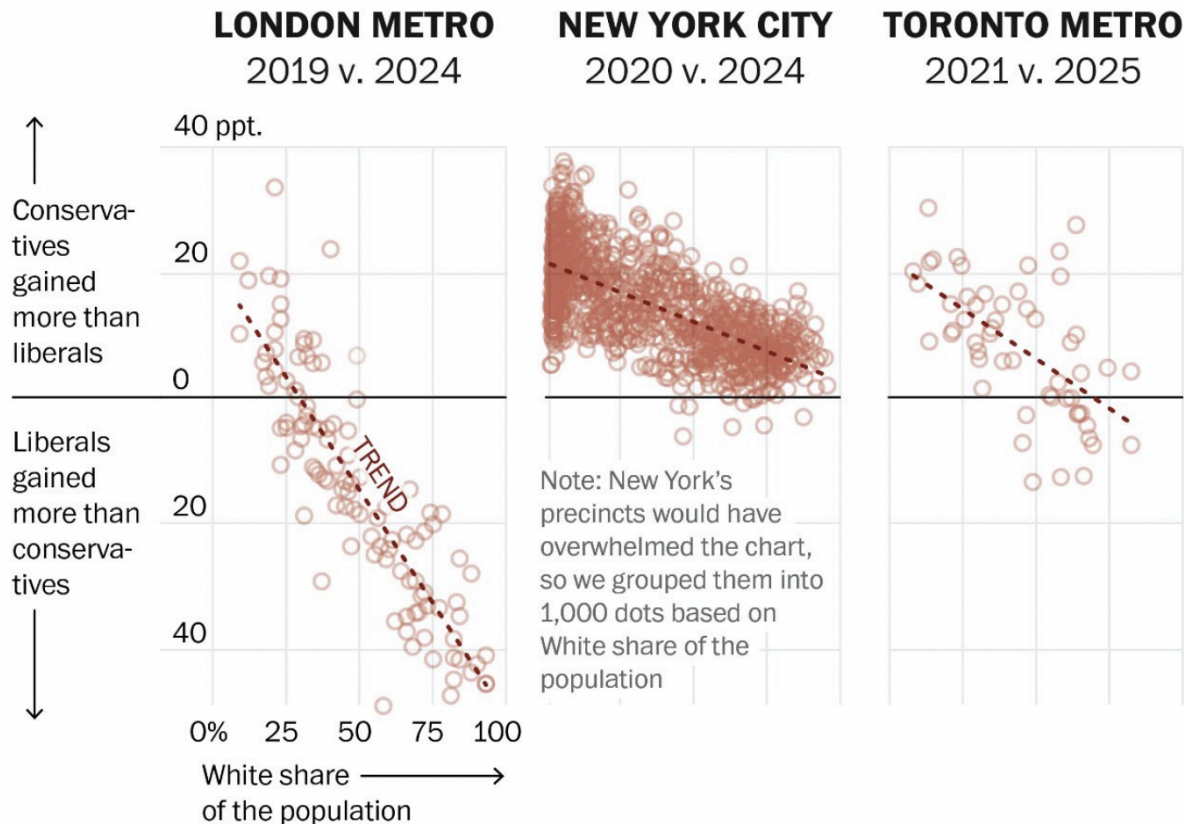
- **Hispanic voters:** Democratic advantage fell from **D+30 (2020)** to **D+9 (2024)**
- **Asian Americans:** Democratic advantage dropped from **D+31** to **D+20**
- **Black voters:** Democratic advantage declined more modestly, from **D+78** to **D+72**
- **White voters:** Republican lead grew from **R+14** to **R+16**

Around the country, Democrats have lost ground with minority voters. The shifts were measurable among Black voters and more significant among Asians, and the largest shifts were among Hispanic voters.

As seen in the analysis [by The Washington Post](#) (image below), these trends are not unique to the United States. Recent federal elections in Toronto, Canada, and London, UK, exhibit even more pronounced racial depolarization than what has been observed in New York City. Conservative candidates showed the most improvement in areas with larger minority populations and performed worse in predominantly white areas. To many, this analysis suggests that the racial depolarization underway in the U.S. isn't just a short-term trend driven by Donald Trump but rather part of a more profound, more durable shift.

Conservatives gained most (or lost least) in the least White areas

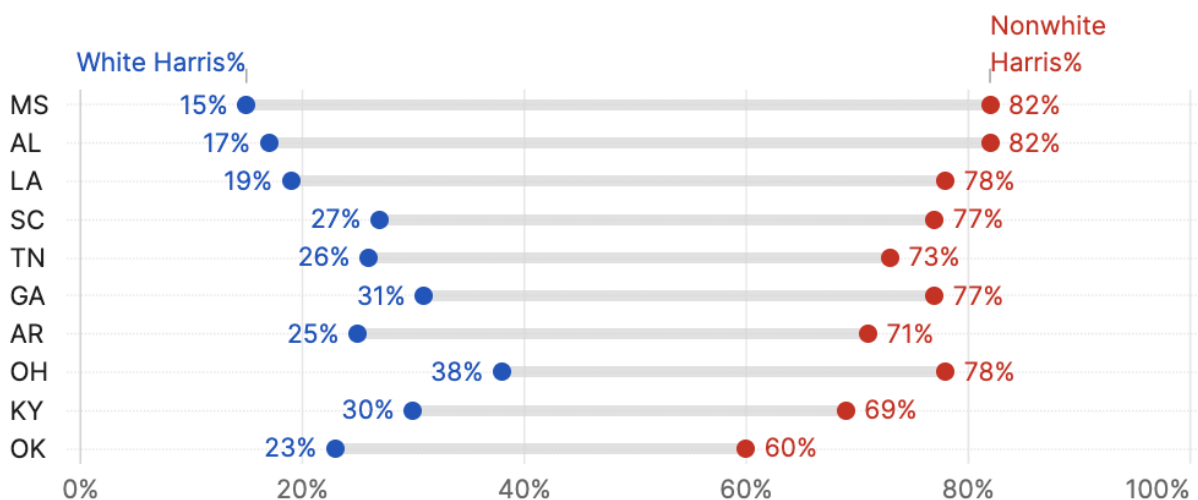
How much more conservative parties gained, relative to their main liberal opposition, in electoral districts within each city or metropolitan area



Race remains a strong predictor of voting in the U.S. **While the racial gap is rapidly narrowing, it's still large.** Nonwhite voters tend to vote heavily Democratic, and White voters heavily Republican in many states.

The 10 Most Racially Polarized States in 2024

This plot shows the 10 states with the largest racial polarization in the 2024 presidential election, based on the gap in two-party support for Kamala Harris between white and nonwhite voters. Red dots represent Harris's support among white voters, and blue dots show her support with nonwhite voters in each state.



Source: Ecological Inference Estimates



GEOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The 2020 and 2024 election results indicate a significant political realignment that has fundamentally altered the American electoral landscape. While Republicans made gains in the nation's largest metropolitan areas, with particularly substantial improvements in Democratic strongholds like New York City, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, South Texas, Miami, and Chicago, these urban shifts tell only part of the story.

The map shows that the vast majority of American counties actually trended (a trend means the change in a county controlling for the shift of the nation as a whole) towards Democrats between 2016 and 2024, creating a geographic paradox where Republican gains were concentrated in a few high-population blue areas while Democratic gains spread across rural and suburban America.

Places Shifting More Democratic:

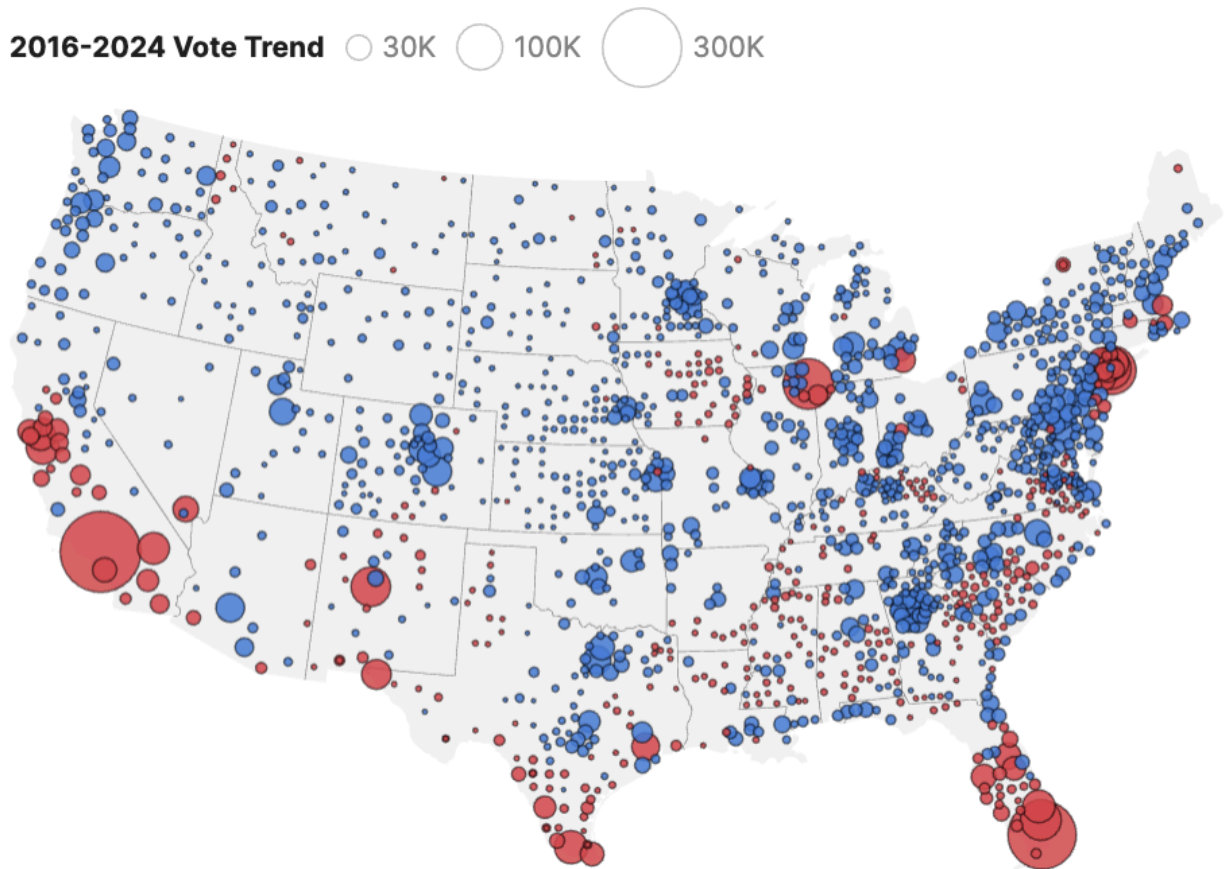
- **Affluent suburban communities** with well-maintained neighborhoods, highly-rated public schools, and amenities like golf courses and country clubs. These areas feature primarily college-educated professionals in comfortable single-family homes who, historically, voted Republican but have increasingly shifted toward the Democratic Party.
- **Upscale exurban areas** that blend suburban convenience with more spacious living, often featuring newer developments, shopping centers, and family-oriented amenities. These communities attract educated families seeking good schools and safe neighborhoods.
- **College-educated enclaves** are found in smaller cities and towns, particularly areas near universities or with concentrations of white-collar professionals in fields such as healthcare, education, and technology.
- **Historic Republican strongholds** in well-to-do suburbs that prioritize local governance, fiscal responsibility, and quality of life issues, where voters have become alienated from the national Republican party's direction.

Places Shifting More Republican:

- **Diverse working-class communities** with significant immigrant populations, particularly areas with large Latino and Asian American populations who have traditionally voted Democratic but are increasingly open to Republican candidates.
- **Mixed-income neighborhoods** in major metropolitan areas where recent immigrants and their children live alongside established communities, creating complex political dynamics around economic opportunity and cultural values.
- **Multi-ethnic suburbs and cities** where economic mobility and entrepreneurship are high priorities, and where both White and more middle-class Asian and Hispanic voters may be drawn to Republican messages about business ownership, school choice, and economic opportunity.
- **Areas with a high concentration of young people**, such as college campuses. Gen Z is, as of now, the most pro-Republican generation alive.

The Great American Political Realignment

This map highlights every U.S. county that trended in the same partisan direction in both 2020 and 2024 either toward Democrats (blue) or Republicans (red). Each dot's size reflects the number of votes gained by that party in the county, relative to what we'd expect from national trends since 2016. Larger circles represent counties driving the most notable realignment.



Source: Decision Desk HQ



This counterintuitive pattern has effectively neutralized the Republican Party's historic Electoral College advantage, which traditionally relied on winning smaller states and rural areas by large margins while losing urban centers. The blue dots scattered across rural America represent thousands of counties where Democrats gained ground.

Meanwhile, the large red circles in traditionally blue metropolitan areas show where Republicans made their most notable inroads, cutting into Democratic margins in places that had been reliably blue for decades.

GEOGRAPHIC SORTING

Nationally, Democrats performed slightly worse with White voters in 2024 than in 2020, but Trump's gains in this demographic proved more modest than his breakthroughs among minority communities. Shifts in the White vote varied widely across regions, driven both by persuasion, as some voters switched between Trump and Harris or Biden, and by migration, as long-term partisans moved and altered the balance of local electorates.

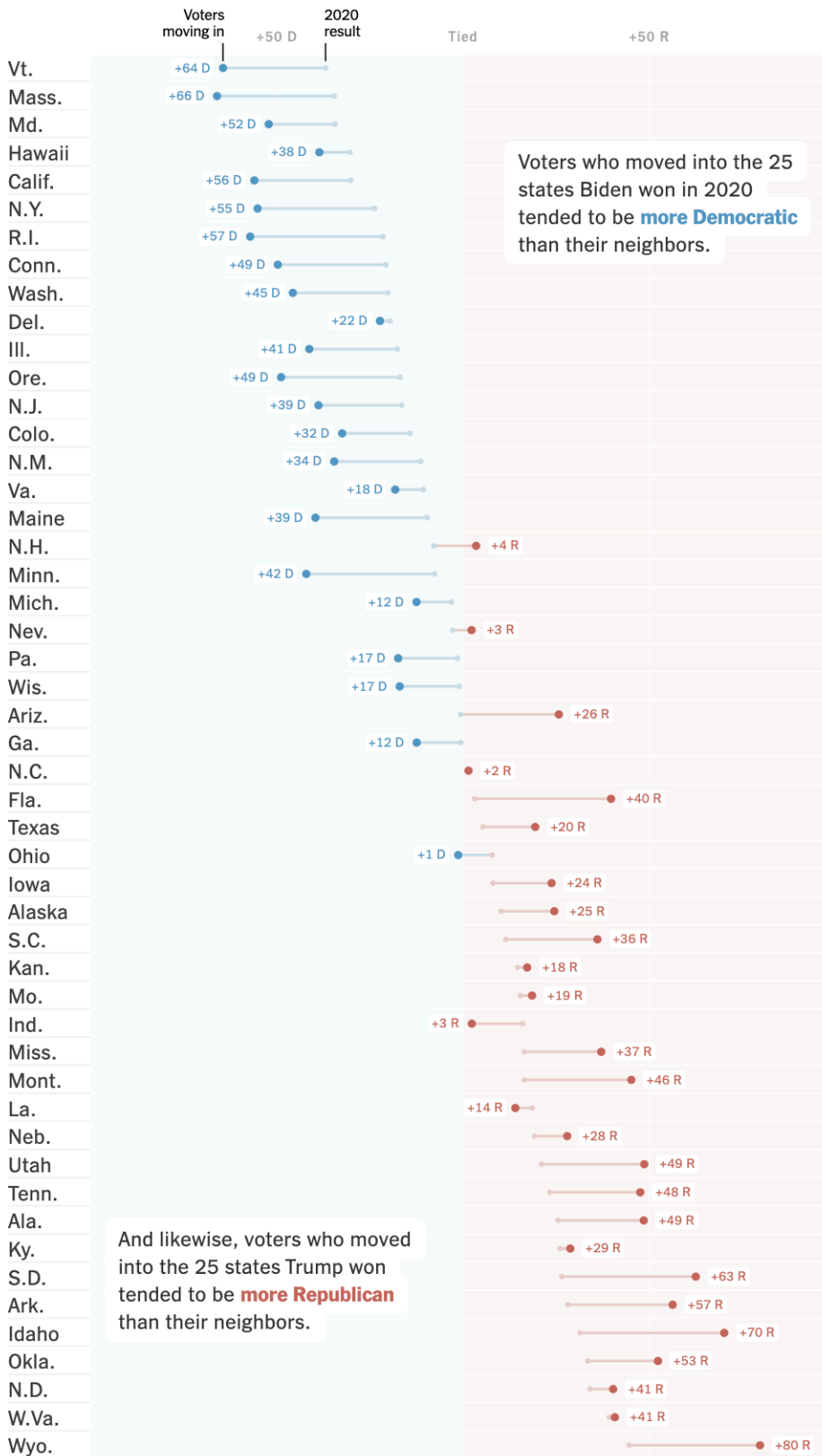
Trump's strongest White voter gains in many places were powered by migration rather than voter persuasion. States such as Arizona, Florida, and Idaho have attracted newcomers who lean far more Republican than the states' existing electorates, driving notable rightward shifts.

Voters are increasingly self-selecting into states that match their partisan preferences, with Democrats migrating to blue states and Republicans to red ones. This migration pattern helped explain many regional shifts: pro-Trump migration boosted Republican performance in states like Florida.

In contrast, pro-Democratic movement helped the party maintain strength in the Pacific Northwest and mitigate losses in California and the Northeast. The result is a political map where population flows often outweigh voter persuasion in determining electoral outcomes.

The plot below is from Ronda Kaysen and Ethan Singer, as published in the [New York Times](#).

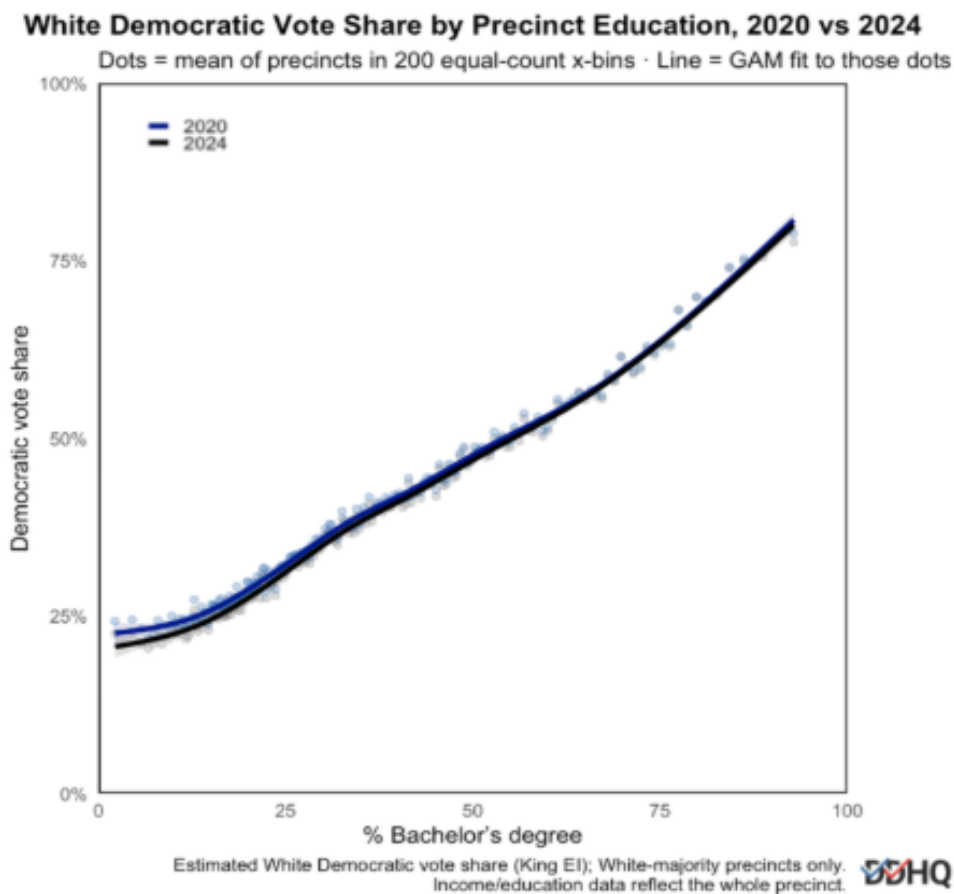
Partisanship of incoming movers and the states they moved to



EDUCATION POLARIZATION

The data on educational polarization continues to show fault lines coming out of the 2024 elections.

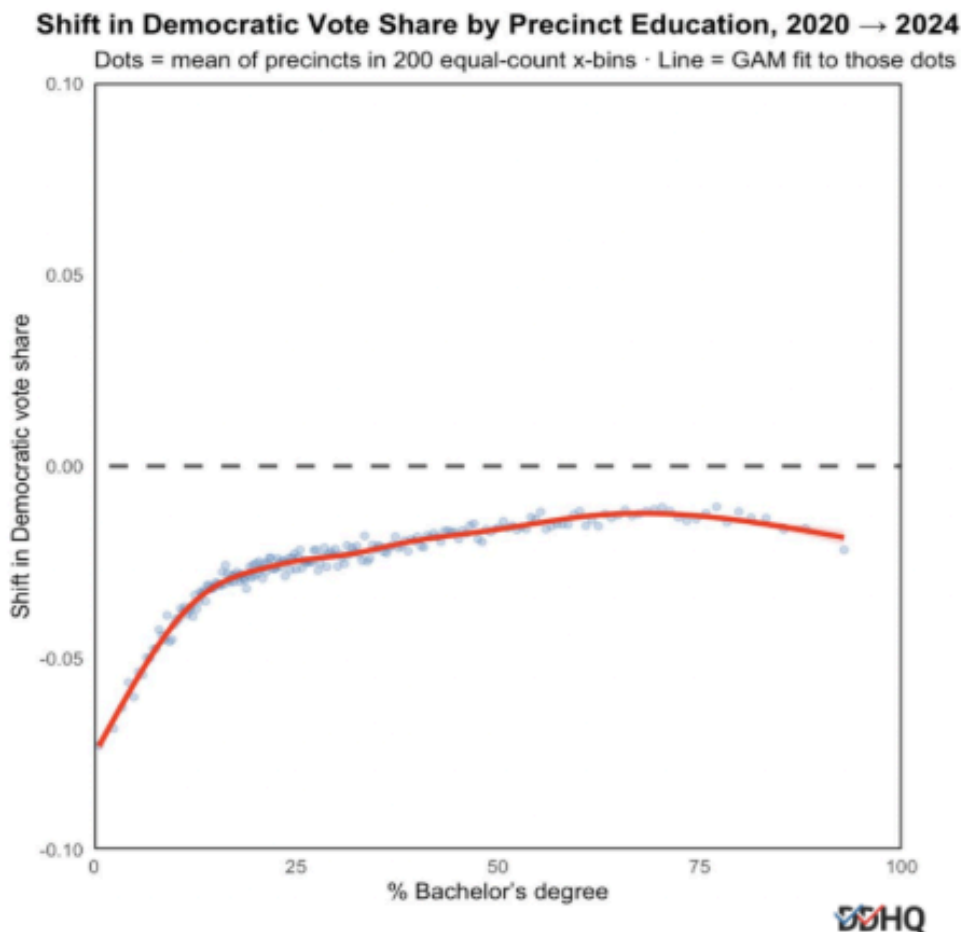
Among White voters, this divide has become stark: the single most predictive factor in determining how White voters in a given precinct will cast their ballots is the percentage of residents holding bachelor's degrees. This educational sorting has created two distinct political worlds, with college-educated White communities increasingly Democratic and non-college White areas becoming reliably Republican.



The broader national picture reveals an even more dramatic trend. When examining all voters regardless of race, educational polarization is accelerating at an unprecedented pace. For years, the "diploma divide" appeared less pronounced in national elections because Democrats maintained strong support

among lower-educated nonwhite voters, which helped mask the growing educational split. That Democratic advantage, however, has been steadily eroding.

Voters in lower-education areas across all racial groups shifted around 10 points towards Trump in 2024, with the steepest declines occurring in precincts where fewer than 15% of residents hold bachelor's degrees. This shift represents a fundamental realignment of the Democratic coalition, as the party becomes increasingly dependent on college-educated voters while simultaneously hemorrhaging support in working-class communities of all backgrounds.

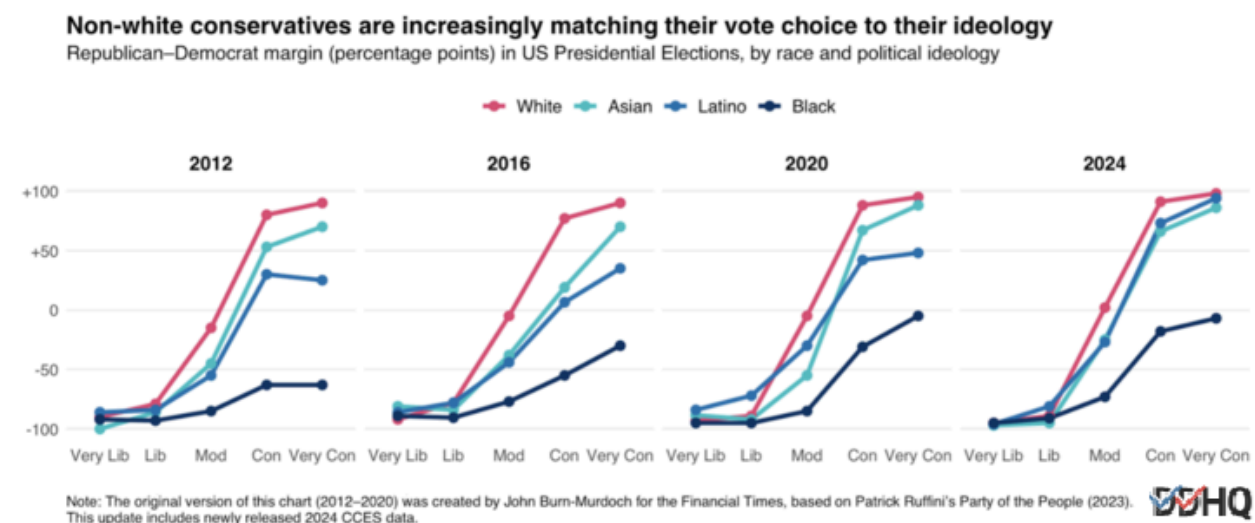


IDEOLOGICAL POLARIZATION

So, what's behind the erosion of Democratic support among nonwhite voters? And what can either party do about it?

The simplest explanation, supported by the data, is that this realignment was inevitable.

- **Nonwhite voters aren't becoming significantly more conservative; instead, Republicans are now performing better among conservative and moderate nonwhite voters than in the past.** Controlling for ideology, the racial polarization that once propped up the Democratic coalition is fading. In hindsight, the extent of Democratic support among right-of-center nonwhite voters may have been the historical anomaly, not what we're seeing now.
- This shift makes intuitive sense. In a less racially polarized landscape, conservative and moderate Hispanic and Black voters who gravitate toward the GOP align with their ideological leanings. Continued gains are just as possible for Republicans as is a snapback towards Democrats.



One key takeaway from the plot is that by 2024, **Republicans had nearly maxed out their support among conservative Hispanic and Asian voters but still had significant room to grow with conservative Black voters.**

If Black voters aligned with other groups on ideology, their vote split would resemble a 60–40 Democratic margin rather than the current 88–12. That gap leaves a wide range of possibilities for how Black voting patterns could shift in the years ahead.

There are, however, two important caveats.

First, the realignment is still unfolding. During transitional periods, voters often continue to support down-ballot candidates from their former party due to personal affinity or local familiarity. For instance, voters in West Virginia realigned to support Republicans for President instead of Democrats in the 2000s. However, it took years for this change to trickle down to the congressional level, and even longer to the local level. These kinds of “down-ballot lags” are typical of voters still adjusting their partisan behavior.

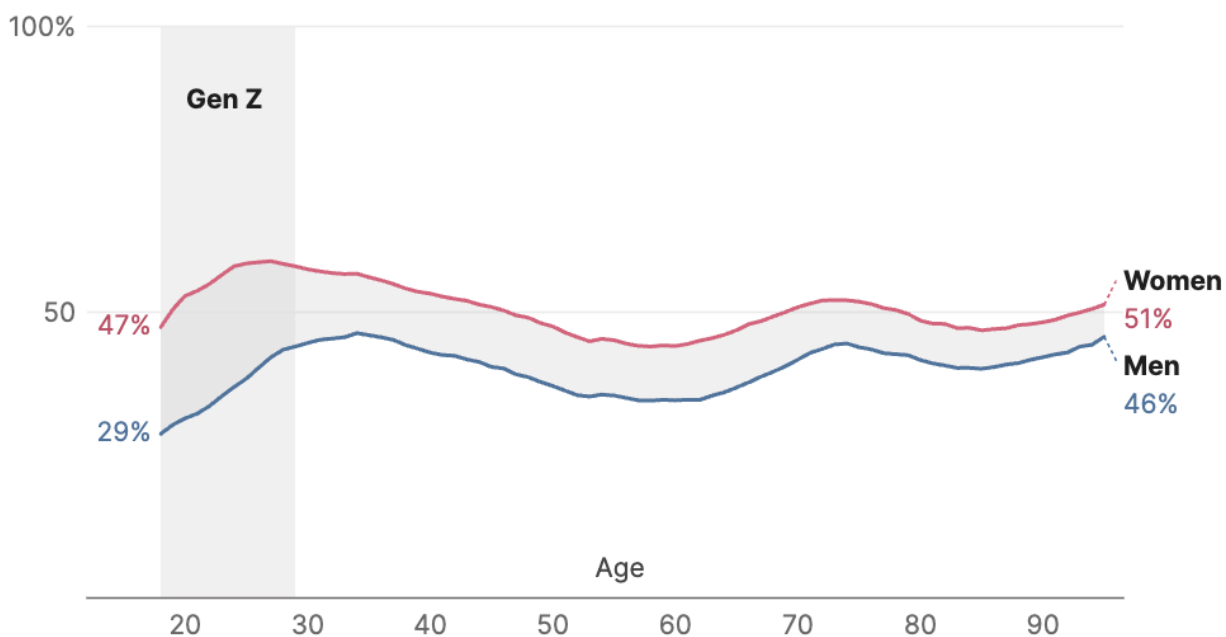
Second, Democrats may have a path to rebound in 2028, especially with a candidate who connects with moderate and conservative nonwhite voters. Many of these voters aren't rigid ideologues. Their decisions can often be shaped more by cultural affinity, identity, and “vibes” than by strict policy alignment. A candidate who can take advantage of this fact and appeal to nonwhite voters in a more personable and non-policy way is key.

YOUTH SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Gen Z appears to be charting a different political course than Millennials, resembling the conservative lean of Generation X more than the progressive activism associated with younger voters in recent decades.

Republicans Are Dominating Among White Zoomers

This chart shows the estimated percentage of White men and women who are registered as Democrats, of those registered with either major party, calculated by age on January 1st 2025. The pink line represents women and the blue line represents men.



Data is limited to the 31 states that report party affiliation in voter registration. All % are "Two-Party"

Source: Voter Registration Data



Generation Z is currently, by registration, the most pro-GOP generation alive. Data from Democratic strategist David Shor, together with precinct results from college campuses, align with the registration figures, [providing multiple indicators that point to substantial Republican gains among Gen Z](#).

According to registration data:

- **Young White women:** Register as Democrats at 47%, roughly matching their predecessors

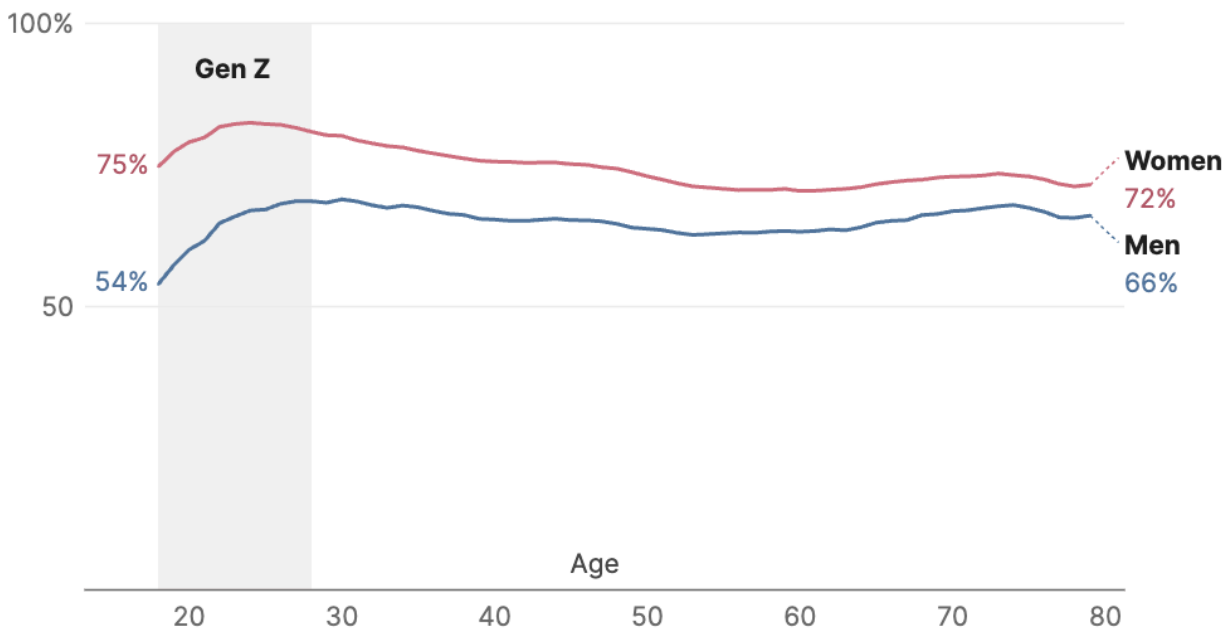
- **Young White men:** Democratic registration has collapsed to just 29%, down from historical norms around 49%
- **Gender gap explosion:** The 18-point divide represents the widest political split between young White men and women in modern American history

This shift threatens to undermine one of the core pillars of Democratic electoral strategy, which has long counted on younger voters to offset losses among older demographics. Traditional assumptions about generational replacement favoring Democrats may no longer hold, as each new cohort of young White men becomes increasingly Republican.

If sustained, this generational realignment could reshape American politics for decades to come, as these young Republican men age into their prime voting years and establish long-term partisan loyalties that fundamentally alter the electoral landscape.

Young Nonwhite Men Are Zooming Towards the GOP

This chart shows the estimated percentage of Nonwhite men and women who are registered as Democrats, of those registered with either major party, calculated by age on January 1st 2025. The pink line represents women and the blue line represents men.



Data is limited to the 31 states that report party affiliation in voter registration. All % are "Two-Party"

Source: Voter Registration Data



The collapse of Democratic support extends beyond young White men to encompass a broader crisis with Generation Z nonwhite voters, particularly men. While Trump's gains with nonwhite voters overall dominated headlines in 2024, the registration data reveal an even more troubling long-term trend for Democrats.

The erosion spans traditional Democratic strongholds:

- **Young nonwhite men:** Democratic registration has plummeted to just 54%, down from the consistent 66% level maintained across previous generations
- **Young nonwhite women:** Registration has fallen to 75%, compared to a peak of over 80% just a decade ago
- **Historical context:** Millennials formed the backbone of Obama-era victories, and many assumed that Gen Z would follow in their footsteps. The opposite happened.

THE IMPERMANENCE OF POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS

These trends, while significant, must be understood within the broader context of American political volatility. **Political coalitions in the United States have historically proven remarkably fluid, with seemingly permanent advantages dissolving within a single election cycle.**

The same analysts who proclaimed a permanent Republican majority after 2004 were writing obituaries for the GOP just four years later following Obama's victory. Similarly, the confident predictions of an inevitable Democratic multiracial majority that dominated political commentary in 2013 now appear somewhat premature, given the current landscape.

The Democratic Party faces substantial challenges heading into 2028, particularly in rebuilding support among young men, working-class voters of all backgrounds, and the diverse communities that once formed the backbone of their coalition. The path to reclaiming the presidency, let alone flipping the Senate and achieving unified government control, appears daunting given current trajectories.

Yet the same electoral dynamics that created these Republican advantages could just as easily reverse them as economic conditions shift, generational attitudes evolve, and unforeseen events reshape voter priorities. The question for Democrats is whether the party can successfully navigate this period of realignment and emerge with a viable coalition for the future.

VOTER REGISTRATION CHANGES THIS CYCLE

In the voter registration world, odd-numbered years allow states across the country to perform voter registration maintenance. This maintenance varies and is governed by state law. Depending on the state, two types of registration moves are made:

1. Moving registered voters from 'Active' to 'Inactive'
2. Removing 'Inactive' voters from the voter registration list

State law defines what an active and inactive voter is, and movement within and off the voter registration list occurs when:

- A voter passes away
- A voter moves into or out of the state (or within the state)
- A voter requests to be removed from the voter registration list
- A voter does not vote, and a voter does not show any voting activity

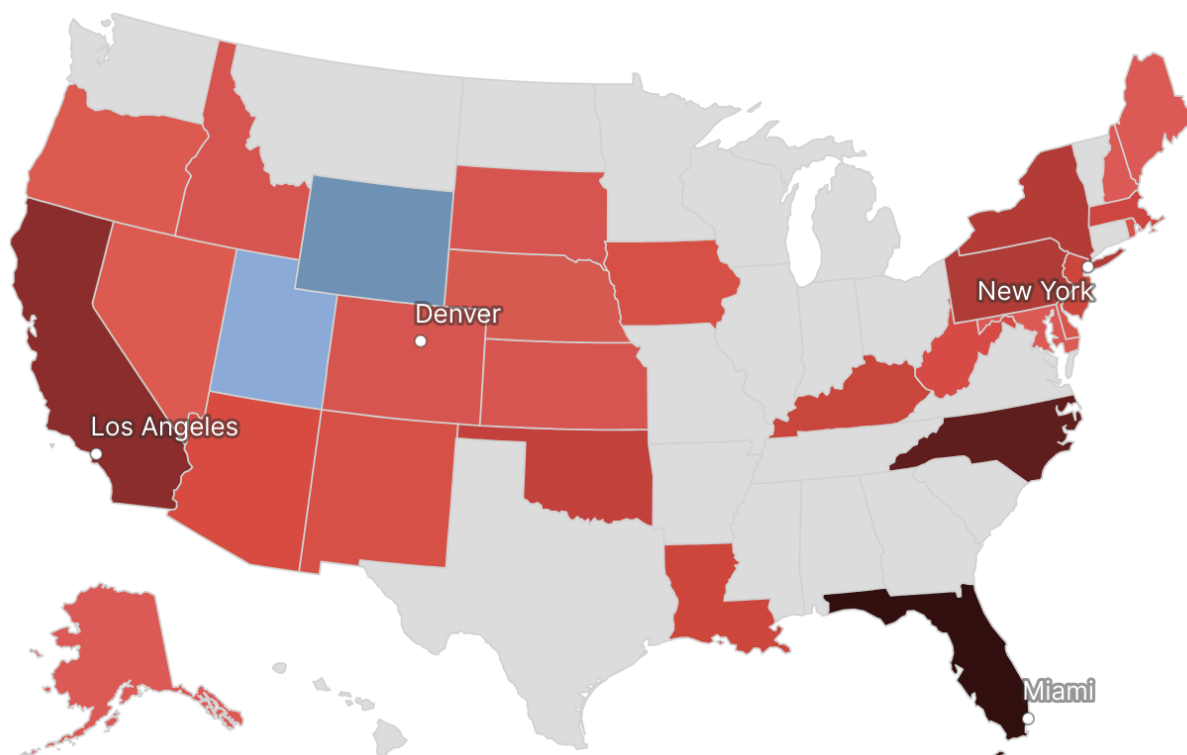
This last point is one of contention. For example, the state of Wyoming removes you from the voter rolls if you did not vote in the most recent even-year General election. The state of New York, however, will allow you to stay on the voter registration rolls for decades, regardless of voting activity.

Thus, in 2025, states across the country are at different stages in implementing voter registration changes since Election Day 2024. Most have begun or have already completed their voter registration maintenance, cutting hundreds of thousands from the active and inactive rolls. In the 30 states + DC that track party registration, the net change in party registration totals since election day 2024 is as follows:

- REPUBLICANS - Loss of 152,982
- DEMOCRATS - Loss of 1,296,069
- ALL OTHERS - Loss of 413,190

Party Voter Registration Changes 11/24 - 09/25

Of the 30 states that offer registration by political party, 27 continue to show the GOP gaining registrations over Democrats.



Source: Voter Registration File

Decision Desk HQ

Republicans are the beneficiaries of a net voter registration gain in 27 of 30 states, while Democrats have seen a net increase in just two states (Wyoming and Utah). When compared to the previous cycle, this represents a continuation rather than a change.

The most significant gain for Republicans comes from the state of Florida. The GOP has picked up a net of 273,935 voters over the last 10 months, continuing to turn the once purple-shaded state into something more crimson.

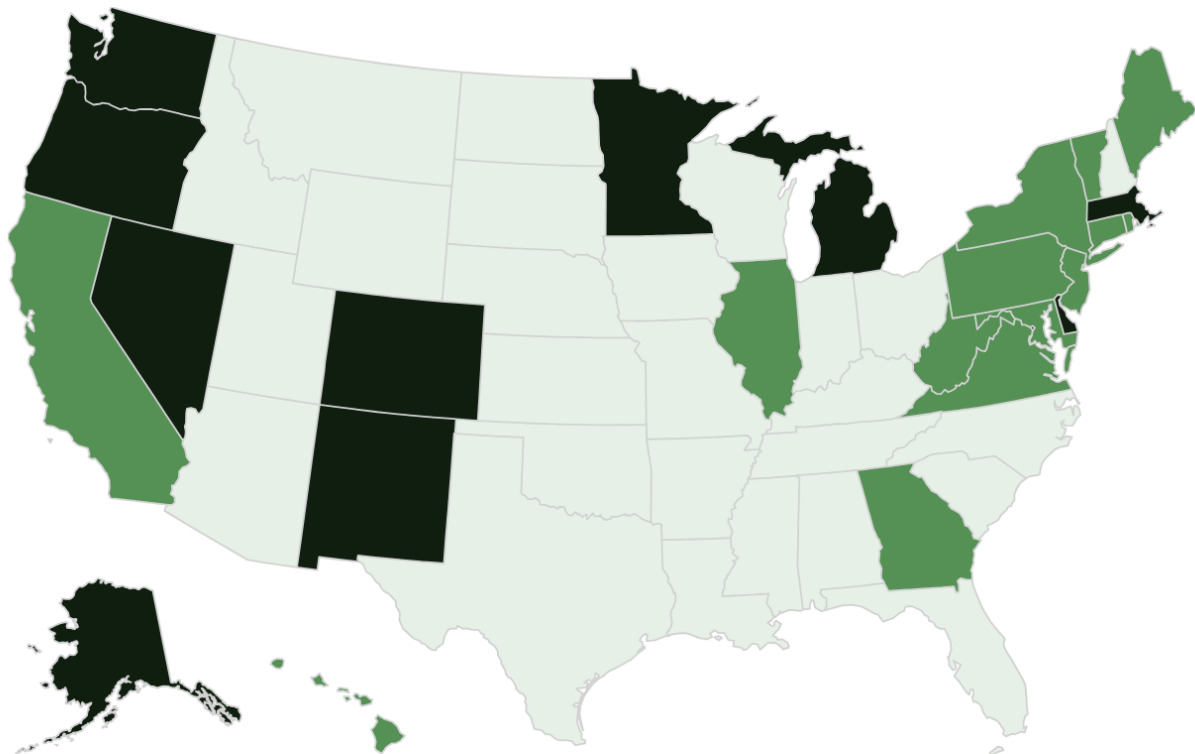
AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION AND THE RISE OF THE INDEPENDENT

Another trend we've been following has been the rise of the independent voter. A majority of US states now see their most significant registration gains coming from voters who wish not to be affiliated with any party. Some interpret this to be a dissatisfaction with the 2-party system, but in reality, it's largely a product of increased automatic voter registration (AVR) implementation.

US States With Automatic Voter Registration

24 US States plus the District of Columbia implement automatic voter registration.

■ No AVR ■ Front-End AVR ■ Back-End AVR



Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

Decision Desk HQ

In March of 2015, Oregon became the first state to pass automatic voter registration (AVR). In the ten years following, 23 additional states have passed AVR, representing 55% of the total US population.

A significant difference in the way AVR is administered lies in whether it is a front-end or back-end approach.

- Front-end administration auto-enrolls the voter at the DMV and allows the voter to opt out during the process.
- Back-end administration auto-enrolls the voter at the DMV but does not allow the voter to opt out during the process.

[Ten US states offer back-end AVR](#), and when a voter is auto-enrolled, the only way to unenroll is for the voter to contact their local clerk or county clerk and request to be removed from the voter rolls. For this reason, very few voters take this additional step, allowing back-end AVR state registration rolls to soar.

Back-End Automatic Voter Registration States

Ten states have backend automatic voter registration, and when compared to their CVAP% (Citizen Voting Age Population), they're all ahead of the average US state.



Source: Census 5-year ACS & Voter Registration File

 **Decision Desk HQ**

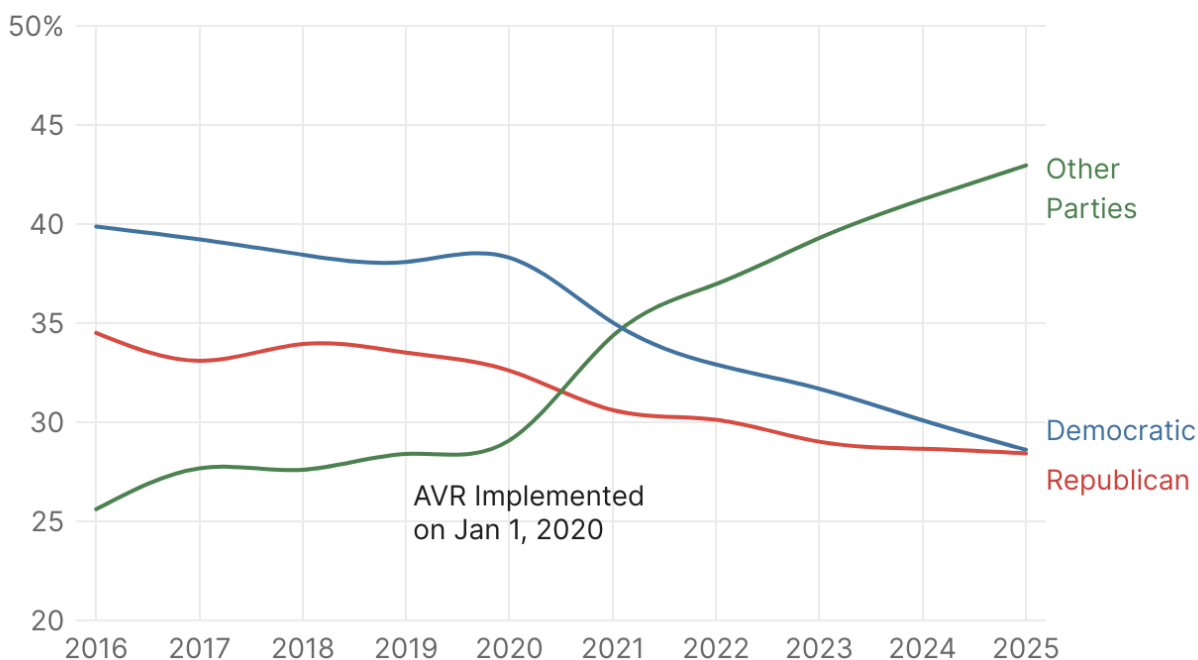
NEVADA'S INDEPENDENT SURGE

A notable example of how automatic voter registration has altered the composition of state rolls is in Nevada. In 2020, the state implemented AVR, and in 2024, it expanded registration beyond the DMV to other state agencies (such as Health and Human Services).

On November 8, 2016, active voters not registered as Democrats or Republicans accounted for **27.19%** of the total roll. As of September 1, 2025, they now account for **43.27%** of the total voter roll each month. On average, Nevada adds more than 10,000 new unaffiliated voters to the voter rolls through AVR while Democratic and Republican registration remains stagnant.

Change in Nevada Voter Registration Rates

How the makeup of Nevada's active voter registration has changed over the last decade. Nevada passed Ballot Question 5 in 2018 and implemented AVR in January of 2020



Source: Nevada Secretary of State

Decision Desk HQ

Similar trends are observed in all AVR states; however, the increase in registration (and specifically independent registration) did not result in a higher turnout in 2024.

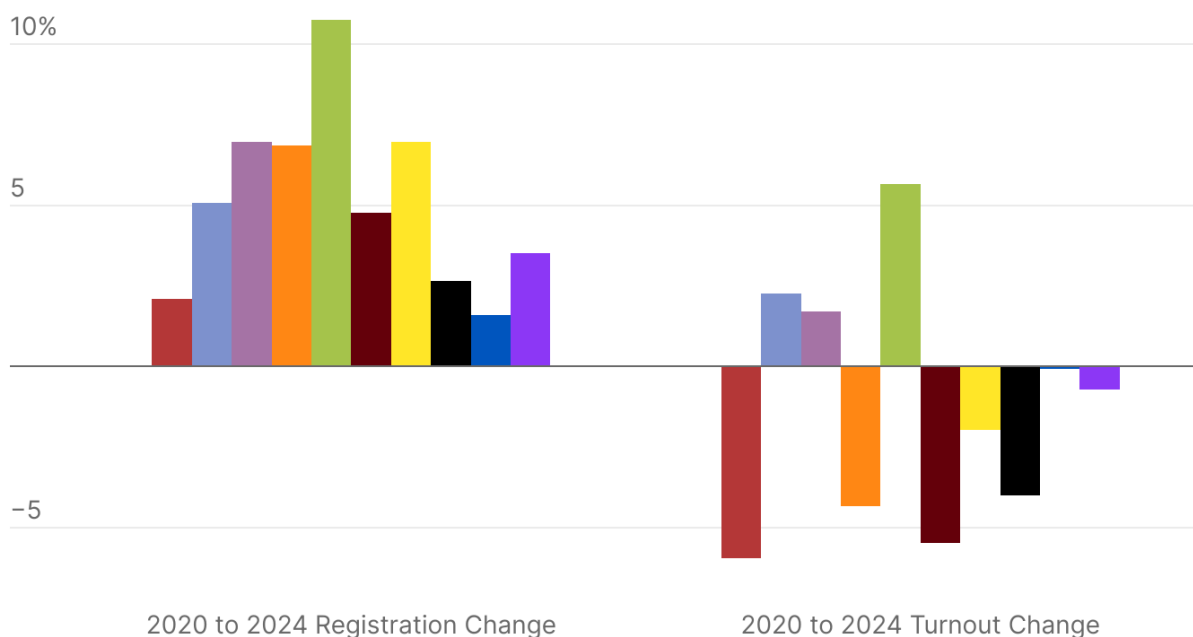
- Presidential vote 2024 - 155,238,302
- Presidential vote 2020 - 158,429,631
- Differential (2024 vs. 2020): **-3,191,329**

When comparing the ten states with back-end AVR, all ten showed increased registration. However, turnout never matched the increase in new voters, and seven noted raw turnout decreases from election to election.

Back-End AVR States Did Not Increase Turnout in 2024

All ten back-end AVR states saw increases in registration from November 2020, but only three of them saw increases in Presidential turnout over the same time period. Seven saw turnout decreases.

AK MI DE MA NV OR CO WA NM MN



Source: Registration (Secretaries of State) Turnout (DDHQ)

Decision Desk HQ

Automatic voter registration is doing a good job of adding low-engaged voters to the rolls (some even exceed this when accounting for inactive voters). However, simply adding these voters has had no material impact on turnout rates.

Overall, while independent registrations are quickly gaining strength across the country, much of their value is only on paper. In practice, many NPA voters aren't even aware they've registered to vote.

TOSS-UP STATE REGISTRATION CHANGES

Four of seven toss-up states in 2024 offer voter registration by party. All four states show substantial net registration gains for Republicans from 2020, but it becomes a more muddled picture when you look at the most recent changes.

Republican Swing State Gains in Voter Registration

This chart displays the net voter registration changes between Democrats and Republicans over three series in time. Democrats have seen a net gain in Nevada over the last six months.

	Nov-2020	Six Month Change	One Month Change
Nevada	82,958	3,991	10
Arizona	198,560	14,721	1,616
North Carolina	486,310	42,317	3,771
Pennsylvania	632,189	48,059	5,506

Source: Secretaries of State as of September 1st, 2025

 **Decision Desk HQ**

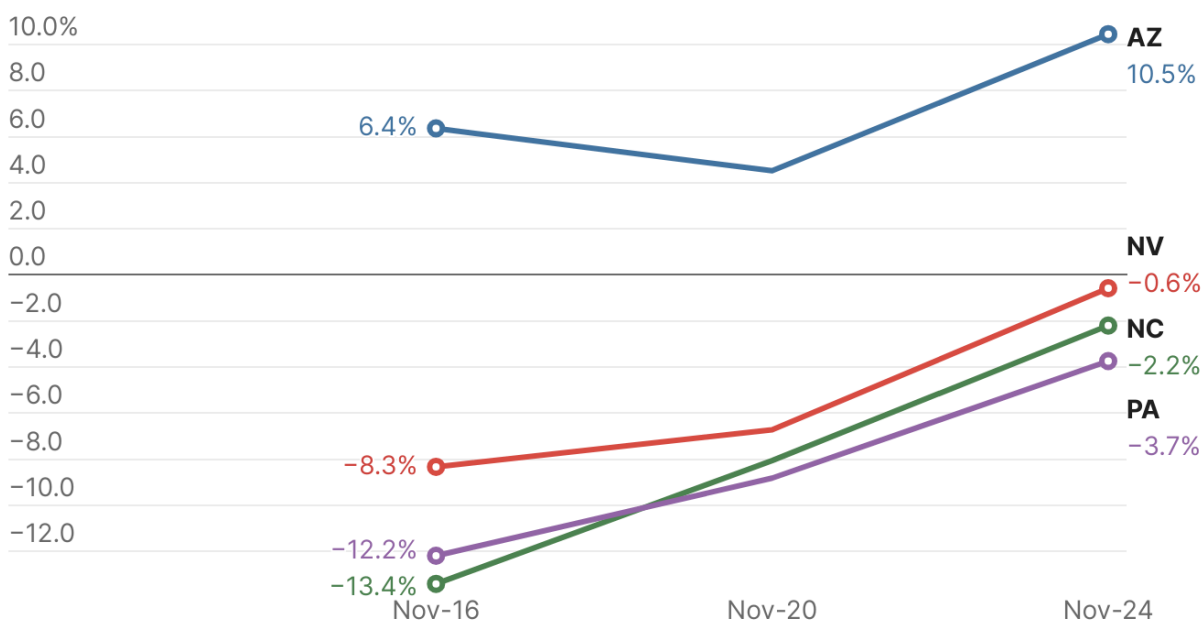
Republicans continue to make net gains in registrations after Election Day; however, progress has slowed in recent months. This is to be expected for a couple of important reasons:

1. Odd-year registrations slow down considerably as parties regroup and pull back voter registration drives.
2. Republicans are nearing parity between election results and registration. In the four swing states shown above, the 2024 combined result was Trump

+3.08%. The combined registration of these states through Sep 2025 is R +2.41%.

Party Registration Swing State Changes 2016 vs. 2024

This graph shows the change in 2-way (R-D) party registration between 2016 and 2024 in four swing states. For example, in November of 2016, in Nevada, Democrats had an 8.3% edge in registration over Republicans. In 2024, that edge was reduced to just 0.6%.



Source: Secretaries of State

Decision Desk HQ

Several factors are driving this shift to the right. Front and center is the change in partisanship among the youngest Gen Z voters. Once a Democratic stronghold, the youngest voters are now registering more with the GOP than with Democrats, which does not allow Democrats a natural counter to the consistent shift from Democratic to Republican registration seen later in a voter's life.

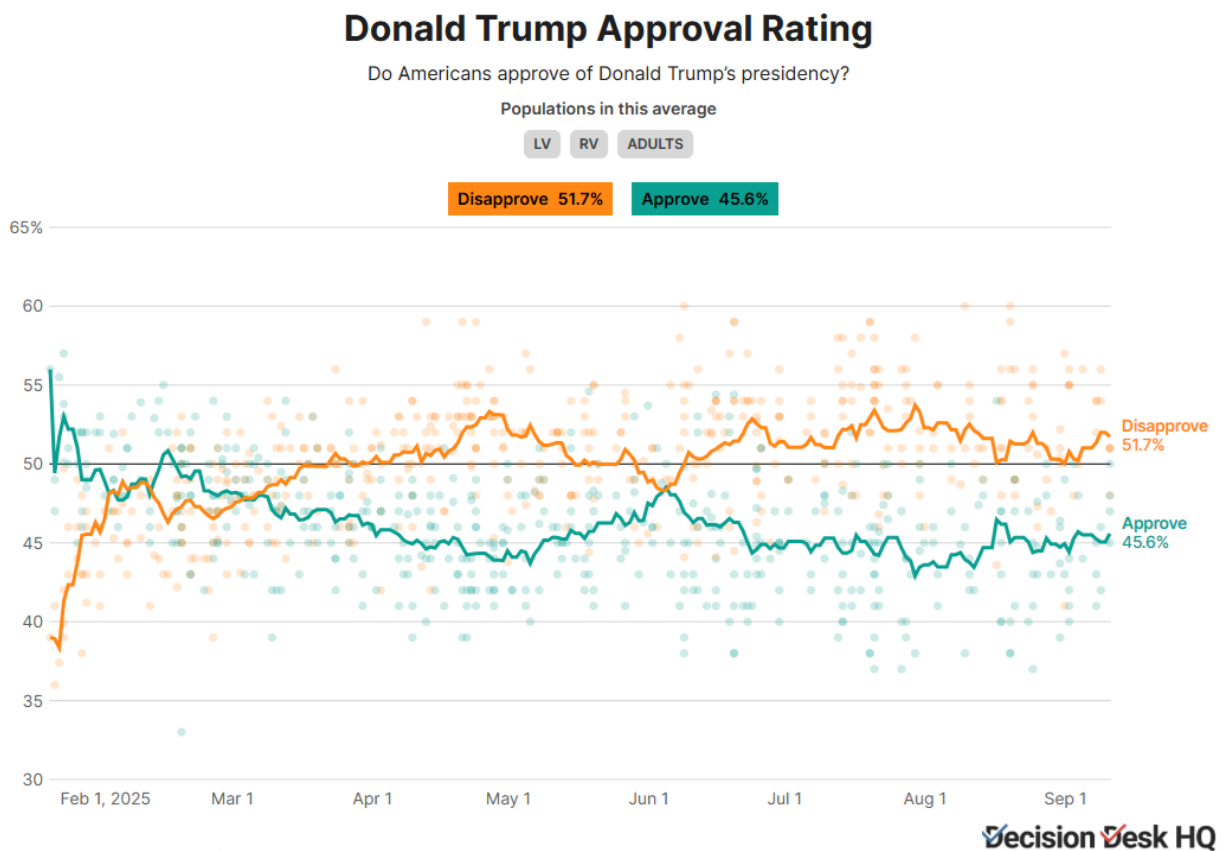
Equally important has been the continued shift in political ideology among minorities. According to the [PEW 2024 post-election survey](#), non-white voters continue to move away from the Democratic Party. As a result, third-party voter registration drives have struggled to provide Democrats with momentum. Typically reliable minorities are not as monolithic as they were in previous cycles, and Dem-aligned groups focused on minority registration have independently observed this phenomenon.

CAPTURING PUBLIC OPINION

The first year of President Trump's second term has been characterized by several divisive policy decisions, which have drawn criticism not only across party lines but also within the Republican Party itself. With less than eight months of his second term complete, Trump has made several key changes, including:

- widespread economic policies on trade and tariffs
- stricter immigration laws and enforcement
- the "One Big Beautiful Bill" tax cuts and budget law.

Researchers, including those at the [Pew Research Center](#), claim that Trump's policy changes in the first six months of his term have been accompanied by increasingly negative public evaluations of his characteristics, job performance, and specific policies. [In Decision Desk HQ's Trump approval polling average](#), pictured below, Trump currently holds a net approval rating of -6.1 points. Trump has only held a positive net approval rating for fewer than 15% of the days in our second-term approval average, with only one of these days occurring within the last 6 months.

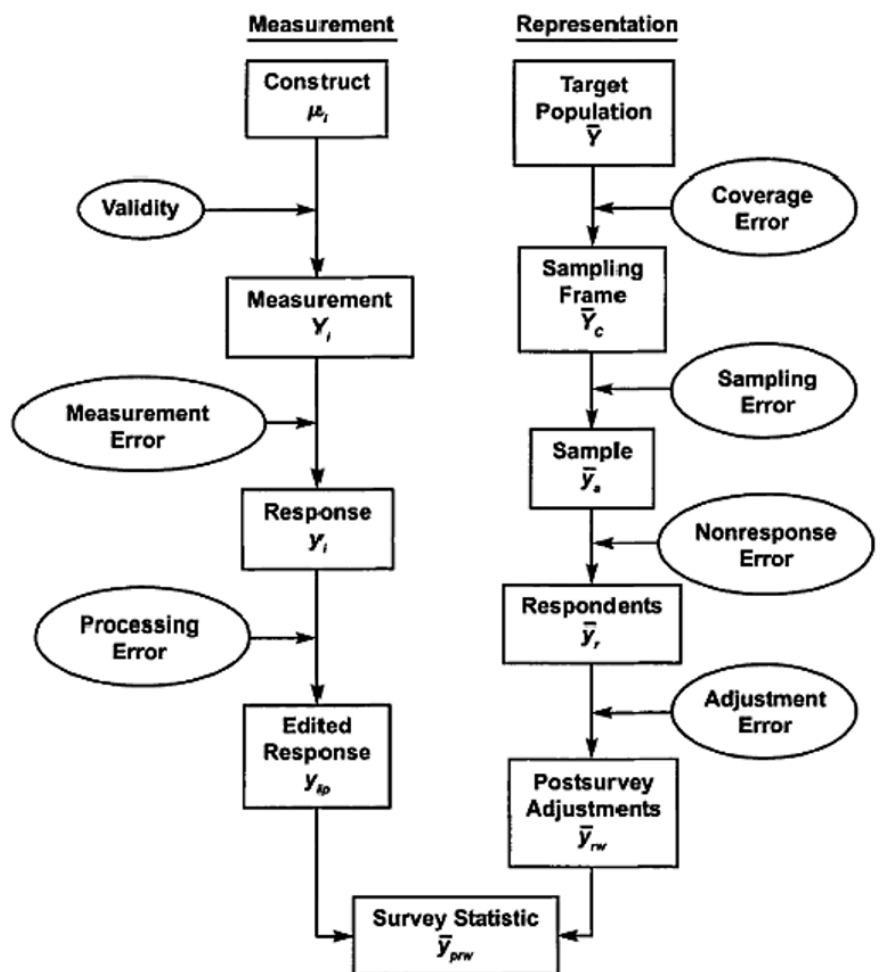


If polls continue to suggest a worsening public opinion of Trump and his policies, one might anticipate electoral consequences in the midterm and subsequent presidential election. Yet, considering the difficulty in accurately capturing public opinion through polling, partisan divides on policy, and confounding variables that factor into fluctuations and trends in approval, a more granular examination of public opinion and Trump's second-term policies is necessary to understand the electoral consequences of policy developments.

Polling, Error, and Capturing Public Opinion

As one of the most common and salient methods for capturing public opinion, we often expect polls to wholly and accurately reflect the state of public attitudes at a given time. Yet, in recent years, polling has missed - and missed big. Even as recently as the New York City Mayor Democratic Primary, only a single poll reported Zohran Mamdani in the lead in the first round, making his convincing victory all the more surprising. Errors do not mean that polls tell us nothing about public opinion, but instead that they are an imperfect social science, more helpful in identifying trends than in providing exact answers to public opinion.

Polling is based on the theoretical underpinnings of random sampling and the idea that, in an actual random sample of a given population, the mean of the population response is within the margin of error of the sample mean 95% of the time. As shown in the [figure to the right](#), different types of errors occur at each step of the survey process, leading to bias in the survey's final result. In United



States election surveys, errors in representation, and, in particular, non-response bias, are the most pressing. With caller ID, cell phones, and the internet, response rates continue to decline, introducing a considerable amount of error and reducing the trust we can have in the mathematical assumptions of polling.

Presidential Polling Averages for Swing States

Polling averages from DDHQ and competing platforms for Swing States, collected on Election Day 2024.

State	Actual Margin	DDHQ / The Hill	538	Silver Bulletin	Real Clear Politics	Split Ticket	Race To The WH	New York Times
National	N/A	Tie	Harris +1.1	Harris +1.0	Harris +0.1	Harris +1.4	Harris +1.4	Harris +1.0
AZ	Trump +5.5	Trump +2.5	Trump +2.6	Trump +2.4	Trump +2.8	Trump +2.2	Trump +4.3	Trump +3.0
GA	Trump +2.2	Trump +1.7	Trump +1.1	Trump +1.0	Trump +1.3	Trump +1.2	Trump +0.7	Tie
MI	Trump +1.4	Harris +0.4	Harris +1.0	Harris +1.2	Harris +0.5	Harris +1.8	Harris +1.6	Tie
NC	Trump +3.2	Trump +1.5	Trump +1.0	Trump +1.1	Trump +1.2	Trump +1.2	Trump +0.8	Tie
NV	Trump +3.1	Trump +1.7	Trump +0.3	Trump +0.6	Trump +0.6	Harris +0.1	Harris +0.2	Tie
PA	Trump +1.7	Trump +0.8	Trump +0.1	Trump +0.1	Harris +0.4	Harris +0.4	Harris +0.4	Tie
WI	Trump +0.9	Trump +0.3	Harris +0.8	Harris +1.0	Harris +0.4	Harris +1.5	Harris +1.4	Tie
Average Difference		1.57	2.25	2.3	1.77	2.47	2.11	2.44

Source: Decision Desk HQ and other displayed platforms

 **Decision Desk HQ**

Rather than indicating that polling is no longer a valuable tool for capturing public opinion, these challenges in polling instead encourage us to use polling with caution, understanding the true magnitude of [large margins of error](#) and utilizing polling to identify trends and changes, rather than expecting it to predict a result closely. Polling aggregation can also help mitigate “house effects,” which are partisan swings in individual pollsters' results created by repeated methodological

biases, thereby producing a more accurate picture of public opinion. Decision Desk HQ aggregates polls without weighting pollsters on methodology, a technique that ensures the full spread of available surveys on public opinion is included. The table above indicates the performance of Decision Desk HQ's polling average compared to the actual margins in key swing states. While not a perfect representation of the exact result, the trends and directionality of our polling averages accurately reflected the public opinion that ultimately led to Trump's election.

Approval, Economic Policy, and Electoral Consequences

Understanding polls and their limitations in this way, comparing Trump's approval ratings to those of his first term and other presidents' approval ratings provides a more effective window into public opinion on his current policies than a single poll average from one cycle can.

Presidential Approval Compared

Trump's current average approval rating compared to the previous 6 presidential terms.

President	Approve	Disapprove	Net
Bush, 1st Term	60.9%	32.5%	28.4%
Bush, 2nd Term	36.6%	58.9%	22.3%
Obama, 1st Term	49.6%	44.9%	4.7%
Obama, 2nd Term	45.9%	49.6%	3.7%
Trump, 1st Term	42.8%	53.4%	10.6%
Biden, 1st Term	43.2%	52.5%	9.3%
Trump, 2nd Term	45.6%	51.0%	5.5%

Source: Decision Desk HQ, Real Clear Polling

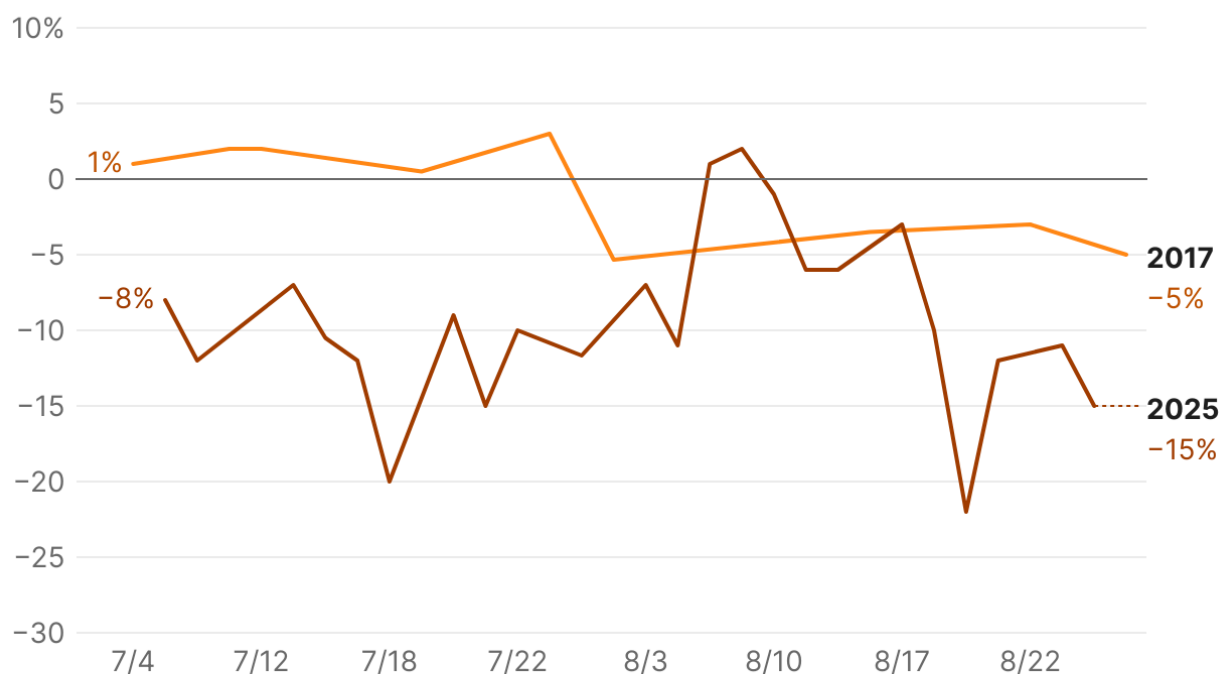
 Decision Desk HQ

As shown in the graphic above, Trump's current average net approval rating, as of August 29, 2025, is more than 5 points above his average net approval from his first term and nearly 4 points higher than Biden's. Although at its surface, a net approval rating 5.5 points underwater seems to represent negative public opinion, in context, it appears that improved perceptions of his job performance characterize Trump's second term. While other recent presidents, including Bush and Obama, saw decreases of more than 8 points in their approval ratings from their first to their second terms, Trump's approval ratings have increased.

When approval is explicitly polled on **economic issues**, though, **Trump's net approval for the past two months of his second term largely trails below his net approval for the same months in the first year of his first term**. Considering that much of Trump's key policy changes have centered around the economy, these contrasting trends in overall and economic approval may be indicative of flagging public support for Trump's economic policies.

Trump Net Approval - Economy

Trump's net approval rating on the economy for the months of July and August in the first year of Trump's first and second terms.



Source: Decision Desk HQ, 50 Polls

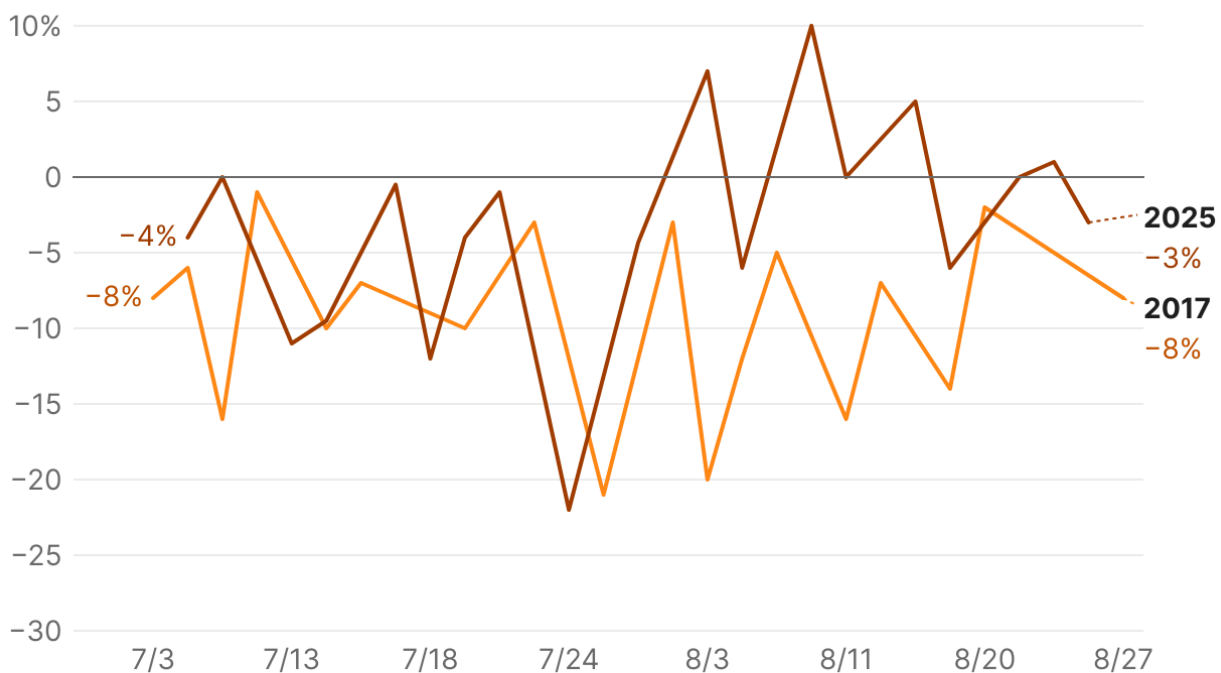
Decision Desk HQ

Worsening evaluations of Trump's job performance on economic issues are an even starker indication of public opinion when compared to questions on approval of Trump's job performance on immigration issues. While Trump has pressed for both more extreme immigration and more extreme economic policies in his second term, his approval ratings on immigration have seemingly improved since this time during his first term.

When net approval is polled regarding the economy, Trump's approval rating in 2025 trails 10 points behind his approval rating in comparable months in 2017. However, when net approval is polled on immigration, as shown in the graph below, Trump's approval rating in 2025 tends to be higher than it was eight years ago, currently echoing the same five-point gain we see in Trump's overall approval.

Trump Net Approval - Immigration

Trump's net approval rating on immigration for the months of July and August in the first year of Trump's first and second terms.



Source: Decision Desk HQ, 44 Polls

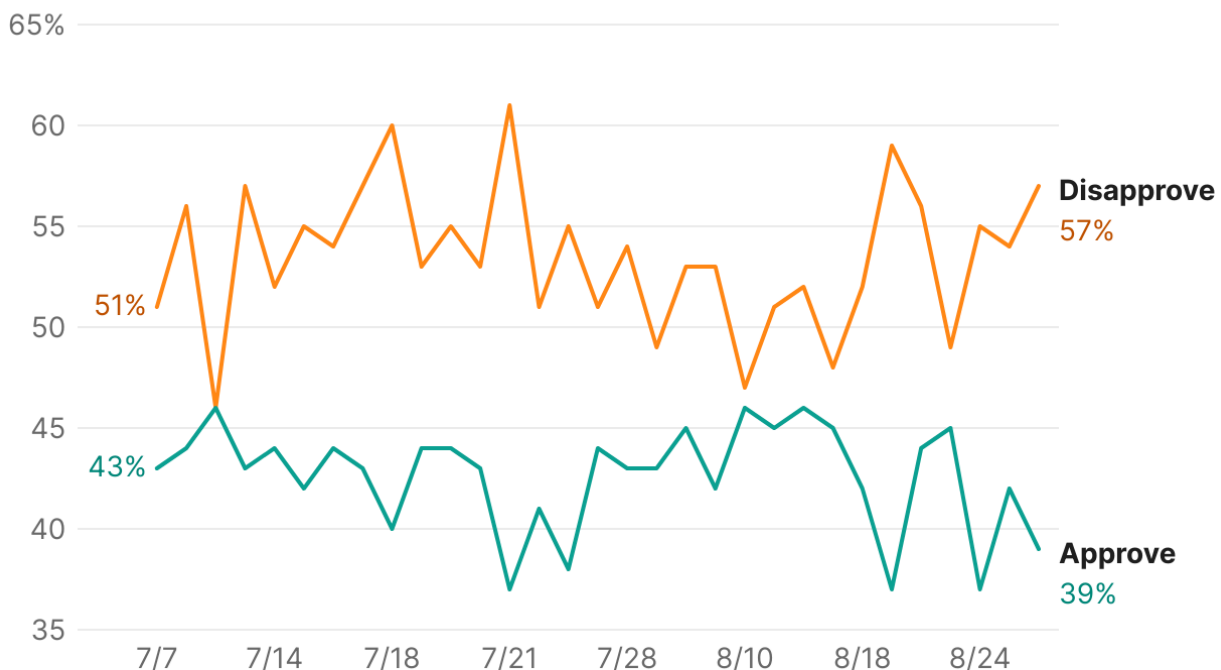
Decision Desk HQ

Held in comparison to previous terms and other issues, Trump's economic policies stand out as garnering less support than his overall job performance. In this

context, in combination with his consistently negative approval ratings on the economy, this indicates flagging public opinion on these policies specifically. As shown in the graph below, the last two months also appear to indicate a further decline in approval of Trump's handling of the economy.

2025 Trump Approval - Economy

Trump's approval ratings on the economy for the months of July and August.



Source: Decision Desk HQ, 31 Polls

Decision Desk HQ

It is well established that the state of the economy and perceptions of the economy shape electoral outcomes in midterm and presidential elections. Economic measures comprise two of [Allan Lichtman's 13 Keys](#) and have a significant influence on the national environment. Economics is closely tied to electoral success, and [changing attribution frames](#) on economic strength critically influence evaluations of the president.

Furthermore, even when the economy itself performs well, unfavorable perceptions of the economy can have the same consequences as a worsening economy. Trump's election in 2024 is a recent case study in the electoral implications of diverging perceptions of the economy and actual economic performance. Although most economic indicators in the fall of 2024 were strong,

[perceptions of the economy lagged](#), leading to electoral losses for the seated party, the Democrats. Such a trend suggests that even if the economy itself improves during Trump's term, if perceptions of the economy and his handling of it continue to worsen, he will nonetheless experience electoral consequences.

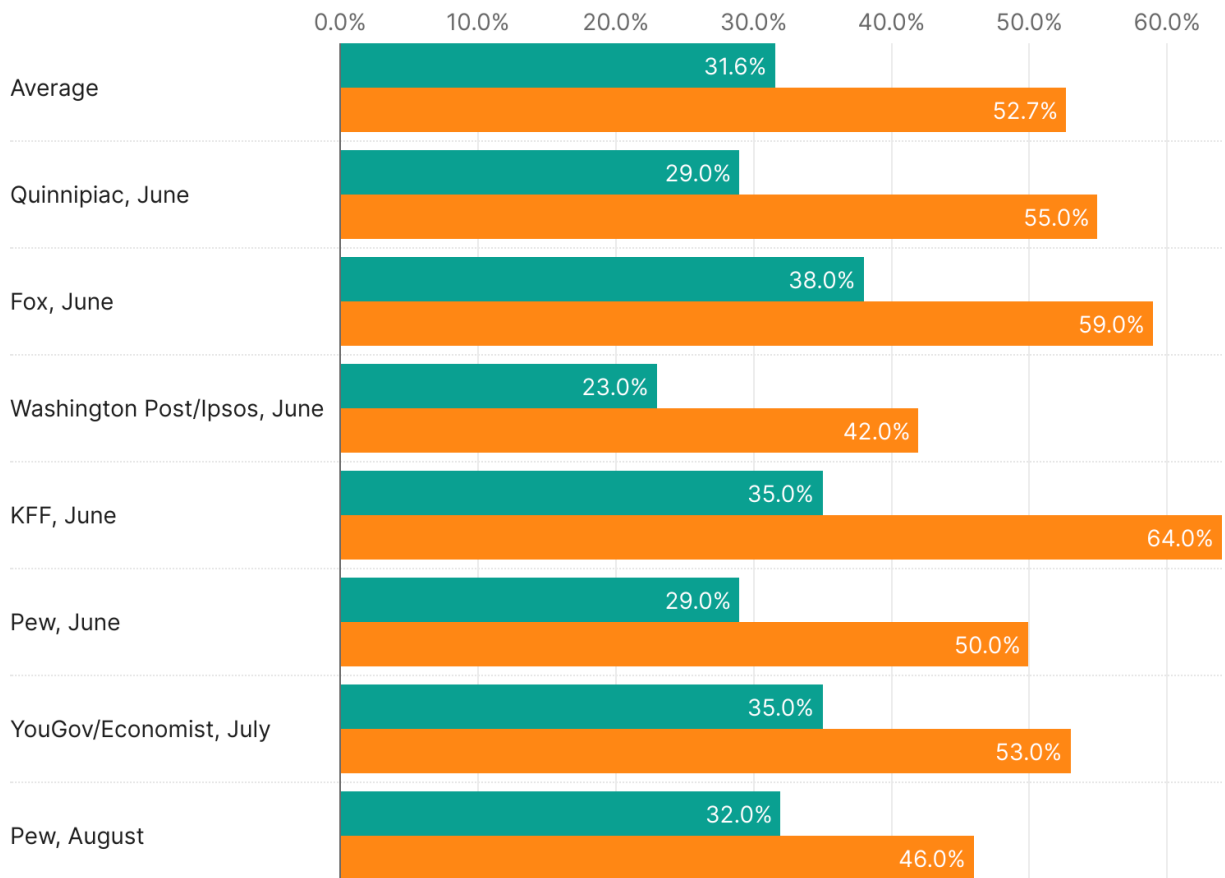
Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" and Downballot Electoral Consequences

Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" ("OB BB"), a federal budget and tax cuts bill, is a part of the suite of economic policies that have attracted criticism, even from within his own party. Polls fielded on the "OB BB" indicate an overwhelming lack of support for this bill, providing a specific example of negative public perceptions of Trump's handling of the economy.

Support for "One Big Beautiful Bill"

Polls on support of "One Big Beautiful Bill" shortly before and after it was signed.

Support Oppose



Source: Decision Desk HQ and displayed pollsters

Decision Desk HQ

However, the consequences of Trump's "OB BB" extend to the downballot in complex ways. While perceptions of the economy hold electoral implications for the current majority party in presidential and congressional offices, opposition to Trump's economic policies also holds electoral consequences. Senators and representatives who voted against the bill have faced severe backlash from Trump and other party members.

Electoral Consequences of Impeachment Votes

Of the Republican representatives who voted to impeach Trump after January 6, only two successfully advanced to the General Election.

Representative	Ran for Reelection?	Advanced to General?
Liz Cheney	Yes	No
Anthony Gonzalez	No	
Jaime Herrera Beutler	Yes	No
John Katko	No	
Adam Kinzinger	No	
Peter Meijer	Yes	No
Dan Newhouse	Yes	Yes
Tom Rice	Yes	No
Fred Upton	No	
David Valadao	Yes	Yes

Source: Decision Desk HQ

Decision Desk HQ

If Trump's impeachment vote is any indication, this backlash is more than just specious infighting. For elected officials, breaking ranks with the President can have severe electoral consequences. As shown in the chart above, only 2 of the 10 Republican representatives who voted to impeach Trump were successfully reelected, or even made it to the general election. Even representatives with a financial and incumbency advantage, such as Liz Cheney, lost their primaries to Trump-endorsed challengers.

All of the Republican representatives who challenged Trump's "OBBB" are threatened with the same fate. As shown below, four of the five representatives

who initially refused to vote "Yes" on the bill voted "Yes" when the bill returned to the House, likely fearing the backlash and potential reelection consequences.

Representatives who Opposed Trump's "OB BB"

Reelection plans and district partisan leans of representatives who voted against Trump's "OB BB."

Representative	District	District PVI	5/22 Vote	7/3 Vote
Thomas Massie	KY-04	R+18	No	No
Brian Fitzpatrick	PA-01	D+1	Yes	No
Warren Davidson	OH-08	R+12	No	Yes
Andy Harris	MD-01	R+8	Present	Yes
David Schweikert	AZ-01	R+1	N/A	Yes
Andrew Garbarino	NY-02	R+6	N/A	Yes

Source: Decision Desk HQ

Decision Desk HQ

Only 2 Republicans voted "No" on the final version of the bill. One, Brian Fitzpatrick, is likely protected from severe electoral consequences by his competitive district, the successful defeat of primary challengers to his right in previous elections, and his moderate stances.

However, Thomas Massie, a representative of a deeply conservative district and target of Trump's severe vitriol following this vote, is a much more likely victim of a primary challenge. Massie, who has resisted several of Trump's policies in the past, has several likely challengers, including Claire Wirth. Wirth and any other primary challengers have already gained Trump's support in the [Truth Social post](#) shown below, posing a serious threat to Massie and his deep-red seat.



Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

Congressman Thomas Massie of Kentucky is not MAGA, even though he likes to say he is. Actually, MAGA doesn't want him, doesn't know him, and doesn't respect him. He is a negative force who almost always Votes "NO," no matter how good something may be. He's a simple minded "grandstander" ...

Massie should drop his fake act and start putting America First, but he doesn't know how to get there — he doesn't have a clue! He'll undoubtedly vote against the Great, Big, Beautiful Bill, even though non-passage means a 68% Tax Increase for everybody, and many things far worse than that.

MAGA should drop this pathetic LOSER, Tom Massie, like the plague! The good news is that we will have a wonderful American Patriot running against him in the Republican Primary, and I'll be out in Kentucky campaigning really hard.

The senators who opposed the "OB BB" are in a safer position. Thom Tillis is not seeking reelection, while Rand Paul and Susan Collins are likely protected by their popularity and the characteristics of their states.

Senators who Opposed Trump's "OB BB"

Reelection plans and state partisan leans of senators who voted against Trump's "OB BB."

Senator	State	State PVI	7/1 Vote	Running for Reelection?
Rand Paul	KY	R+15	No	Yes
Thom Tillis	NC	R+1	No	No
Susan Collins	ME	D+4	No	Yes

Source: Decision Desk HQ

Decision Desk HQ

Nevertheless, the track record of electoral consequences associated with breaking from Trump makes it unlikely that Massie in particular will successfully win reelection. The policy changes thus far in Trump's second term not only affect the broader national environment but also hold consequences for Republicans who refuse to fall in line.

Looking ahead, the policy issues that have characterized the first part of Trump's term are likely to continue to hold sway over both the broader national environment and the unity of the Republican Party. The possibility of a follow-up to Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill," a reconciliation bill, opens the door to both a worsening perception of the economy under Trump and further divisions within the Republican Party.

However, with the recent Court of Appeals decision against Trump's tariffs and an appeal to the Supreme Court pending, a reversal of some of Trump's economic policies may be forthcoming. Other court rulings and developments, such as decisions on Trump's firing of Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook, will inevitably be accompanied by changes in Trump's hold over both the national environment and his own party.

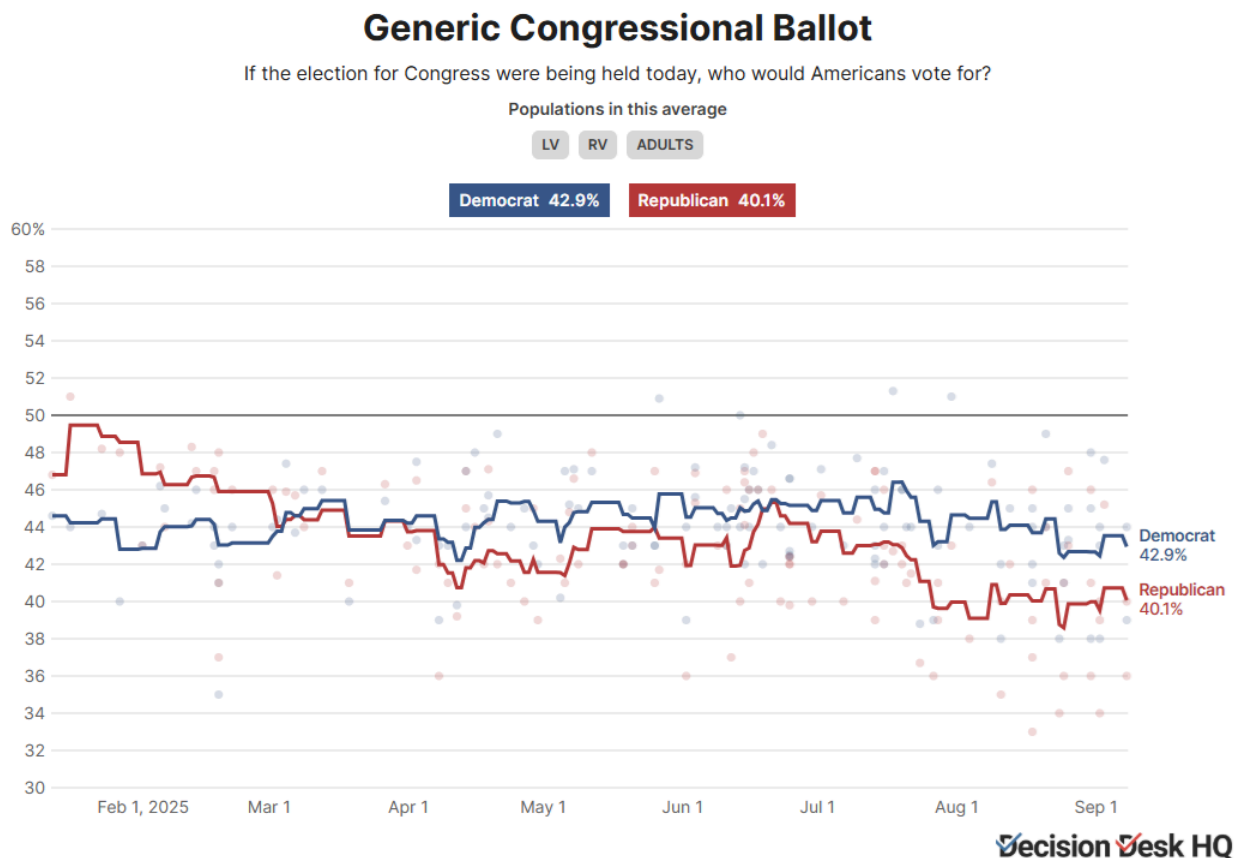
CURRENT NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Generic Ballot

Historically, generic ballot polls have proven to be a strong predictor of House outcomes. In midterm elections from 1954 to 1998, [the final poll by Gallup and the Pew Research Center was, on average, within 1.1 points](#) of the final result.

The generic ballot asks voters a question along the lines of “if your congressional election were held today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate?” It does not include specific candidate names, but instead aims to provide a national snapshot of partisan preferences. As such, it does not address race dynamics, district lines, turnout, or other factors that would determine control of specific seats.

As of September 15, 2025, Democrats have maintained a slight lead in DDHQ’s generic ballot polling average since March, except for a few days in late June.



For the 2026 midterms, however, generic ballot polling requires more qualifications.

1. **Declining accuracy:** From 2002 to 2022, generic ballot polling became a less precise predictor of the final result:
 - From 2002 to 2022, RCP's generic ballot average was within 2.5 points of the final result on average.
 - The 2006 midterms saw the least accurate polling, with an error of 3.6 points.

In all six midterms, however, the generic ballot average did accurately predict the winner, if not the correct margin. Thus, the generic ballot still holds predictive value, but it should not be taken as the final truth on House control.

2. **Changing dynamics:** We are witnessing a dramatic realignment in partisan turnout patterns, which culminated in the 2024 elections. This turnout dynamic raises questions about many historical truths regarding voting patterns, making the generic ballot a less reliable indicator.
3. **Point in the cycle:** The generic ballot in an odd year is unlikely to accurately reflect the dynamic we will see closer to election day. For the past four midterm elections, RCP's average favored Democrats for the first seven months of the off-year. In three of these cases, it gave Republicans the edge 14 months later on election day.

Shift in Generic Ballot from August of Odd Year to Midterm Election Day

	RCP: Aug 31 of Odd Year	RCP: Election Day	Actual	Shift
2022	D+2.0	R+2.5	R+2.8	4.5
2018	D+9.0	D+7.3	D+8.4	1.7
2014	D+1.7	R+2.4	R+5.7	4.1
2010	D+0.4	R+9.4	R+6.8	9.8

Source: RCP Generic Ballot Average



Our current average's narrow lead for Democrats could easily become a strong Republican advantage by election day, given a shift of this magnitude. Even a change as significant as the one observed in 2018, when Democrats maintained a remarkably consistent lead in RCP's average, would bring DDHQ's current polling average to an effectively tied race. (In many ways, 2018 may indeed be the strongest predictor of 2026 dynamics given the status of both as midterm elections under Trump.)

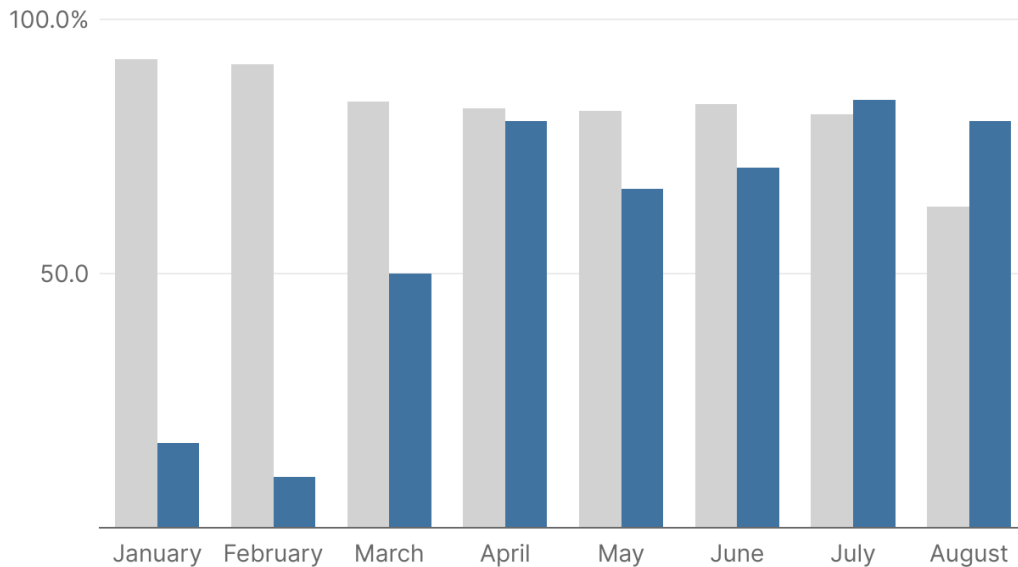
Similar odd year shifts prove relevant in presidential years as well. In 2024, DDHQ's polling average went into election day with Democrats leading by 0.3 points. However, DDHQ's generic ballot average in the first half of 2023 — the equivalent point in the 2024 cycle to August 2025 — showed consistent Democratic leads. Relying on the polls being fielded at this time would not have been predictive of the eventual result.

We can, however, garner some relevant information from a comparison between this point (August of the odd year) in the 2024 and 2026 cycles:

% of Generic Ballot Polls with Democrats Leading

Number of polls Democrats led divided by total number of polls.

■ 2023 ■ 2025



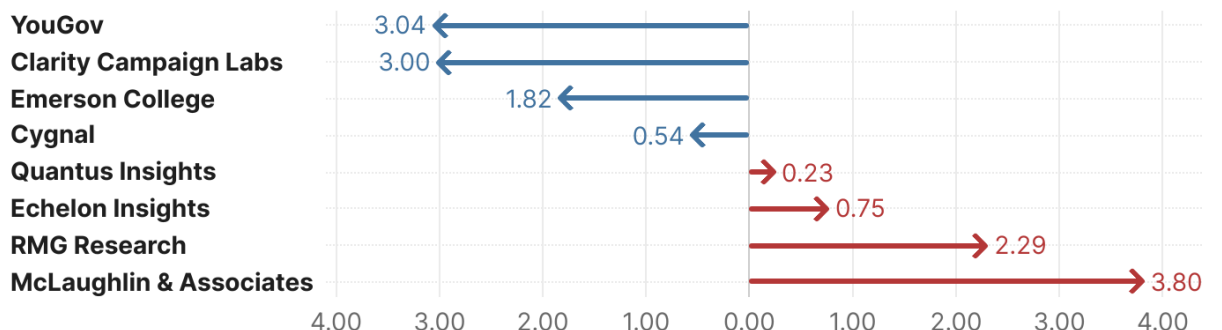
Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team

Decision Desk HQ

1. Democrats maintained a steady lead from January to August of 2023, in contrast to six flips thus far in our generic ballot average this cycle. Polls in 2025 have therefore not aligned with one another in the same way as they did in 2023.
2. This volatility in polling in 2025 mostly comes down to strongly differing findings from pollsters like YouGov and Clarity on the one hand and RMG Research and McLaughlin on the other:

Average Generic Ballot Result of High Volume Pollsters

Unweighted average of the generic ballot result by pollster for the eight pollsters with the most polls in our average.



Source: DDHQ Polling Average

Decision Desk HQ

3. Republicans first took the lead in the generic ballot for the 2024 cycle on August 15, 2023, and they generally maintained that lead until Biden's departure in 2024. August 2023 was a turning point for the 2024 elections. It remains to be seen if August 2025 will prove the same. However, Democrats have maintained a notable, if not as strong as they would like, lead for the past month. If August is indeed a turning point again, this would likely be good news for Democrats.

Trump Approval

The president's party has provided a strong indication of midterm results going back to the 1940s. Beginning in 1938, except for 1998 and 2002 (when George Bush benefited from post-9/11 support), the president's party lost seats in the House. The effect persists even when the president is ineligible to run again and when the president's party does not control the House. The president's party also generally loses seats in the Senate, although to a lesser extent, due to structural limitations.

Seat Change For President's Party in Midterm Years

Year	President	Party	— Seats to Defend —		— Seat Change —	
			House	Senate	House	Senate
1934	F. Roosevelt	D	313	14	+9	+9
1938	F. Roosevelt	D	334	27	-81	-7
1942	F. Roosevelt	D	267	25	-46	-9
1946	Truman	D	244	21	-45	-12
1950	Truman	D	263	21	-29	-6
1954	Eisenhower	R	221	11	-18	-1
1958	Eisenhower	R	203	20	-48	-13
1962	Kennedy	D	264	18	-4	+3
1966	L. Johnson	D	295	21	-47	-4
1970	Nixon	R	192	7	-12	+2
1974	Ford	R	192	15	-48	-5
1978	Carter	D	292	14	-15	-3
1982	Reagan	R	192	12	-26	+1
1986	Reagan	R	181	22	-5	-8
1990	G. H. W. Bush	R	175	17	-8	-1
1994	Clinton	D	258	17	-52	-8
1998	Clinton	D	207	18	+5	±0
2002	G. W. Bush	R	220	20	+8	+2
2006	G. W. Bush	R	233	15	-30	-6
2010	Obama	D	257	15	-63	-6
2014	Obama	D	201	20	-13	-9
2018	Trump	R	241	9	-40	+2
2022	Biden	D	222	14	-9	+1

Table: DDHQ Collected Data • Source: The American Presidency Project. "Seats in Congress Gained/Lost by the President's Party in Mid-Term Elections." Santa Barbara, CA: University of California.

As such, Trump's approval will be of utmost relevance heading into the 2026 midterms. An approval percentage of more than 50% has been correlated with the lowest number of seats lost in the House over the past 30 years.

Seat Change for President's Party in Midterm Years

President's job approval percentage in Late October Gallup poll.

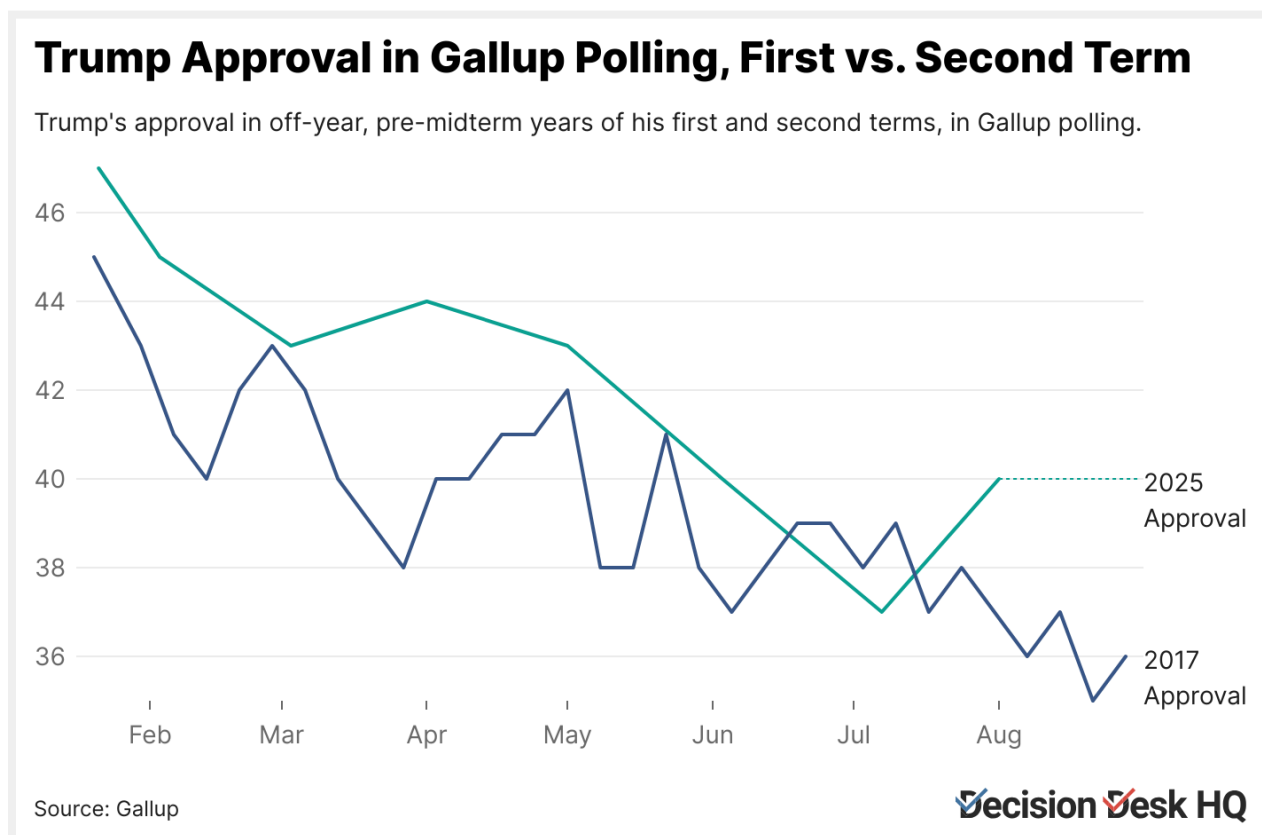
Year	President	Party	Final Approval Percentage	House Seat Change	Senate Seat Change
1990	G. H. W. Bush	R	57%	-8	-1
1994	Clinton	D	48%	-52	-8
1998	Clinton	D	65%	+5	±0
2002	G. W. Bush	R	67%	+8	+2
2006	G. W. Bush	R	37%	-30	-6
2010	Obama	D	45%	-63	-6
2014	Obama	D	41%	-13	-9
2018	Trump	R	44%	-40	+2
2022	Biden	D	40%	-9	+1

Table: DDHQ Collected Data • Source: The American Presidency Project. "Seats in Congress Gained/Lost by the President's Party in Mid-Term Elections." Santa Barbara, CA: University of California.



In his first term, Trump's approval rating remained relatively stable for the two years before the midterms. However, his approval rating has already fluctuated wildly in just the first half of the year, making it difficult to predict where he will sit at the end of 2026.

A general downward trend in approval over the first six months also occurred in Trump's first term, as reflected in pollster-specific comparisons:



By late 2017, the downward trend in approval had generally leveled off, and indeed, his approval picked up slightly by the 2018 midterms. Polling over the next several months will likely indicate how well this cycle will align with 2018.

Electoral Evidence: Special Elections

Special elections can provide a metric of comparison against polling. In special state legislative general elections since Jan. 7, 2025, Democrats have overperformed Trump's margin in their districts by [15 points on average](#). At this point in 2017, they were overperforming by [13 points on average](#), but began performing worse by late September 2025. Next month will thus serve as a key indicator of whether this cycle diverges from Trump's last term.

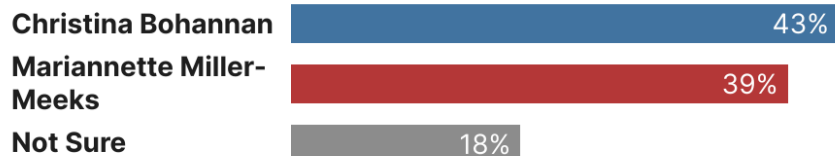
SPECIFIC HOUSE POLLING

Early polling in specific races can also provide a point of comparison on how things look well in advance of the midterms.

Both IA-01 and PA-10 will likely see rematches of their 2024 races, with Democratic challengers Christina Bohannon and Janelle Stelson once again facing Republican incumbents. Early polls released by Public Policy Polling on behalf of House Majority PAC (the Super PAC for House Democrats) show both Democratic challengers leading, even though a generic Democrat trails a generic Republican. Although these polls have a partisan affiliation, both asked their respondents who they voted for in 2024 (known as a “recall vote”) and demonstrated a sample aligned with the 2024 results.

IA-01 Polling

Performance of Republican Incumbent Mariannette Miller-Meeks against Democratic Challenger Christina Bohannon in Public Policy Polling/House Majority PAC poll, Jul. 18-19, 2025.

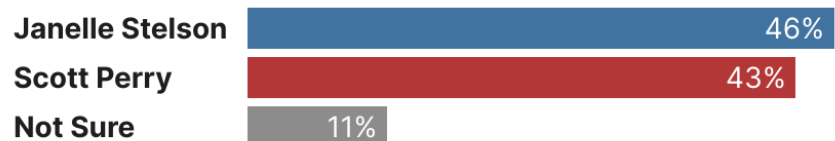


Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team



PA-10 Polling

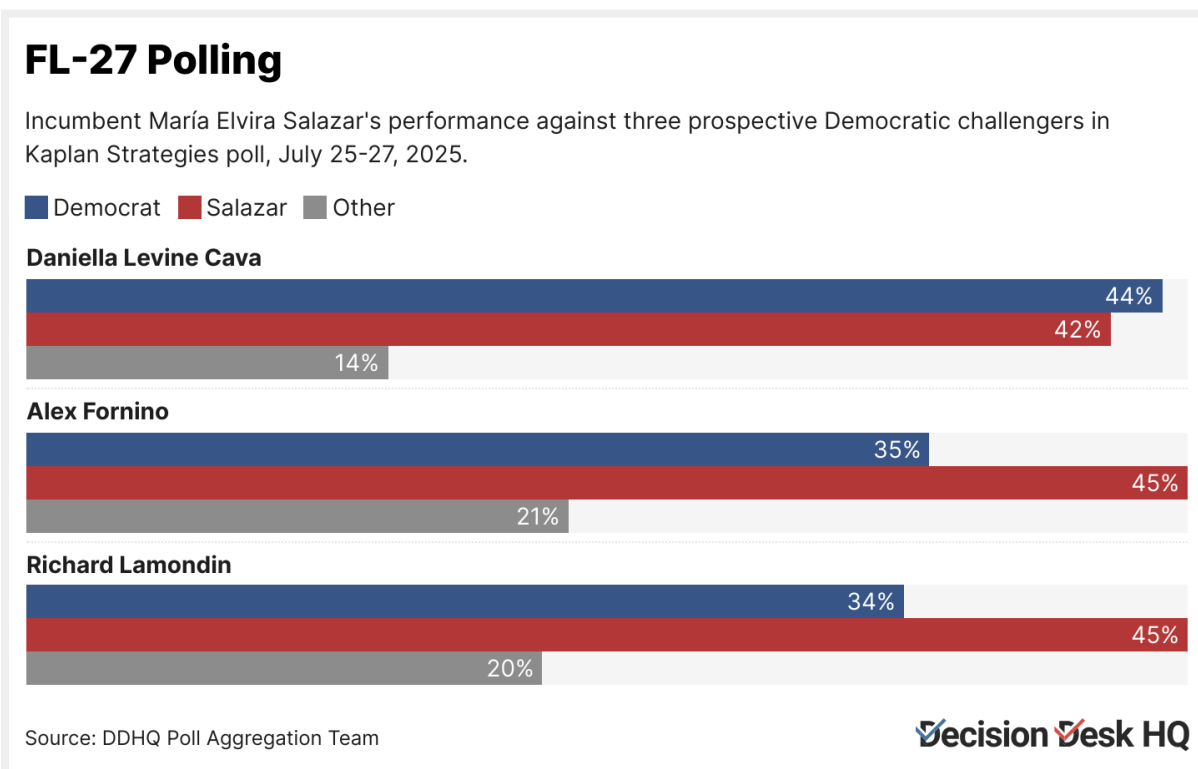
Performance of Republican Incumbent Scott Perry against Democratic Challenger Janelle Stelson in Public Policy Polling/House Majority PAC poll, Jul. 10-14, 2025.



Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team



Polling in races where we do not yet know the candidates for the general election also proves interesting. Early polling in FL-27, an R+6 district that [Trump won with a nearly 15-point margin](#), shows Democrat Daniella Levine Cava leading Incumbent María Elvira Salazar by 2 points.



Levine Cava benefits from name recognition as the mayor of Miami-Dade County, but has [not yet decided to run](#); the two declared candidates trail Salazar by a large margin. This poll demonstrates potential for Democratic wins even in more strongly Republican districts, but it also emphasizes the importance of candidate quality. This factor is likely to remain unknown until after the primaries.

SPECIFIC SENATE POLLING

The Senate, as previously mentioned, faces more structural barriers to a flip. It is also less correlated with factors such as presidential approval and the generic ballot and is thus best analyzed at the state level.

NC Senate Polling

Findings of the three available polls with the declared candidates of the NC Senate race.

■ Cooper ■ Whatley ■ Other/Undecided

Victory Insights



Emerson College



Harper Polling/Carolina Journal



Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team

Decision Desk HQ

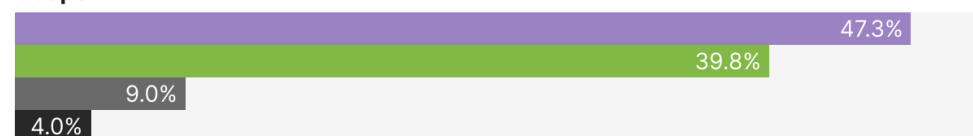
In North Carolina, the Senate race will almost certainly see former Governor Roy Cooper on the Democratic side facing former RNC chair Michael Whatley on the Republican side. Cooper enjoys a substantial lead in all polls conducted, achieving his largest lead in the most recent poll from Harper Polling/Carolina Journal. Cooper primarily benefits from Whatley's low name recognition in the state:

NC Senate Favorability

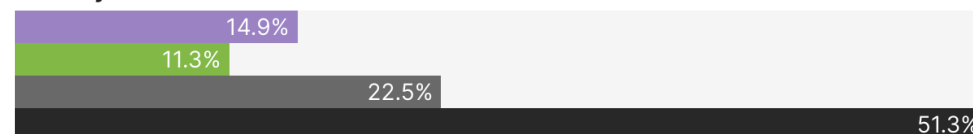
NC Senate candidates' favorabilities in the most recent poll, fielded Aug. 11 - Aug. 12 by Harper Polling/Carolina Journal.

■ Favorable ■ Unfavorable ■ No Opinion ■ Never Heard Of

Cooper



Whatley



Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team

Decision Desk HQ

In the most recent NC senate poll, fielded two weeks after Whatley jumped in the race, more than 50% of respondents said they had never heard of him. Survey respondents on live phone calls often hesitate to express that they have not heard of a candidate, so these numbers should be especially worrying for Whatley.

OH Senate Polling

Findings of the three available polls with the declared candidates of the OH Senate race.

■ Husted ■ Brown ■ Other

February: YouGov / Bowling Green State University



April: YouGov / Bowling Green State University



August: Emerson College



Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team

Decision Desk HQ

In Ohio, Republican Jon Husted, former Lieutenant Governor and incumbent by appointment, will likely face former U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown in a special election. Husted has led Brown in all available polls. Most notably, he has performed close to a majority in recent polling. A low volume of undecided voters this early in the race presents a strong sign for Husted and represents a trend to watch in future polling.

GA Senate Polling

Unweighted average of Jon Ossoff's poll values vs various potential Republican candidates. Sample size next to candidate.

■ Ossoff ■ Republican

Derek Dooley (n=2)



Brad Raffensperger (n=3)



Buddy Carter (n=4)



Mike Collins (n=3)



Generic Republican (n=1)



Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team

Decision Desk HQ

In Georgia, incumbent Senator Jon Ossoff will almost certainly secure the Democratic nomination. His opponent could be one of several Republicans who have declared candidacy or expressed interest. It will not, however, be current Governor Brian Kemp.

While Ossoff slightly trails a generic Republican candidate in the only poll conducted thus far, he maintains a significant advantage over all candidates who have expressed interest. While a substantial portion of voters remain undecided, Ossoff clearly benefits from a weaker field with Brian Kemp out of the race.

MI Senate Polling

Unweighted average of poll values for Mike Rogers vs various potential Democratic candidates. Sample size next to candidate.

■ Democrat ■ Mike Rogers

Dana Nessel (n=1)



Mallory McMorrow (n=2)



Haley Stevens (n=3)



Abdul El-Sayed (n=1)



Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team

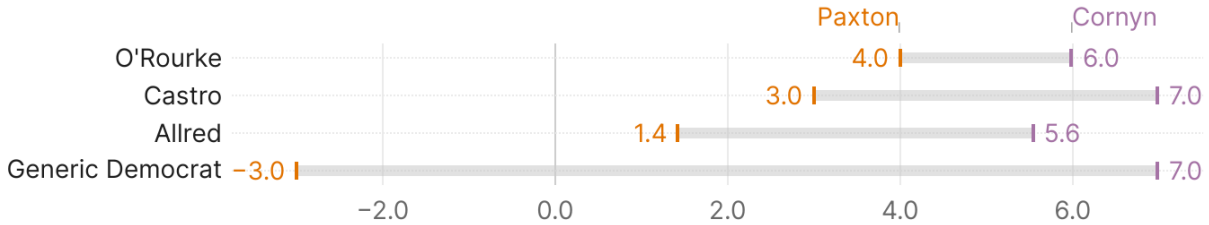
Decision Desk HQ

In Michigan, Mike Rogers currently leads declared candidates for the Republican nomination. If nominated, he could face one of several Democratic challengers who have declared or expressed interest in running. Of these, Michigan's Attorney General Dana Nessel performs the best on average.

However, Nessel has not yet declared and thus benefits from a small sample size (one poll). Haley Stevens, U.S. Representative for MI-11, and Mallory McMorrow, state senator, have both led Rogers in at least one poll; however, their trailing performances in other polls bring down their average performance. All Democratic candidates face name recognition problems against Mike Rogers in the available polling.

TX Senate Polling

Unweighted average of Paxton and Cornyn's respective leads against various potential Democratic candidates in all available polling.



Source: DDHQ Poll Aggregation Team

Decision Desk HQ

The outcome of the Texas Senate primary remains undecided. Incumbent Senator John Cornyn currently faces a challenge from Ken Paxton, the current Attorney General of Texas. While Paxton performs well against Cornyn in primary polling, he performs significantly worse against potential Democratic opponents in the general election.

Cornyn leads a generic Democrat by 7 points, but Paxton trails by three percentage points. Against all declared or potential Democrats who have been polled against both Cornyn and Paxton, Cornyn leads by 2 to 4 points more than Paxton.



**November General Election
Key Race Previews**

**For Background/
Planning Purposes Only-
Not for Attribution**

A PREVIEW OF THE 2025 NEW YORK CITY MAYORAL ELECTION

- **Zohran Mamdani** (Democrat) - Assembly Member of the 36th District (*Queens*)
- **Andrew Cuomo** (Fight & Deliver) - Former Governor of New York
- **Eric Adams** (Independent) - New York City Mayor
- **Curtis Sliwa** (Republican) - Founder of the 'Guardian Angels'

2025 Democratic Primary Recap

New York City Mayor RCV Final Round Democratic Primary			
County Results			
52HQ Last Updated: Aug 30, 2025, 11:39 PM		Precincts reporting: 100%	
Candidates	Party	Votes	Pct.
Zohran Mamdani ✓	DEM	573,169	56.4%
Andrew Cuomo	DEM	443,229	43.6%
Total		1,016,398	
* Incumbent		Election Date: 6/24/2025	

At just 33 years old, Mamdani's rise marks a generational and ideological shift in New York City politics. A Democratic Socialist backed by national progressives like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Mamdani centered his campaign on aggressive affordability measures, including rent freezes, free childcare, and expanded public transit.

His victory not only defied expectations but also signaled growing momentum for the city's left flank. Andrew Cuomo, long considered the favorite in the race, struggled to turn out older, more moderate voters and is taking a second shot this November on the 'Fight and Deliver' party line. Notably, Mayor Eric Adams, who chose not to participate in the Democratic primary, is now running as an independent.

With Mamdani's nomination, the 2025 mayoral race is poised to become a battle between the Democratic Party's moderate and progressive wings.

**No Republican Primary was held; Curtis Sliwa ran unopposed.*

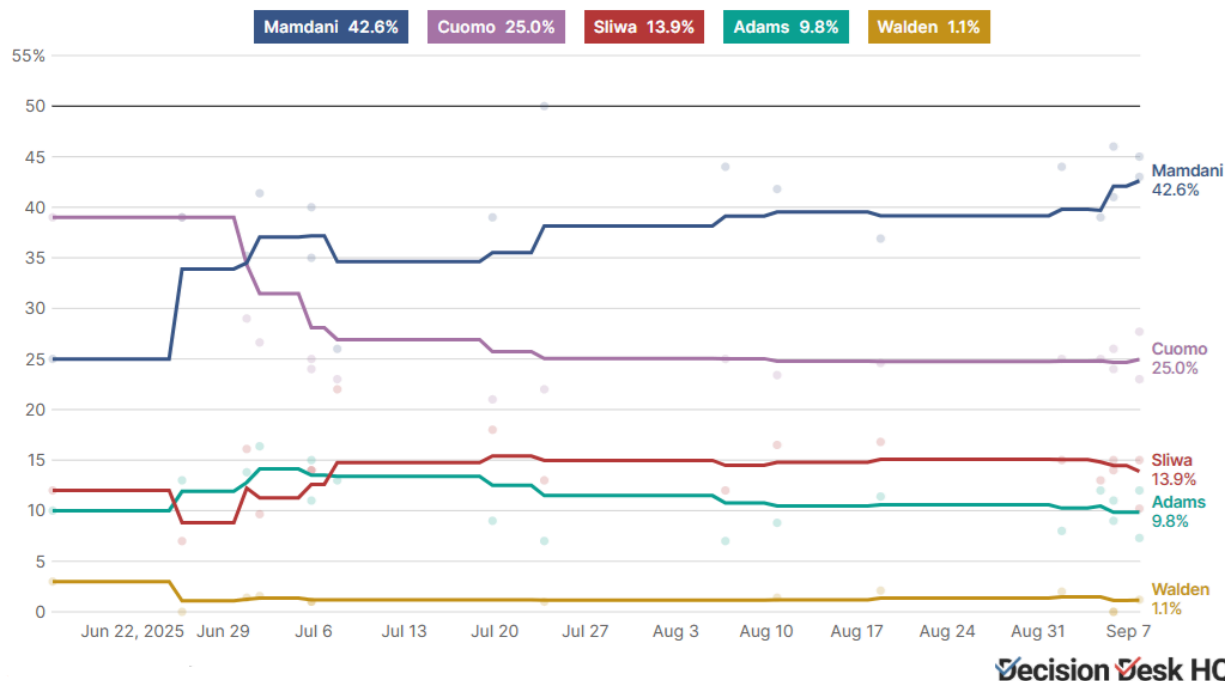
Current DDHQ Polling

New York City Mayor General Ballot Test

If the election for New York City Mayor were being held today, who would voters choose?

Populations in this average

LV RV ADULTS



Soon after his primary election win, Mamdani has consistently enjoyed a double-digit polling average in this 5-way race. No challenging candidate has been able to consolidate support, and even when voters have been polled in head-to-head polling matchups, Mamdani remains well ahead.

Mamdani or Bust

New York City has been a Democratic stronghold for almost 100 years, as it last voted for a Republican presidential candidate back in 1924. Liberals' strength among minority, blue-collar, low-income voters, coupled with ironclad support for Democrats by wealthy and educated White voters, results in a remarkable political paradox: Democratic candidates in presidential elections used to run up the most significant margins in one of the poorest and least educated as well as one of the wealthiest and most educated areas in the nation.

For example, in 2016, Hillary Clinton won The Bronx by 79% and Manhattan by 77 points, while carrying Brooklyn and Queens, which feature educational attainment and income levels in line with the US, respectively by “only” 62 and 53 points.

Importantly, Mamdani’s coalition seems to be the most defined, while Cuomo and Adams risk ending up battling over the same voters, hence splitting a moderate anti-Mamdani front. Mamdani’s focus on housing and affordability, coupled with his progressive proposals and embrace of socialism, made him the preferred candidate for the youth, who participated in the June primary at significantly high rates, as well as educated and wealthy White voters.

Cuomo’s moderation and support from labor leaders should have given him an edge with low-income, working-class, minority voters who have limited education. It didn’t.

If Mamdani faces only one prominent opponent – be it Adams or Cuomo – there is a chance this race becomes interesting. His opponent would also have plenty of time to mount a targeted campaign against someone who will no longer be seen as an outsider.

On the other hand, the idea that Adams, Sliwa, or Cuomo will voluntarily drop out of the race warrants caution, especially given that two of them are involved. The former Governor is currently polling firmly in second place ahead of Adams, but the mayor still has a significant amount of cash on hand to spend in the campaign.

DDHQ Rating - Should all four candidates remain on the ballot and engaged in the race, the projected result is ***Likely Mamdani*** with an expected margin of victory between 12 and 16 points.

Important Election Details

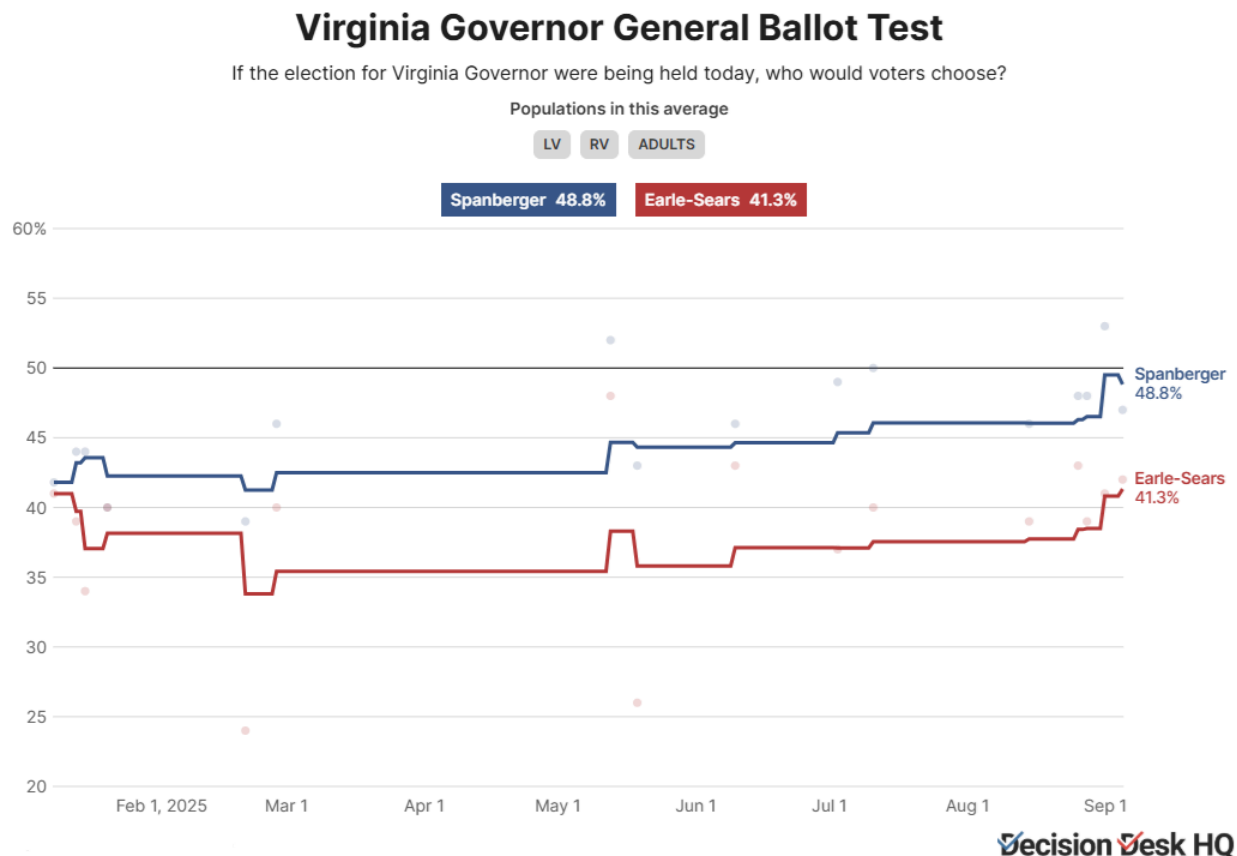
- Polls close @ 9 pm ET
- Expected turnout = 1.5MM
- Early in-person voting will last for nine days, beginning on October 25th.
- New York City runs ranked-choice voting for the primary, but the general election uses a standard election format. One selection per voter; the candidate with the highest vote total wins.
- ~95% of the total vote is expected to be counted on election night. A small amount of late mail and affidavit ballots will be counted in the 2 weeks following election night.

A PREVIEW OF THE 2025 VIRGINIA GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

- **Abigail Spanberger** (Democrat) - Former VA-07 Representative
- **Winsome Earle-Sears** (Republican) - Lieutenant Governor of Virginia

(Both Republican and Democratic primaries for governor were unopposed)

Current DDHQ Polling



With 16 polls having been conducted since the start of the year, Spanberger has maintained a comfortable distance from her Republican rival. Recent polling has allowed Earle-Sears to creep up from an average of ~36% slowly; however, she has yet to lead in any individual poll.

The First Female Governor of Virginia is ...

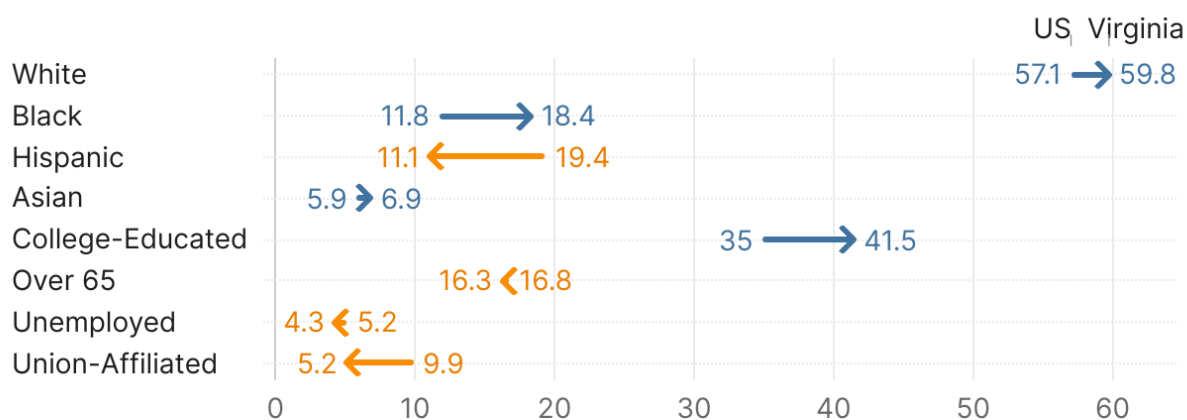
TBD.

Virginia's demographics make it a blue-leaning state, but Republicans still hold out hope for winning statewide offices and being competitive under favorable

conditions. Kamala Harris carried the state by 5.8% after Biden won it by 10 points in 2020, while in 2021, Republican Glenn Youngkin was elected Governor, defeating Democratic opponent Terry McAuliffe by 1.9%.

Demographic Makeup: Virginia vs US

Compared to the US as a whole, Virginia (tip of the arrow) is more Black and less Hispanic. It has a significantly bigger share of college-educated population, fewer union-affiliated workers, and a higher Median Household Income - \$91,000 compared to the national \$79,000.



Source: US Census - 2023 American Community Survey

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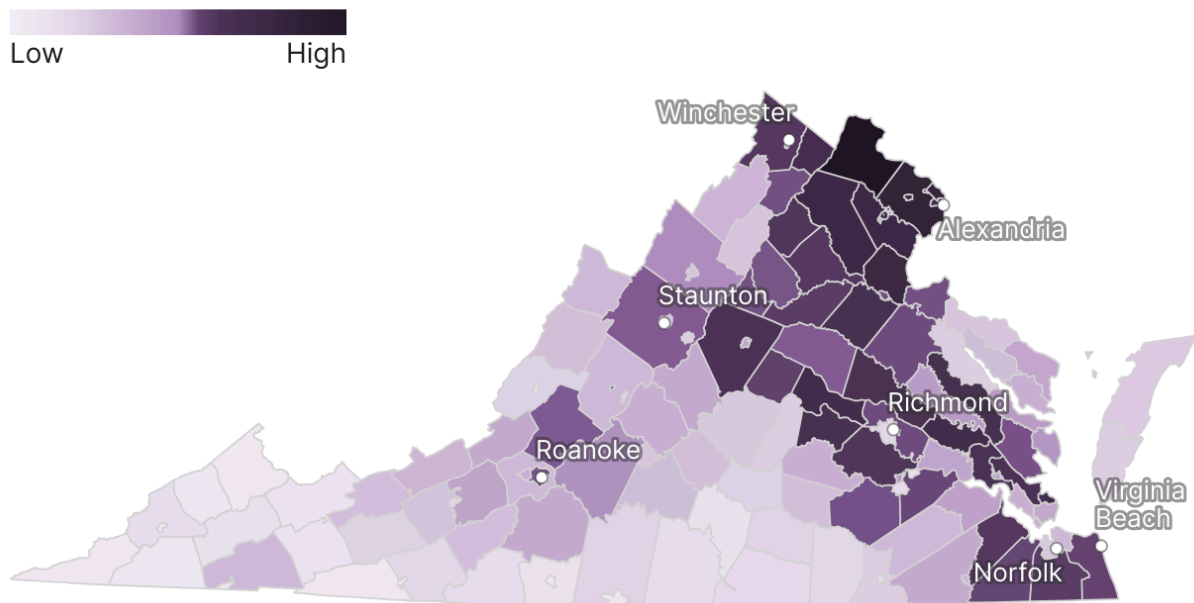
Virginia has somewhat unique demographics, in large part due to its higher-than-average Black population and higher-than-average college-educated population. The former remains a strong voting bloc for Democrats, while the latter is trending toward them, making Virginia a more challenging state for Republicans in the long term.

Another small boon to Democrats is the size of the Federal workforce that calls Virginia home. Per capita, Virginia employs the [second most federal employees](#) across the country (Maryland #1), and recent efforts by the Trump administration to reduce the Federal workforce are likely to work against Earle-Sears.

Income is becoming more correlated with partisanship, and Virginia exemplifies the trend. The most interesting map is one that shows where wealth is concentrated within the state, and it could easily be confused with where Democrats now generate their most outstanding vote shares.

Median Household Income, Virginia

Northern Virginia counties register some of the highest MHI in the nation. Wealth is concentrated in suburbs, as income decreases significantly in rural areas in the Southwest and the Black Belt.



Source: US Census

Decision Desk HQ

If you're looking for reasons why Spanberger is going to win, you have plenty, but the largest likely came in November of 2024 when Donald Trump won the presidency. Since 1976, Virginia has only elected one governor who matched the President's party (McAuliffe in 2013). Even though Youngkin is a relatively popular governor (term-limited), demographics, expected turnout, and polling are all working against Winsome Earle-Sears.

DDHQ Rating - Likely Abigail Spanberger with an expected margin of victory between 8 and 12 points.

Important Election Details

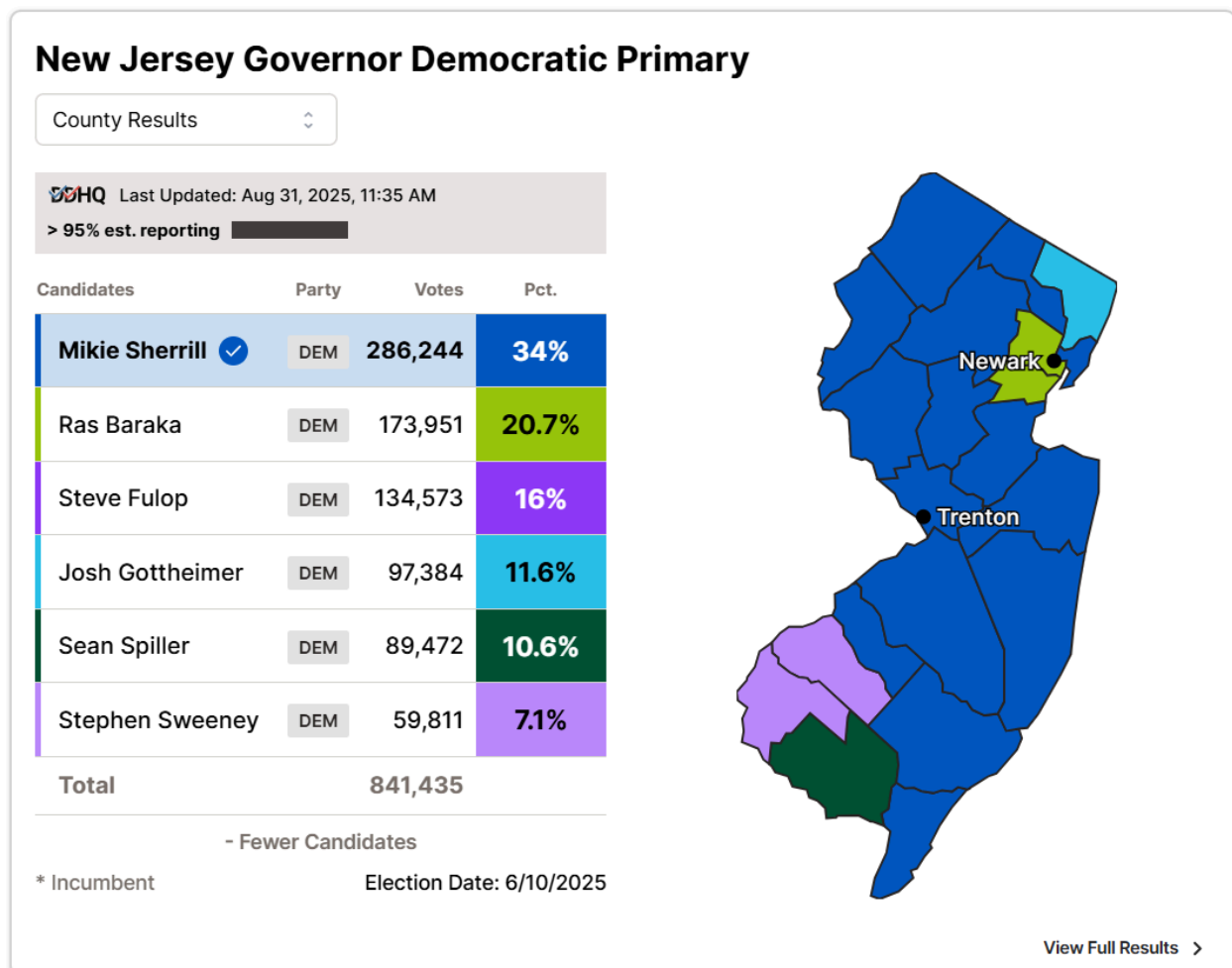
- Polls close @ 7 pm ET
- Expected turnout = 3.2MM
- Early in-person voting lasts for 45 days and begins September 19th.

- ~93% of the total vote is expected to be counted on election night. Virginia allows for same-day registration and late-arriving, post-marked mail, which generally represents between 6% and 8% of all outstanding ballots.

A PREVIEW OF THE 2025 NEW JERSEY GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

- **Mikie Sherrill** (Democrat) - NJ-11 Representative (*Portions of Morris, Essex, and Passaic Counties*)
- **Jack Ciattarelli** (Republican) - Former Assembly Member of the 16th District (*Portions of Hunterdon, Mercer, and Somerset Counties*)

2025 Democratic Primary Recap



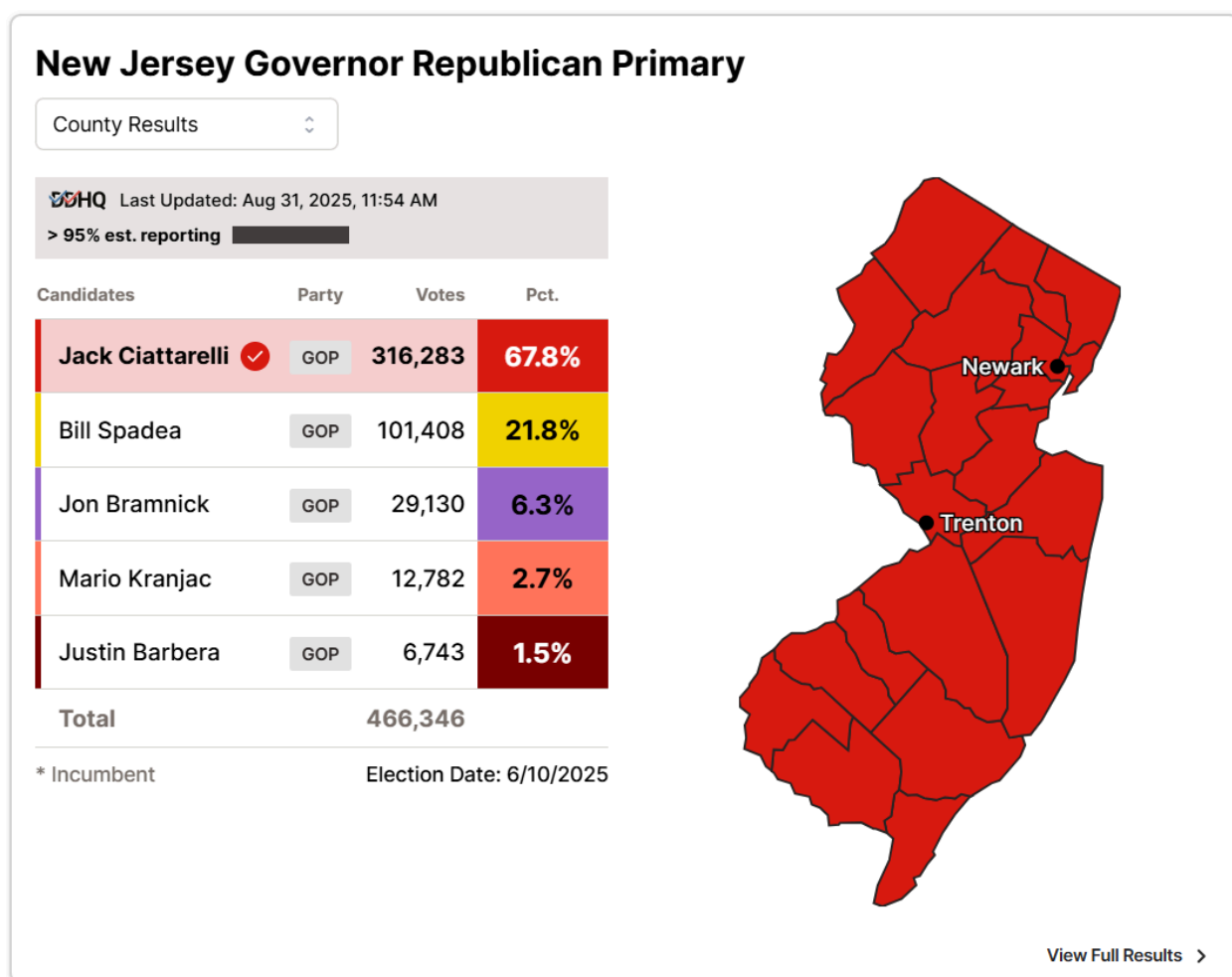
With New Jersey having removed the 'county line' system of elections, the normally uncompetitive gubernatorial primary saw a strong six-candidate field and record spending.

In New Jersey (and only in New Jersey), counties had the authority to print ballots in different ways that favored county-endorsed candidates. Often, endorsed party candidates were grouped on the same 'line', while unendorsed candidates were labeled and located in unconventional ways.

Mikie Sherrill, the only woman in the race, was able to dominate in suburban and northern rural areas, including within her NJ-11 congressional district.

The wider-than-normal field proved beneficial for her, with Baraka and Fulop, the more progressive candidates, splitting the furthest left vote evenly enough that DDHQ was able to call the races only 10 minutes after polls closed.

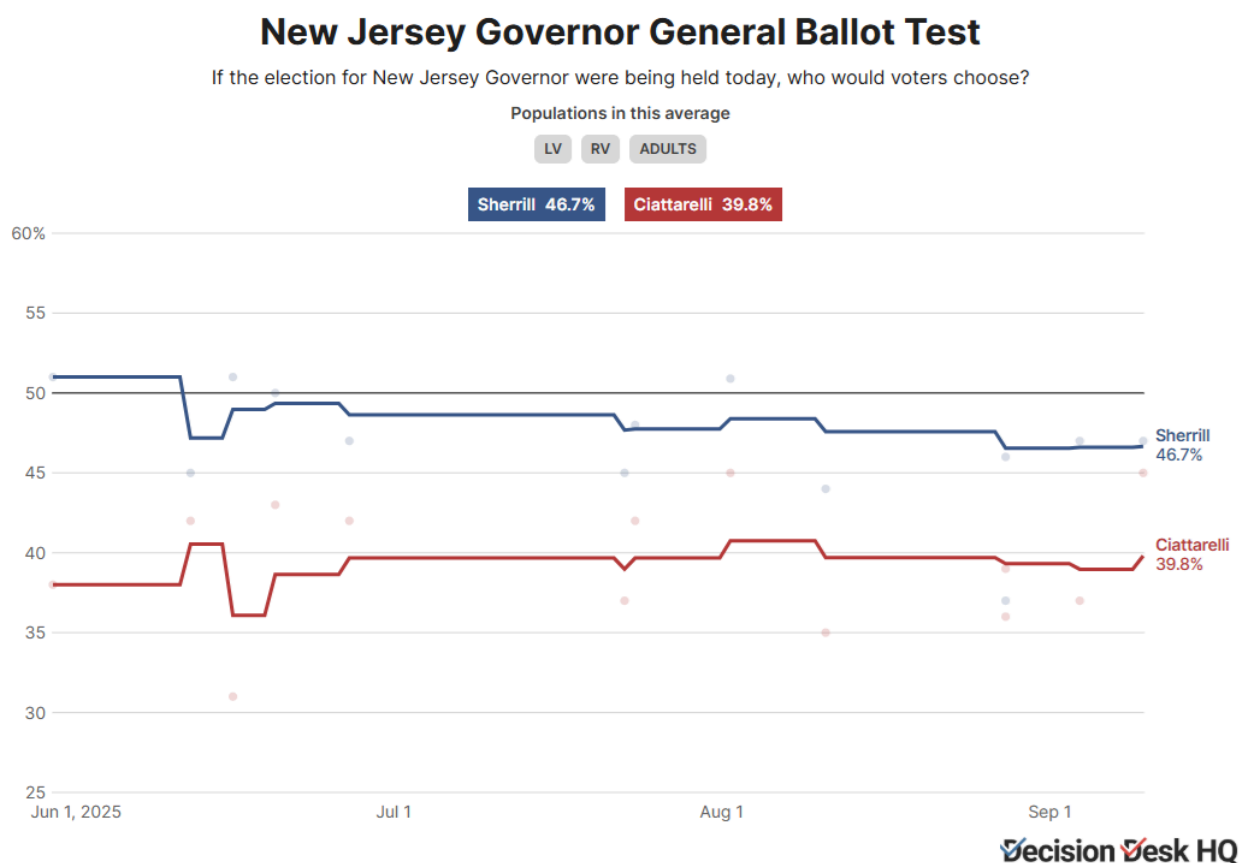
2025 Republican Primary Recap



It was getting late, with the Republican side already underway, and 3-time gubernatorial candidate Jack Ciattarelli was always a significant favorite. On May 12th, 2025, Donald Trump officially put the primary to bed with an [official endorsement of Ciattarelli](#).

Ciattarelli dominated election night, winning all 21 New Jersey counties. This marked his second consecutive uncompetitive gubernatorial primary win and the second straight time Ciattarelli won all 21 counties.

Current DDHQ Polling



While the DDHQ polling average has tightened, Mikie Sherrill still enjoys a relatively robust 6.9% edge. Even with a relatively light set of big-level elections in November, New Jersey polling remains sparse, and the brand-name polling the state generally provides is subpar.

Can Sherrill Break the Trend?

Over the last 55 years, no party in New Jersey has controlled the governor's mansion longer than two consecutive terms. Starting with Republican William T. Cahill's win in 1970, voters have consistently said, "time to try something else." This is somewhat unusual when considering the last Republican to win a statewide election at the Federal level (President or Senate) was [George H.W. Bush in 1988](#).

The difference between November's election and those from the past is that this time, Democrats are reasonably favored to continue their control. Both fundamentals and polling suggest Sherrill is the next governor of the Garden State, but warning signs exist.

Part of the reason Kamala Harris only won the state by six points in 2024 is a changing trend in turnout. High minority urban municipalities are not growing at the same rate as their more rural/suburban counterparts, and Republican candidates are benefiting from a share of the vote.

Turnout Shifts Toward Republicans in New Jersey

The chart shows how much of a municipality makes up the total vote in an election year. Democratic won areas are on the decline while Republican won areas are on the rise.

Municipality	County	2024	2021	2020	2017	2016
Jersey City	Hudson	2.08%	1.72%	2.12%	1.89%	2.13%
Newark	Essex	1.57%	1.23%	1.74%	1.70%	2.05%
Toms River	Ocean	1.19%	1.25%	1.18%	1.18%	1.15%
Hamilton	Mercer	1.07%	1.13%	1.08%	1.20%	1.10%
Woodbridge	Middlesex	1.05%	0.92%	0.99%	0.95%	1.00%
Brick	Ocean	1.00%	1.10%	0.99%	1.02%	0.96%
Middletown	Monmouth	0.98%	1.11%	0.95%	0.97%	0.92%
Lakewood	Ocean	0.98%	0.78%	0.82%	0.54%	0.63%
Cherry Hill	Camden	0.97%	1.02%	0.97%	0.97%	0.95%
Paterson City	Passaic	0.94%	0.65%	1.05%	0.86%	1.17%

Ordered by 2024 Municipality Vote Totals

Source: New Jersey Secretary of State

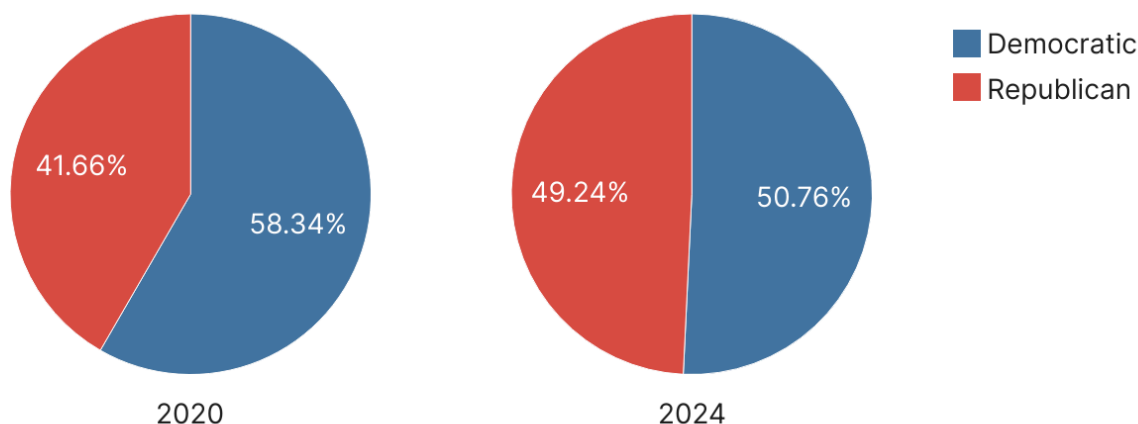
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The trend is pronounced in odd-year Governor's elections. Jersey City and Newark, where Democratic candidates enjoy 70-90% margins, are significantly less impactful without a Federal race on the ballot.

Another concerning development for Democrats is the results shift among North Jersey counties. A comparison of the 2020 and 2024 Presidential elections shows how Passaic and Bergen Counties went from a two-way vote result of D+16.7 to just D+1.5.

2020 & 2024 Presidential 2-Way Vote Share in Bergen and Passaic Counties

In North Jersey, Donald Trump lost handily to Joe Biden in 2020 but nearly won the combined counties of Bergen and Passaic in 2024.



Source: Decision Desk HQ

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Even with concerning turnout trends and a shifting electorate, Mikie Sherrill is likely to do better than Phil Murphy did in 2021 in Republican strongholds. Phil Murphy found himself in a precarious electoral position in 2021, a result of his COVID policy and general negative favorability.

Sherrill's primary strength was in Northern and Central Jersey, where she dominated her NJ-11 district. The 11.3% winning margin Ciattarelli enjoyed in Morris County in 2021 is unlikely to be matched in 2025.

If Ciattarelli is going to pull off the upset, he will have to win both Passaic and Bergen Counties, while generating '24 Trump-like vote shares in and around Hudson and Essex Counties. He's also going to have to draw a swath of

low-turnout, federal-only voters in the South and find a way to lose only a tiny portion of his white rural base.

DDHQ Rating - *Lean Mikie Sherrill* with an expected margin of victory between 5 and 9 points.

Important Election Details

- Polls close @ 8 pm ET
- Expected turnout = 2.8MM
- Early in-person voting lasts for nine days and begins on October 25th
- Approximately 90% of the total vote is expected to be counted on election night, and some counties may not have reported all the votes from election day by 6:00 a.m. ET the following morning. The remaining vote will be made up of late mail and provisional ballots, and these ballots will undoubtedly be beneficial to Mikie Sherrill.