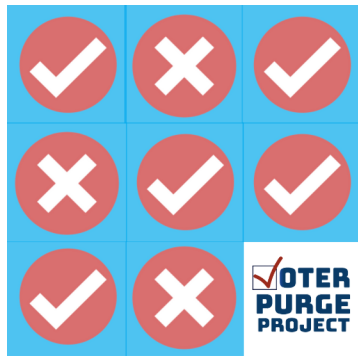


# The Voter Purge Project: A Look at Trends in Battleground States



Oct 18, 2022



# Executive Summary

In recent years the polarization of the electoral process in the United States has de-legitimized the entire system and, in some opinions, posed fundamental threats to the future of America's democracy. There are many pieces that have to come together to make an election system work and the mission of the Voter Purge Project is to ensure that the very bone and blood of the electoral system - voter lists - are accurate beyond any reasonable question by constant and repetitive testing so that all eligible voters who seek to vote, shall be able to vote.

The Voter Purge Project website ([voterpurgeproject.org](http://voterpurgeproject.org)) summarizes voter list data from twenty-nine states but this report highlights only the trends in electoral battleground states. Overall trends across battleground states show that:

- A net increase in the number of women registering to vote, outpacing men;
- More new voters and party switchers are going to the Republican Party;
- The number of unaffiliated voters is growing more than both Democrats and Republicans;
- Nearly 70,000 new registrants in 8 states appear to be incorrectly classified as "inactive" potentially moving them closer to getting removed from the rolls;
- The youngest cohort of voters declined as a share of the electorate, from 9.4% to 8.9%;
- And more.

The Voter Purge Project analyzes raw voter files from state election authorities methodically comparing them to previous lists. This detailed repetition and analysis allows VPP to be able to monitor individual state lists and, where available, compare identifiers such as sex, race, age, and political party. Some state-level trends include:

- Nevada boasts one of the highest purge rates in the nation (10.5%);
- Voters in Michigan appear to maintain relative security from unnecessary purges;
- The only majority Black county in Florida saw the state's highest rate of voter purges;
- Three of the five highest poverty counties in Arizona lost voters while three of the five lowest poverty counties gained voters;
- In Pennsylvania, the number of young voters (18-24 y.o.) declined nearly eight percent;
- And more.

The details are in the data. The Voter Purge Project was founded and operates under the premise that mistakes can be made when dealing with millions of voter records, but that these errors, whether inadvertent or deliberate, have to be ferreted out and corrected to prevent disenfranchisement. As sophisticated technology has come to dominate political life and the access and operation of the American voting system at all levels from the precinct to county or parish to the state and federal level, these systems must be consistent, transparent, and held accountable. VPP has embraced the challenge of the details as part of what is necessary to protect our democracy.

# Introduction

In recent years, everything about the election system in the United States has become contentious. The civil service functionary in a county election office is now seen by some as a world class conspirator. The electoral process has become polarized by people and parties, delegitimizing the entire system and in some opinions posing fundamental threats to the future of America's democracy.

No small part of this contested election terrain rests on the very ability of citizens to cast a ballot. In the US system states and their legislators control access to the ballot, and these legislatures and the courts have been inundated with laws and challenges around access to the ballot, security of the ballot, the counting of the ballots, and supervision of the ballots and the voter rolls.

These issues have reached the Supreme Court and in a landmark decision triggered by rules promulgated in the battleground state of Ohio, the Court has dictated the ways and means that instruct list maintenance and a voter's right to vote. Nonetheless, handling millions of records, errors are made, as they were in Ohio in 2019, forcing restatement of 40,000 incorrectly purged voters. Even worse has been alleged, most notably the challenge to the results of the Georgia governor's race, where then Secretary of State Kemp purged voters that his opponent Stacey Abrams, a member of the Georgia legislature at the time, argued tilted the election in his favor.

There are many pieces that have to come together to make an election system work and work well. There are many partisan and nonpartisan groups and parties that approach these issues from different perspectives and with different resources and biases. The Voter Purge Project (VPP) was created to monitor the critical minutia of the democratic system: the actual, pure voter list that determines when an individual citizen presents themselves to vote, that they will in fact be able to fully participate and cast their ballot. The voter lists are the very bone and blood of the electoral system. The VPP mission is to make sure by constant and repetitive testing that the lists are accurate beyond any reasonable question and all eligible voters who seek to vote, shall be able to vote.

To do this, the Voter Purge Project analyzes raw voter files from state election authorities nationwide in order to closely monitor changes over time, as well as trends in who a state is removing from its voter rolls and whether it is being done lawfully and according to federal mandates and their own procedures.

With that done, VPP identifies the location of each voter using the US Census Geocode database. This allows our team to analyze all voters by county even for states that organize voters by other regional divisions.

The VPP team then cross-references and analyzes overlaps and intersections among voter demographic data, Census data, and other information relevant to voter location, gender, age, race, etc., to examine whether there are significant patterns in either purges or new registrations.

The VPP established a three-star rating system for four elements of each state's voter files: the rate of voters purged from the rolls; the cost of obtaining voter files; the transparency of the files; and the access to information.

This report analyzes trends in registered voters for eight battleground states and rates their purges and public transparency on the VPP three-star scale. This report solely focuses on the analysis of accessible voter lists in these states, because attention, and therefore controversy, continues to be focused on contests in these critical areas even in the 2022 mid-term contests. Our website includes twenty-nine states, where the data is also accessible, and will soon include all fifty states, but in this report we zero in and highlight only the trends in the battlegrounds.

## Overall Highlights

- Women outpaced men in the net increase of registered voters from 2021 to 2022, despite more men registering in some states.
- Republicans are registering more new voters and winning more party switchers than Democrats, but the number of unaffiliated voters is growing more than registered Democrats or Republicans.
- We identified 68,829 voters who appeared to be incorrectly classified as “inactive” in 8 states, potentially moving them closer to getting removed from the rolls despite being new registrants.
- The youngest voters declined as a share of the electorate, from 9.4% to 8.9%.

## State Level Trends

### Arizona

- Over the course of one year, the number of registered Democrats declined by 2.5% and Republicans declined by 1.1%, but the number of unaffiliated voters rose by 6.4%.
- There were signs of disproportionate purging of Arizona’s voters. 3 of the 5 highest poverty counties lost voters while 3 of the 5 lowest poverty counties gained voters.

### Florida

- Republicans built on the voter registration edge they took over Democrats for the first time last year. Just 162,944 Democrats registered between 2021 and 2022, compared to 261,182 Republicans and 282,880 unaffiliated voters. This was despite Republicans getting purged at a slightly higher rate than Democrats.
- 3.7% of voters in the 10 highest poverty counties in Florida were purged, compared to just 2.6% of voters in the 10 lowest poverty counties.
- Gadsden County, where a DeSantis-appointed county commissioner resigned after a photo of him in a KKK robe surfaced, is Florida’s only majority Black county. It was one of just 6 (out of 67) counties in Florida to see a net decline in registered voters from 2021 to 2022. It has the 6th highest poverty rate of Florida’s counties, and had the state’s 4th highest overall voter purge rate (5.3%).

## Georgia

- New registrations in Georgia favor whiter, wealthier counties. 16 of the 20 counties with the highest percentage of white voters saw an increase in registered voters from 2021 to 2022 while only 2 of the 20 counties with the highest percentage of Black voters did.
- The number of registered 18-24 year olds dropped by a significant 5.5% over the course of the year. Although we didn't observe signs of disproportionate purging by race or income, Georgia has the 7th highest overall purge rate of 29 states we've examined.

## Michigan

- Voters are safer from purges in Michigan than all the states in this group except North Carolina. Purge rates of Michigan counties did not noticeably differ from one another, and unlike in other states, no county in Michigan saw a net loss in registered voters over the course of the year.

## Nevada

- There were notable increases in registered voters of nearly every category: except registered Democrats, which declined slightly. The number of unaffiliated voters went up fully 17.7% year over year (97,108), GOP voters up by 2.8% (17,222), but the number of Democrats went down by 0.3% (-1,925).

## North Carolina

- In North Carolina, the number of voters over 65 increased more than any of the battleground states we surveyed—their numbers went up 6.4%, by 143,601.
- There was a 7% jump in unaffiliated voters from 2021 to 2022 (192,849), while Republicans increased their total by 2.7% (66,836) and Democrats increased theirs by 0.8% (23,470).

## Ohio

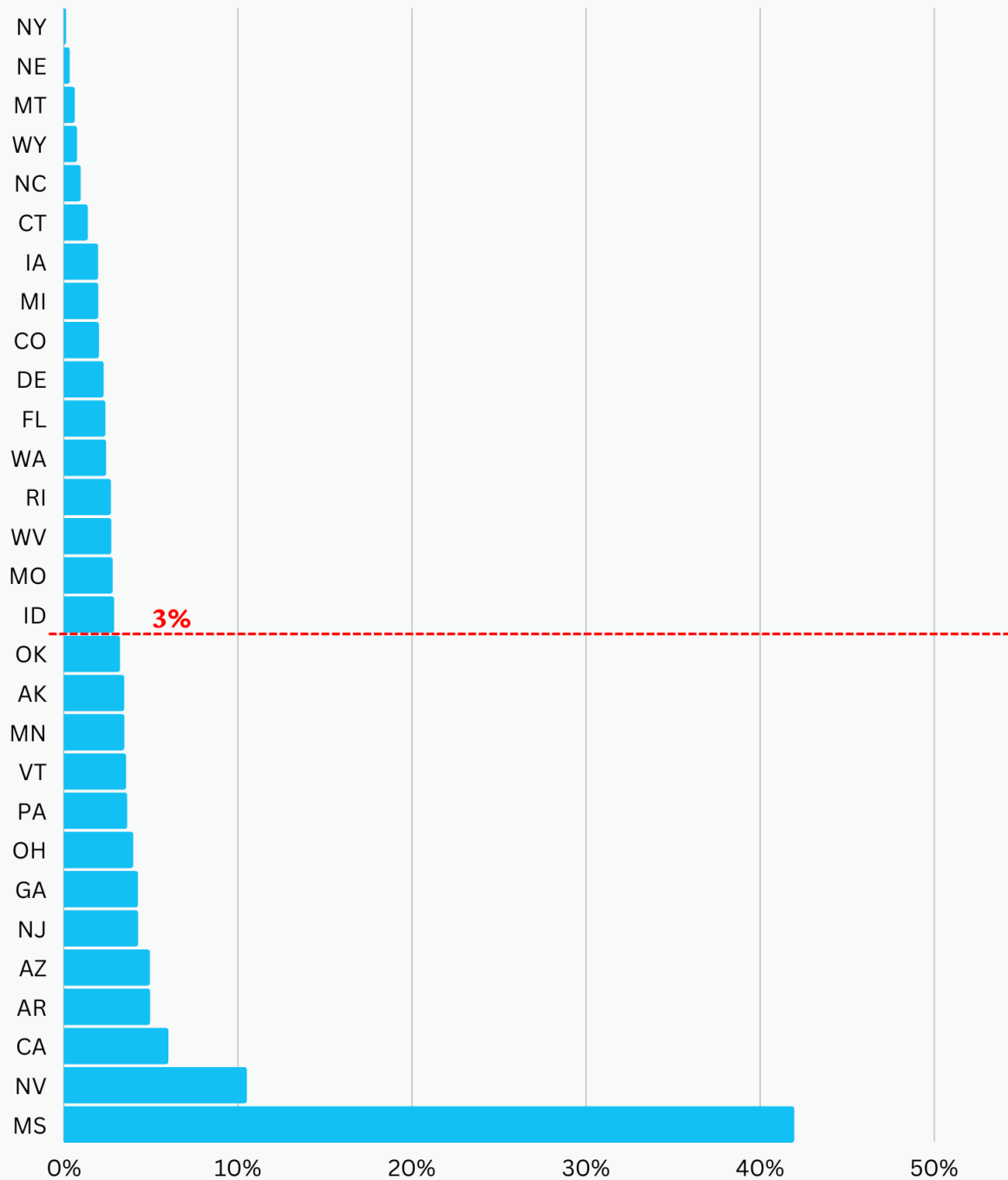
- VPP has located what appears to be a major error in voters' party designations that occurred in November 2021. 475,606 Democrats were no longer listed as Democrats (30.85%), and 486,500 Republicans (25.6%) were no longer listed as Republicans.
- The ten lowest poverty counties in Ohio saw their net total increase by 11,101, while the ten highest poverty counties saw their net total fall by 1,880.
- The number of registered 18-24 year olds declined sharply (down 7.8%).

## Pennsylvania

- Here, the number of Republicans (+1.4%) and the oldest voters (+3.6%) are rising, while Democrats (-0.7%) and the youngest voters (-7.9%) are losing ground.

The following chart shows the percent of voters purged by state for 29 states that the Voter Purge Project was able to access, clean and compare voter data.

## States By Percentage of Voters Purged, 2021-2022



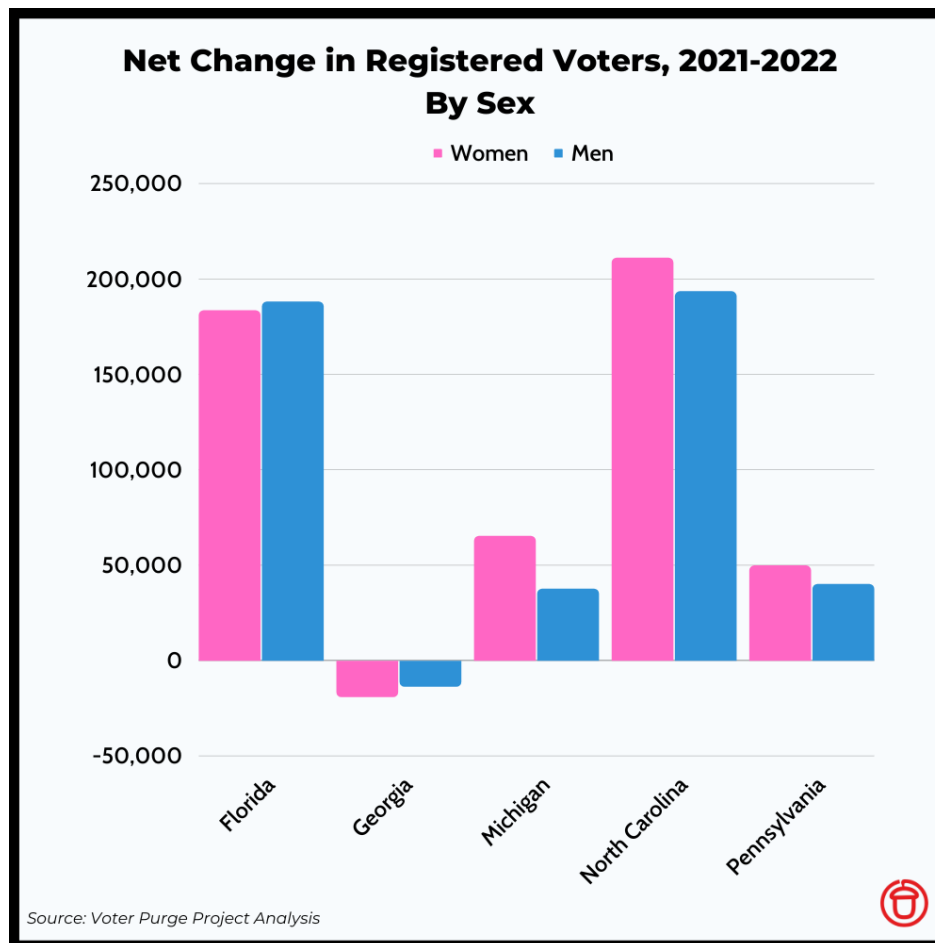
Source: Voter Purge Project Analysis



# Women Outpace Men in Net Increase, Despite More Men Registering in Some States

Within the 5 battleground states that provide data on voters' sex, women (2.4%) and men (2.7%) were purged at roughly the same rate, but women slightly outpaced men for net growth in registered voters from 2021-2022. In those 5 states, 445,644 men and 490,556 women were added to the rolls.

In Florida, more men were added than women (see chart below), and in Georgia, there was more of a decline in women than in men. In Michigan, women were ahead despite men beating women in the number of newly registered voters. More men registered to vote than women in Florida and Michigan, but in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, more women registered to vote.



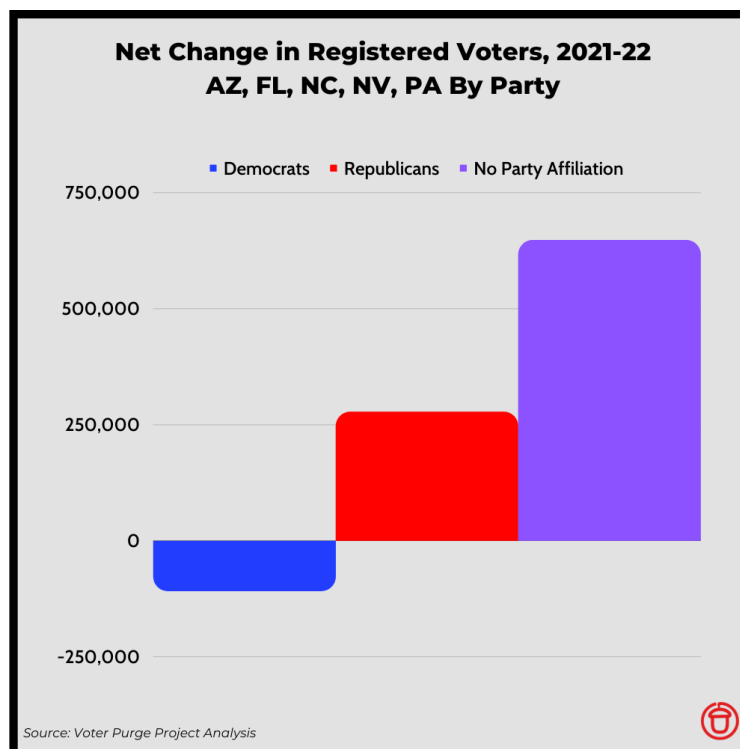
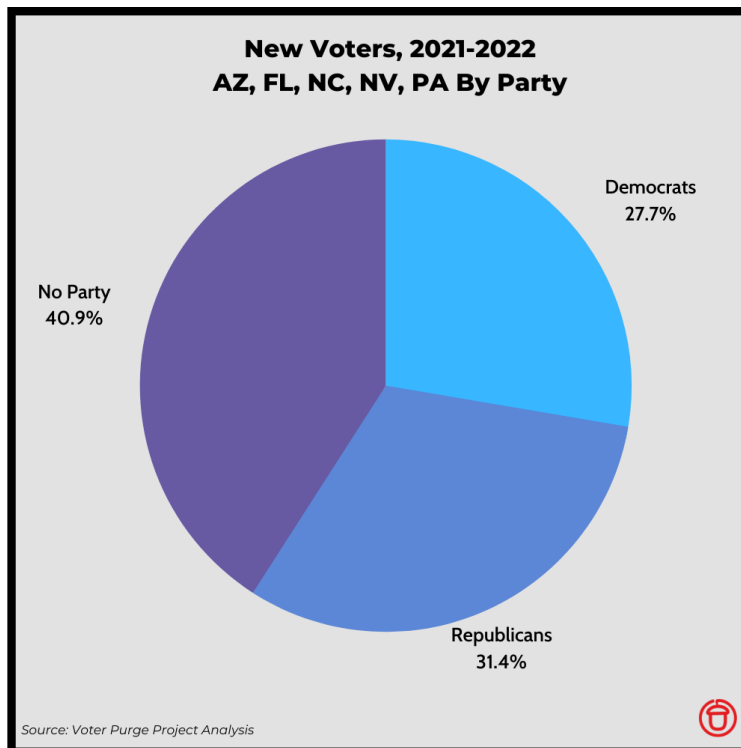
# New Republicans, Switchers, and Unaffiliated Voters

Republicans are outperforming Democrats across the board in the five battleground states that provide voters' party registration information, although finer analysis of who's switching where exactly reveals notable wrinkles (as one Nevada newspaper put it after crunching the numbers, ["More Dems going R than Rs going Dem, but many more indies switching to Dem than R"](#)).

In those five states, Republicans registered 609,011 new voters while Democrats registered 536,497. Both were significantly outpaced by the 793,017 new voters with no party affiliation. We did not include Ohio due to the major unaddressed issue with their data. (see right top)

Democrats signed up more new voters than Republicans in Nevada, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, but the Republicans' significant advantage in Florida made up the difference. Additionally, party switching meant that Republicans came out ahead in the net change year to year in all five states. (see right below)

The net change in registered voters from 2021 to 2022 reveals the Democrats' dilemma more starkly. The number of registered Democrats declined in four states (all but North Carolina, a net decline of 108,513), while the number of Republicans rose in 4 (all but Arizona, a net increase of 277,715). However, the net increase of unaffiliated voters in all 5 states was more than twice that of Republicans (an increase of 647,070).





# New Voters in Line to be Purged?

In each of the battleground states we surveyed, we came across voters who were new to the rolls in 2022 but were categorized by their states as “inactive” or its equivalent. Our concern is that this sets these 69,256 voters up to be purged from the rolls, especially in the states that aggressively carry out “use it or lose it” purges.

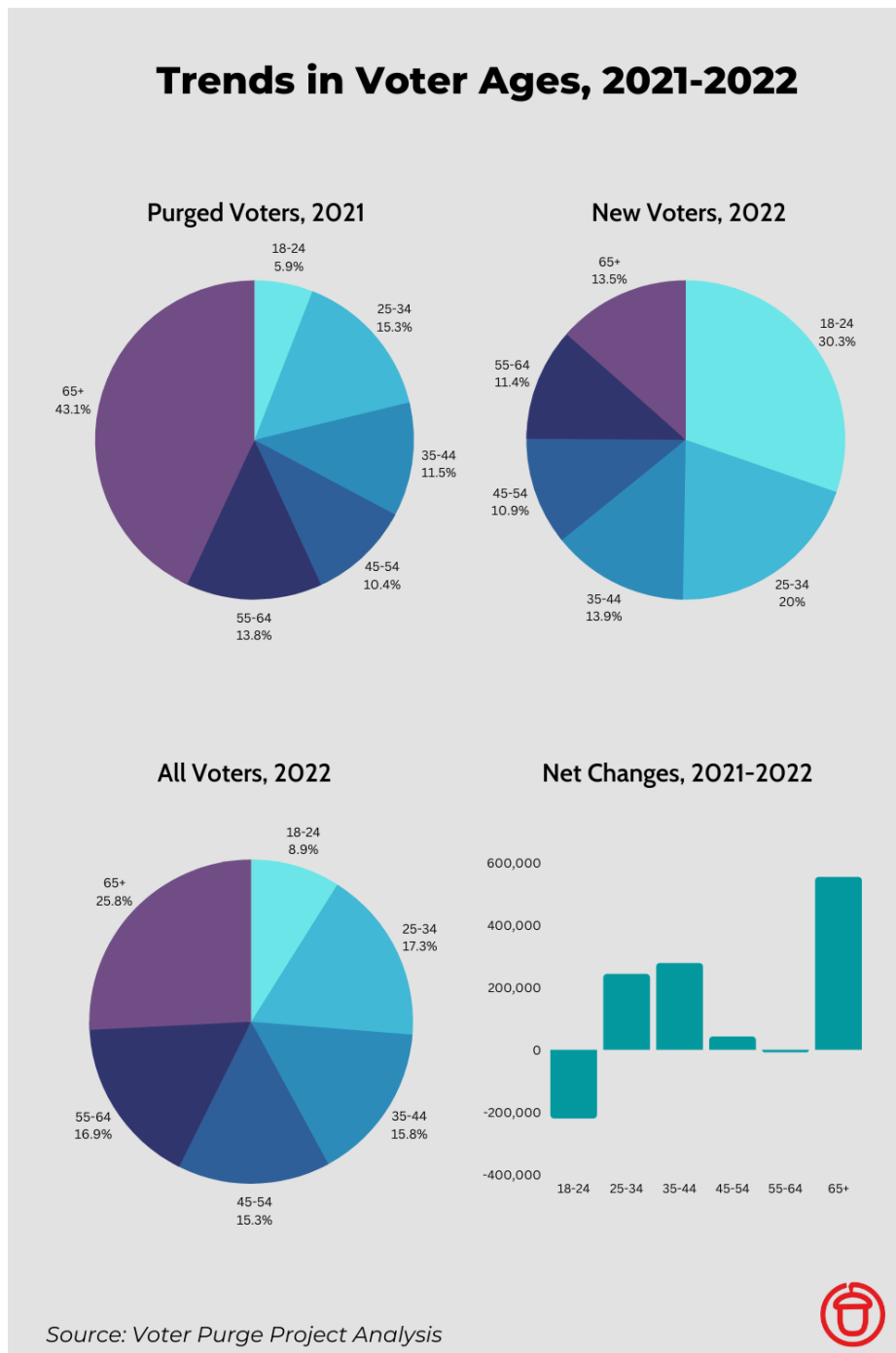
	New, “Inactive” Voters
Arizona	10,006
Florida	13,984
Georgia	5,402
Michigan	4,288
North Carolina	2,235
Nevada	12,600
Ohio	13,855
Pennsylvania	6,886
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,829</b>

Source: Voter Purge Project Analysis



# Youngest Voters Declined

In the eight battleground states we surveyed, the number of voters aged 18-24 decreased by 219,735, while the number of voters over 65 rose by 554,092. The youngest voters made up the smallest share of those purged in 2021 (6.1%) and the largest share of new voters in 2022 (20.5%). But while they made up 9.4% of the electorate in 2021, they fell to 8.9% in 2022. Voters over 65 went from 25.3% of the electorate to 25.8%. Those voters only make up 18.3% of the population of these states.



# 2022 Voter Purge Project Ratings

Although population changes mean the number differs from state to state, on average, roughly 1.5% of people in the U.S. move from one state to another in a given year, and roughly 0.8% of the population dies. We see no reason why any state should purge more than 2% of its voters over the course of a year, even if that means deceased voters or voters who move are left inactive on the rolls for several years. Given the virtual non-existence of voter fraud, the lack of uniform procedures for maintaining voter lists, and the frequency with which purge errors have been uncovered at the county and state level, we believe each voter's right to cast a ballot far outweighs any potential interest in speedily removing deceased or relocated voters' names.

Therefore, we rate states' purge rates on the following scale:

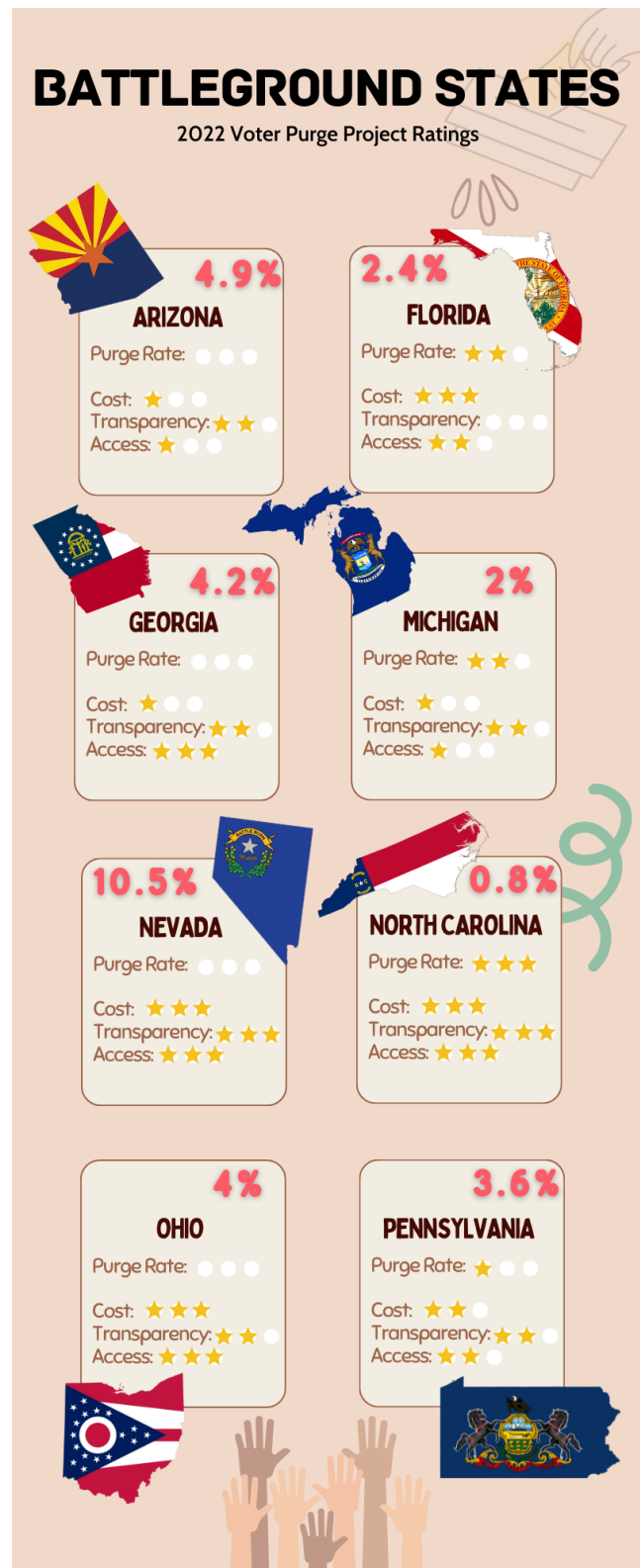
- 0-2% = 3 stars
- 2-3% = 2 stars
- 3-4% = 1 star
- 4% or more = no stars

Each state charges different amounts for access to their voter rolls. Our view is that there's no good reason for states to charge organizations to access these files—only reasons of limiting transparency. So, we award stars for cost as follows:

- Free = 3 stars
- \$1-\$500 = 2 stars
- \$500-\$5000 = 1 star
- \$5001 and up = no stars

On the transparency front, we award a star if a state responds to FOIA requests, a star if they provide voters' birthdates, and a star if they provide phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses.

For access, we provide 3 stars if a state makes voter files available on a weekly basis, 2 stars if they are made available monthly, and one star if they're only available at longer intervals. We knock a star off for access if the state does not provide the file electronically.



# Arizona

Purge Rate: 4.9%

Cost: ★ (\$2800/year)

Transparency: ★★

Access: ★

March 1, 2021-June 1, 2022

**14 of 15 counties' voters** were purged at a rate higher than 3%

Democrats: 4.5% purged

Republicans: 4.8% purged

No party affiliation: 5.4% purged

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021*

**Democrats: -37,353 (-2.5%)**

**Republicans: -17,398 (-1.1%)**

No party affiliation: 80,585 (6.4%)

**18-24: -27,082 (-6.1%)**

25-34: 15,299 (1.8%)

35-44: 8,585 (1.2%)

45-54: 201 (0.03%)

**55-64: -7,295 (-1%)**

65+: 25,638 (2.1%)

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## Background

In March 2021, the Arizona Senate hired pro-Trump companies to conduct an audit of the 2.1 million ballots cast in Maricopa County in the 2020 election. There had already been an initial count, a follow-up hand count audit, a recount of 47,000 ballots, and an audit of the election equipment. Unsurprisingly, the 2021 audit found nothing new.

In 2022, the Arizona state government passed [HB 2243, which will remove voters from the early voter list if they miss two elections](#). Roughly 75% of AZ voters are on the list, which lets them receive a main-in ballot automatically. But thanks to [a legal victory](#) voting rights advocates won, this won't be implemented until after the 2022 election.

The state also passed a law that [gives wide berth to county recorders](#) to make purges based on error-prone third-party databases like the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, which tracks individuals' immigration status. The language of the legislation allows recorders to investigate voters who they have "reason to believe" aren't citizens. It sets no specific criteria or requirements for recorders to either begin the process or to verify what they find.

The law requires comparisons of driver license data with voter rolls. The Secretary of State must send out monthly reports to county recorders that identify address changes and supposed noncitizens. A similar program [was an error-ridden disaster in Texas in 2019](#).

The Justice Department filed suit to prevent the planned 2023 implementation of Arizona's law on citizenship status checks on the grounds that the requirements that voters produce evidence of their citizenship is "onerous" and "[a textbook violation of the National Voter Registration Act](#)."

In 2022, Arizona was [ranked 26th by the Election Law Journal's "Cost of Voting" study](#), after coming in 30th in 2020.

6 of 15 counties in Arizona lost registered voters from 2021 to 2022.

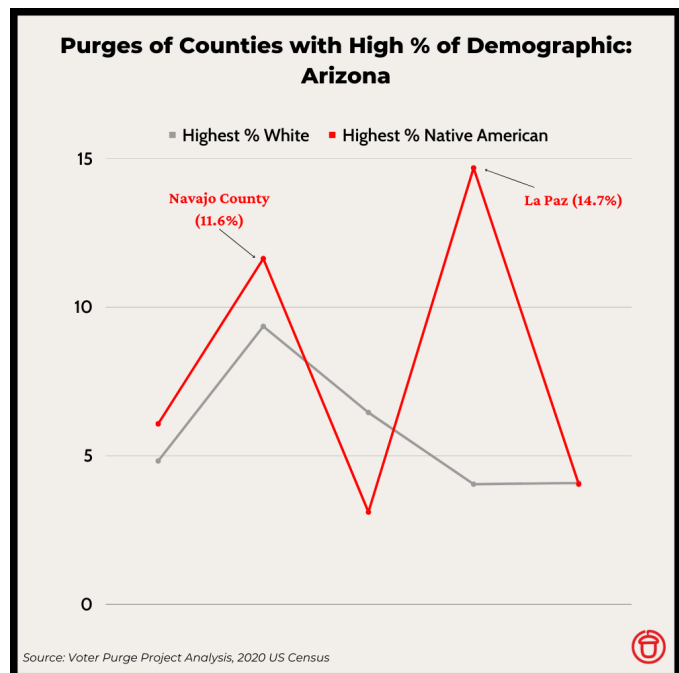
### No Party Affiliation Voters on the Rise, Young Voters Declining

In our look at trends between March 2021 and June 2022, registered Republicans were purged at a slightly higher rate (4.8%) than registered Democrats (4.5%). Nevertheless, registered Democrats declined more in raw numbers and in rate than the registered Republicans, while the number and share of unaffiliated voters rose (80,585; 6.4% increase).

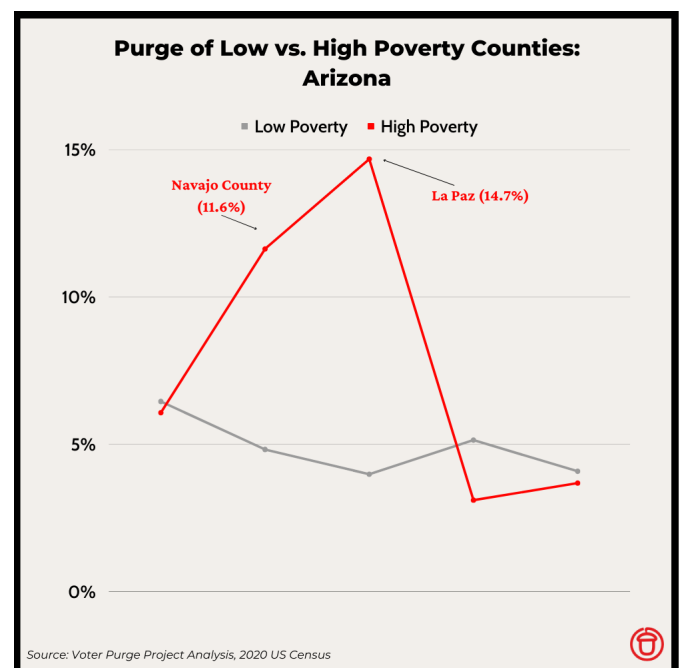
Meanwhile, the number of 18-24 year old voters declined by a significant 6.1% (down by 27,082).

### Signs of Disproportionate Purges of Poorer, More Diverse Counties

Arizona does not track voters' racial identities in its voter files. However, 2 of the 5 counties with the highest percentage of Native Americans had the highest purge rates of Arizona's 15 counties (see right). 3 of the 5 counties with the highest percentage of Native Americans have fewer registered voters in 2022 than they did in 2021 (Apache, La Paz, and Navajo). By contrast, only 2 of the 5 counties with the highest percentage of white voters had a net decline.



3 of the 5 highest poverty counties lost voters while 3 of the 5 lowest poverty counties gained voters.



# Florida

Purge Rate: 2.4%

Cost: ★★☆☆

Transparency: ★★☆☆

Access: ★★☆☆

July 9, 2021-July 1, 2022

**22 of 66 (33%) counties'** voters were purged at a rate higher than 3%. [1 unknown- Union County, 67 total in FL]

Democrats: 2.5% purged

Republicans: 2.7% purged

No party affiliation: 1.9% purged

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021*

**Democrats: -64,536 (-1.2%)**

Republicans: 163,417 (3.1%)

No party: 245,126 (6%)

**18-24: -27,753 (-2.1%)**

25-34: 74,409 (3.1%)

35-44: 94,246 (4.2%)

45-54: 36,921 (1.6%)

55-64: 37,004 (1.4%)

65+: 139,389 (3.3%)

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## Background

Since an extremely close race made him governor in 2018, Ron DeSantis has led state government efforts to make voting more difficult. While 65% voters in that same election chose to restore voting rights to convicted felons, DeSantis and the GOP-controlled legislature [effectively reversed voters' decision in 2019](#) by requiring all felons to pay unspecified fines in order to have those rights restored.

In 2021, the state government implemented [a host of new restrictions](#) on voters and organizations that help people vote. Among other things, the 2021 law forbids people from dropping off more than one additional ballot to dropboxes, requires those dropboxes be monitored by staff and limits their hours of availability, requires voters to [make new requests for mail ballots every election](#), requires voter registration organizations [to make statements to voters that effectively discourage voters from registering with them](#), and imposes severe fines on organizations who fail to comply with new restrictions. It also requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to report changes of addresses to supervisors of elections, adding another opportunity for voters to be purged from the active voter roll.

The state government took [additional steps earlier](#) this year, most notably creating an Office of Election Crimes that, as DeSantis [made sure to tell the world](#), has begun pressing charges against election criminals. The "opening salvo" in this effort was the [prosecution of 20 felons](#) who voted despite not having paid off the fines that the government imposed in 2019. The legislation also sets the stage for ID requirements for mail-in voting, makes collecting absentee

ballots—[so-called “ballot harvesting”](#)—a crime punishable by up to five years in prison, and forbids elections departments from taking donations from non-profits (“[Zuckerbucks](#)”).

This year’s legislation requires an annual voter list purge, and adds several tools for purging more voters:

“It requires elections officials to use data from other government agencies to identify ineligible voters, including potential noncitizens. The law also makes it harder for voters to reactivate their registrations — previously, voters just had to update their registrations or vote to reactivate them. Now, they also have to confirm their residential addresses to remain on the rolls.” [Democracy Docket](#)

The Cost of Voting study ranks Florida 33rd in 2022, an improvement from 40th in 2020.

### **Republicans Purged and Registered at Higher Rates than Democrats. But Unaffiliated Voters Saw the Biggest Increase.**

From July 2021 to July 2022, Republican voters were purged at slightly higher rates than Democratic voters, but Republicans increased their share of the electorate by coming out ahead in new registrations. This continues the advantage that the Republican party [took in the state last year](#) for the first time.

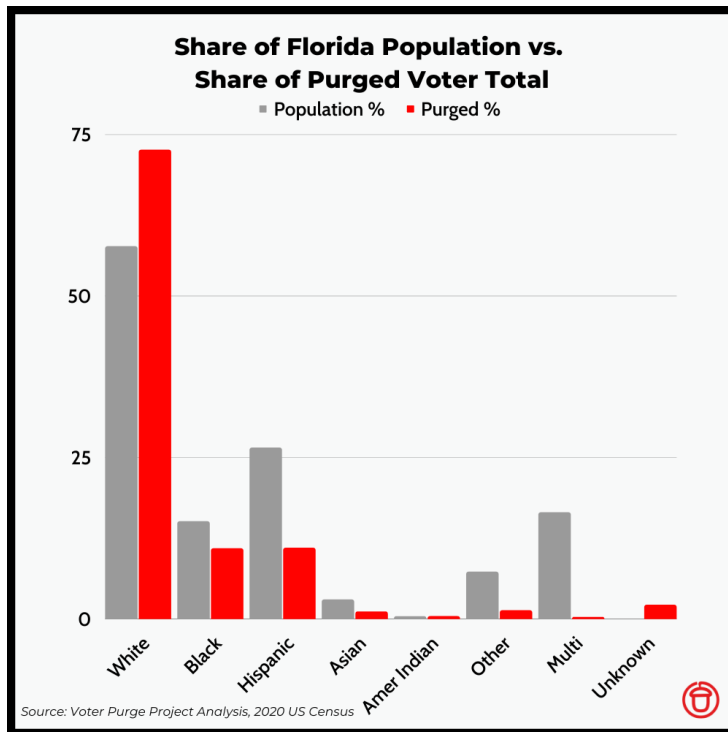
143,640 registered Republicans were dropped from the rolls (2.7% of Republicans) against 135,361 registered Democrats (2.5%).

Registered voters in counties where a majority of voters went for Trump in 2020 were purged at a rate of 2.8% (188,378 voters), while voters in counties that went for Biden were purged at a 2.0% rate (150,363). Nevertheless, from 2021 to 2022 the overall number of registered Democrats declined by 1.2% (64,536) while the number of registered Republicans increased by 3% (163,417). Unaffiliated voters were purged at a rate of just 1.9%, and there was a 6% increase in unaffiliated voters (245,126).

162,944 Democrats registered to vote over the course of the year, compared to 261,182 Republicans and 282,880 unaffiliated voters.

## Examining Purge Rates of Racial Groups

Florida is one of the few states that keeps racial identifiers of voters in its voter files, so we compared the rates of purges of each demographic group to their share of the state's population. (see below)

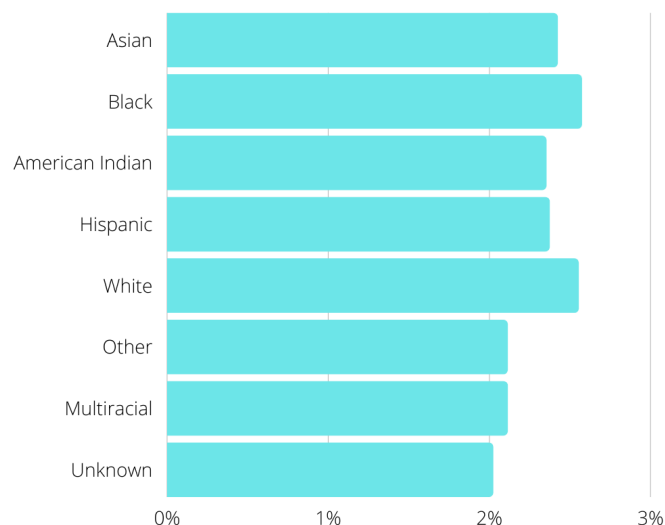


We found that white voters were the only demographic dropped from the rolls out of proportion to their share of the state's population (72.6% of those purged, 57.7% of the state's population).

However, Black voters as a group were purged overall at effectively the same rate as white voters (2.6% of the total, see right). This was the highest purge rate of all tracked racial groups.

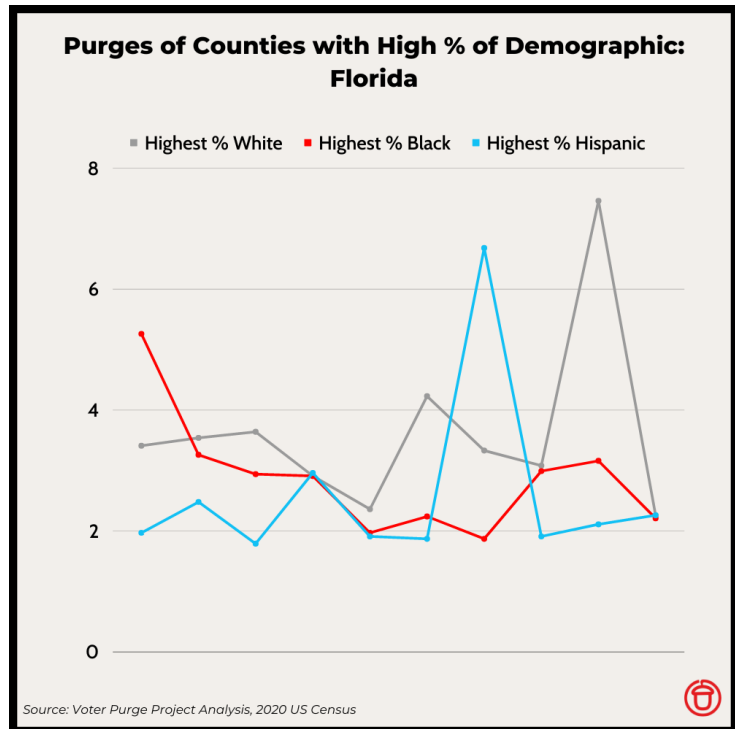
There was a net decline in the number of Native American and Multiracial registered voters. All other demographics saw an increase, with voters identified as "Other" growing at the highest rate (6.4% overall increase), followed by Asian voters (4.9% increase).

## % of Voters Purged by Race in Florida





We also compared the purge rates of three sets of counties to one another: the ten counties with the highest percentage of white voters, ten with the highest percentage of Black voters, and the ten with the highest percentage of Hispanic voters. We found no clear trend that suggests overt racial discrimination.



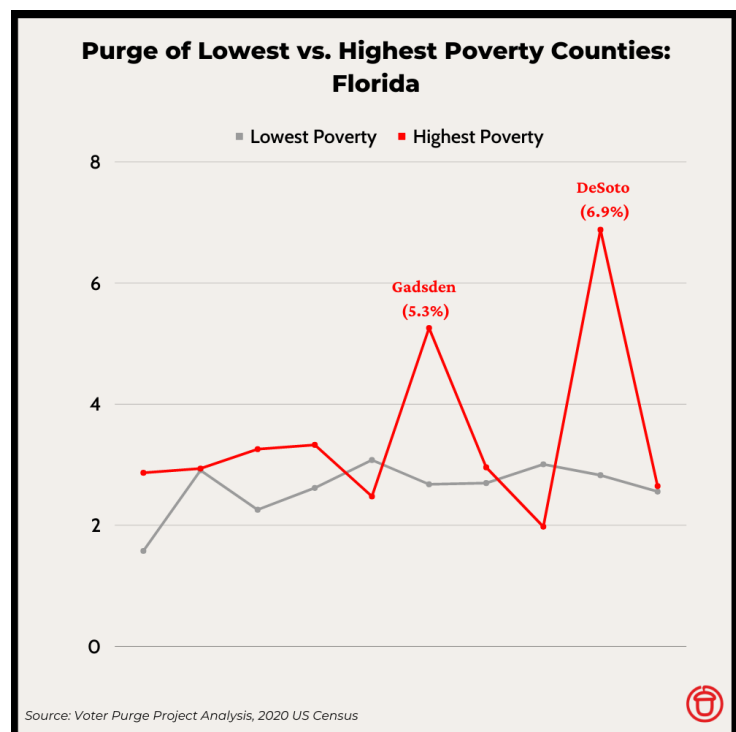
### Concerning Signs of Higher Purges of Low-Income Voters

3.7% of voters in the 10 highest poverty counties in Florida were purged, compared to 2.6% of voters in the 10 lowest poverty counties. We compared the purge rates of each of those counties against one another as well (see right).

Only 6 of Florida's 67 counties had a net reduction in registered voters from 2021 to 2022, and 4 of those are in the 10 counties with the highest poverty rates (Madison, Gadsden, Liberty, and DeSoto).

Gadsden County, where [a DeSantis appointed county commissioner resigned after a photo of him in a KKK robe surfaced](#), is Florida's only majority Black county. It has the 6th highest poverty rate of Florida's counties, and had the state's 4th highest overall purge rate (5.3%).

There are 916 less voters registered in Gadsden County this year than there were last year (from 32,007 down to 31,091).



# Georgia

Purge Rate: 4.2%

Cost: ★ (\$1500 per year)

Transparency: ★★

Access: ★★★

July 9th, 2021-July 1st, 2022

**148 of 159 (93%) of counties'** voters were purged at a rate higher than 3%.

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021*

**18-24: -45,892 (-5.5%)**

25-34: 6954 (0.46%)

35-44: 9876 (0.75%)

**45-54: -11,172 (-0.87%)**

**55-64: -16,788 (-1.33%)**

65+: 24,075 (1.54%)

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## Background

Over the last several years, Georgia's election procedures have been some of the most fiercely contested in the country. In 2017, Republican Secretary of State Brian Kemp oversaw the purge of some half a million voters from the rolls in a single day—8% of Georgia's voters—at the same time he was running for governor. Many in this massive batch of purged voters were removed for legitimate reasons—they'd either died or moved. But some 107,000, [according to an analysis by APM Reports](#), were removed solely because they hadn't voted or responded to a postcard from election officials over a period of seven years. In other words, those who'd voted in the high turnout 2008 election but hadn't done so in any subsequent election were removed.

APM Reports found that “in six of every 10 counties across Georgia, black voters were canceled at a higher rate than their white peers for inactivity.” [87,000 Georgia voters re-registered](#) after having been purged, but nearly 30,000 did so too late to be able to vote in the 2018 gubernatorial election.

In 2018, Stacy Abrams lost that election to Brian Kemp. These purges, additional purges, and other roadblocks put up in voters' paths had Democrats claiming Kemp owed his victory to voter suppression. As Abrams put it in her concession speech, “to watch an elected official who claims to represent the people in this state baldly pin his hopes for election on suppression of the people's democratic right to vote has been truly appalling.”

Over the next two years, Abrams went on to spearhead the registration of 800,000 new voters in Georgia, while Brad Raffensperger, the new Secretary of State as of 2018, continued to purge more. 300,000 were cut from the lists in 2019 despite an unsuccessful lawsuit from Abrams to prevent it, [100,000 more in 2021](#), and [tens of thousands in July of this year](#). We aim to examine that particular purge as soon as we can analyze the latest bi-monthly file from Georgia.

When Biden received more votes in the 2020 election, Trump asked Raffensperger to alter the results, or [“to find 11,780 votes”](#) for him. When Governor Kemp and Secretary of State Raffensperger refused to commit crimes and alter the outcome of the contest, Trump turned on them both and endorsed challengers to both. Neither challenger accepted the legitimacy of the

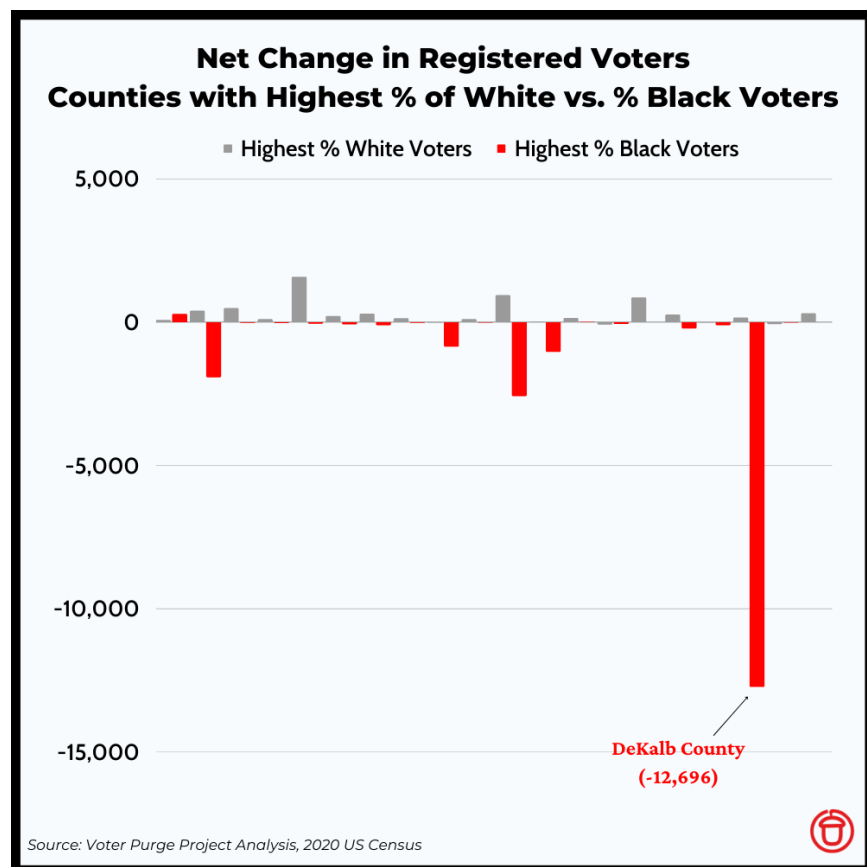
2020 results. Meanwhile, voters will again choose between Kemp and Abrams for governor this November.

Last year, [Georgia overhauled their election rules](#): they clipped their early voting period, banned the distribution of snacks and water to voters waiting in line, began requiring picture ID in order to vote by mail, shortened the window available to run runoff elections, cut holiday early voting, and severely restricted voting at dropboxes, among other measures.

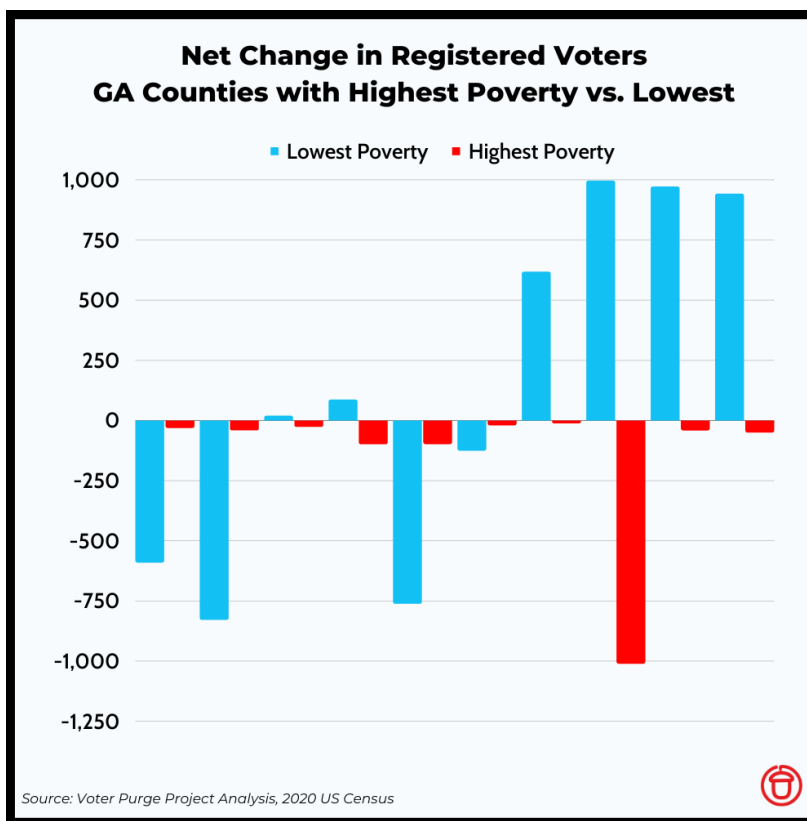
Georgia [was ranked 29th for ease of voting](#) in 2022 by the Election Law Journal, a significant improvement [from its 49th place](#) ranking in 2020. However, the Brennan Center found that “Georgia’s 2022 primary [saw the state’s biggest turnout gap](#) between white and Black voters in at least a decade.”

### New Registrations Favor Whiter, Wealthier Counties

16 of the 20 counties with the highest percentage of white voters saw an increase in registered voters from July 2021 to July 2022 (a net increase as a group) while only 2 of the 20 counties with the highest percentage of Black voters and 3 of the 10 counties with the highest percentage of Hispanic voters did (a net decline in the overall population of both sets of counties). *(see left for net changes in registered voters in the 20 counties with the highest percentage of white voters, compared with the 20 counties with the highest percentage of Black voters).*



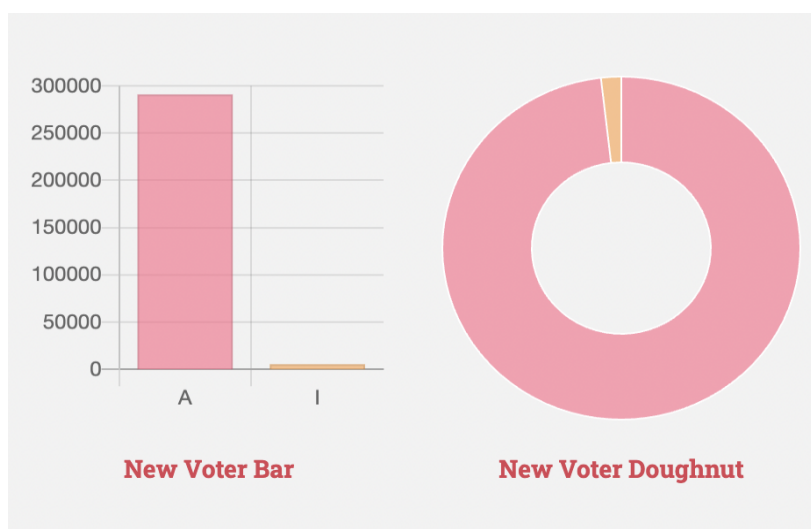
The 10 Georgia counties with the highest poverty rates saw a net decline in registered voters—each of these 10 lost voters. On the other hand, the 10 counties with the lowest poverty rate saw a net increase in registered voters—6 of the 10 counties saw an increase.



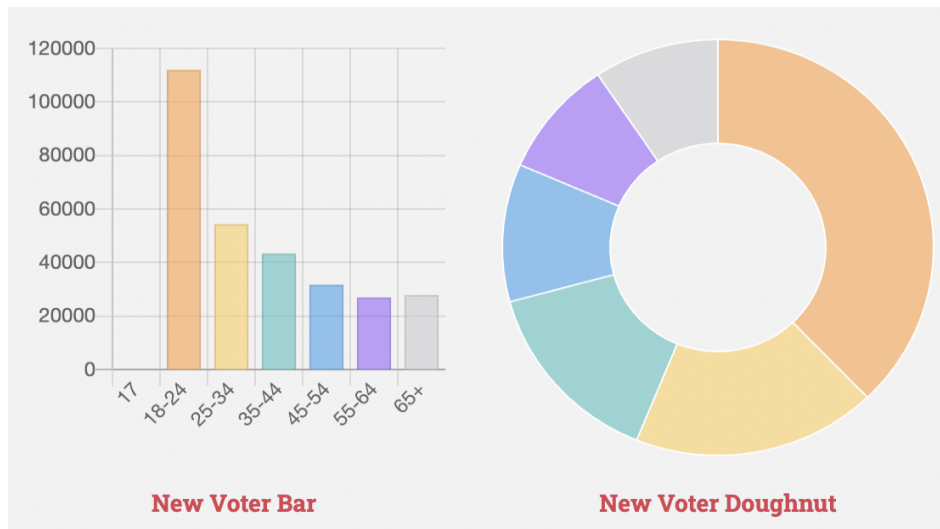
## A High Purge Rate and “Inactive” New Voters, Young Voters Declining

Georgia had the 7th highest overall purge rate of the 29 states we analyzed—4.2% of all voters. Concerningly, we identified 5,402 new voters who have already been deemed “inactive,” and thus are closer to being purged under Georgia’s use-it-or-lose-it system if they do not vote in the 2022 elections. (see right)

Unsurprisingly, the age group purged at the highest rate were voters over 65—7.3% of all Georgia voters in that age group were purged over the course of the year. Meanwhile, while young voters were the largest



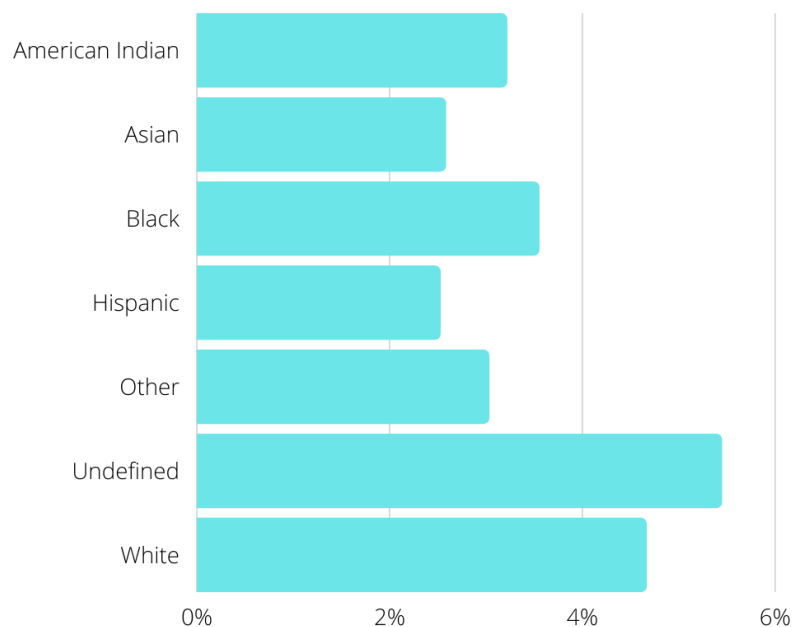
share of the newly registered (*see below*), it was not enough to keep the group from losing voters overall over the course of the year. The number of registered 18-24 year olds dropped by a significant 5.5%.



## Examining Purges by Race and By Income

We compared the purge rate of each racial group designated in Georgia's voter file (*see left*). Voters categorized as "undefined" were purged at the highest rate of any category (5.4%), which makes it difficult to ascertain who was actually being purged the most from this metric alone. "Undefined" voters made up a significant 11.7% of all purged voters.

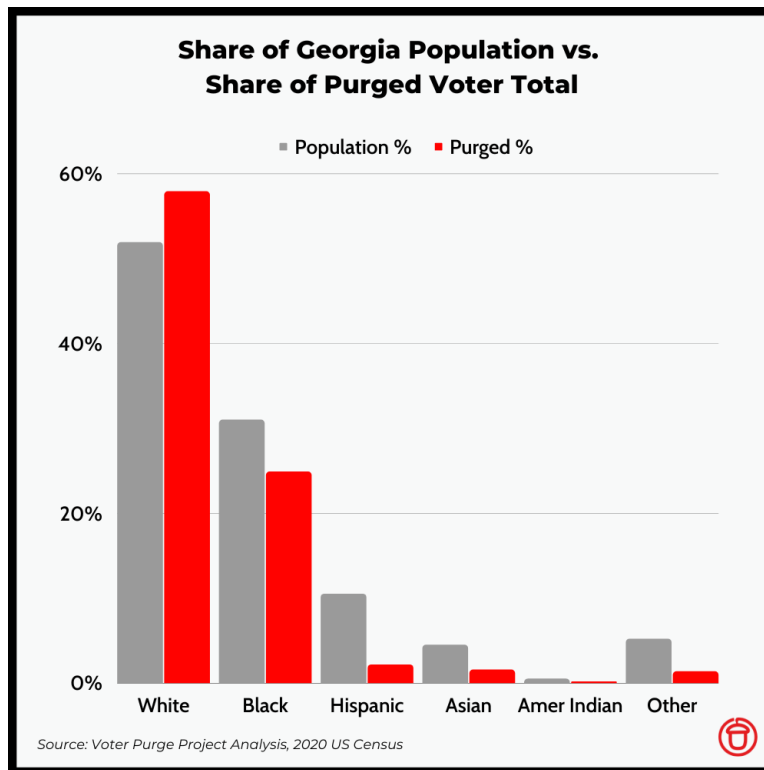
### % of Voters Purged by Race in Georgia



Source: Voter Purge Project Analysis

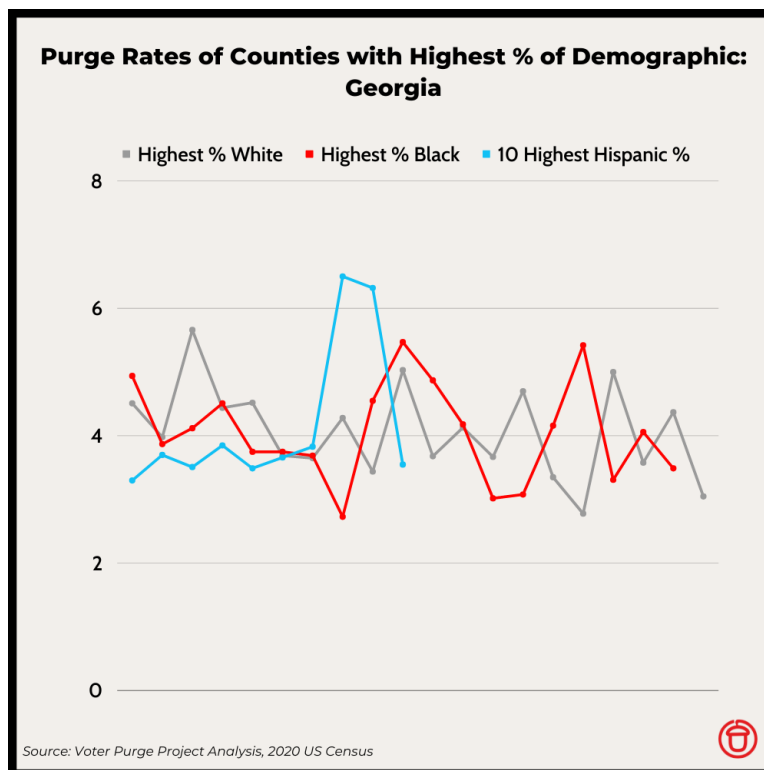


We also compared two percentages in order to look for disparate treatment: the percentage of the total population constituted by a given demographic versus the percentage of the total purged voter pool made up by that demographic. As in Florida, white voters were the only demographic purged at a rate higher than their share of the state's population.

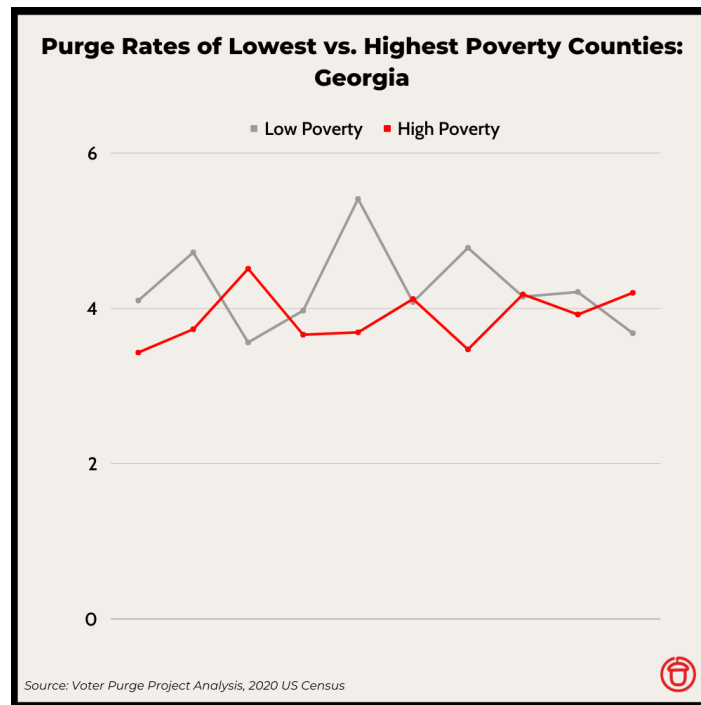


Finally, we compared the purge rates of counties with the highest percentages of Black voters, white voters, and Hispanic voters. (see right)

We found that voters in the 20 counties with the highest percentage of African-American voters were purged at a rate of 4.18% while 4.15% of voters in the 20 counties with the highest percentage of white voters were purged. 3.5% of voters in the 10 counties with the highest percentage of Hispanic voters were purged.

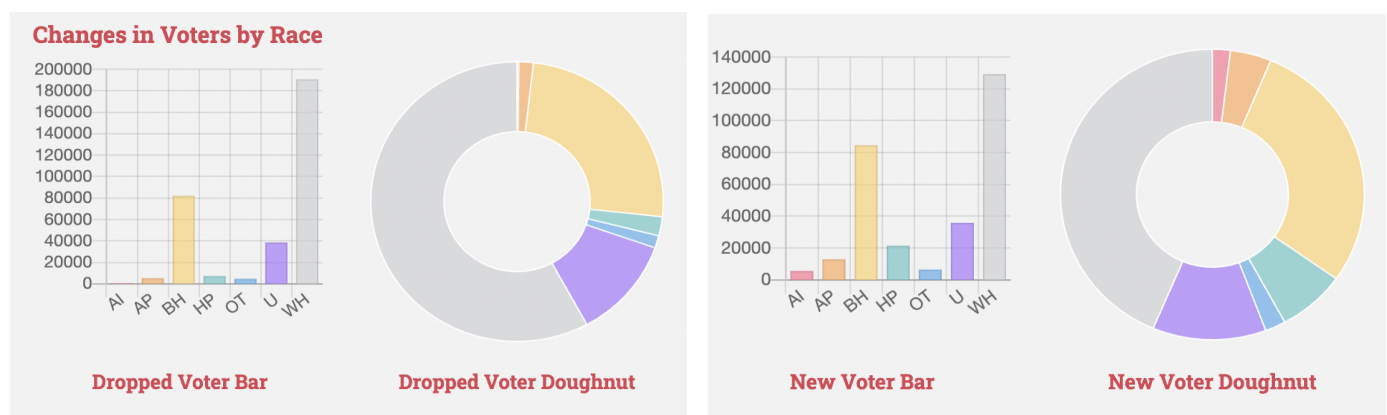


We also compared purge rates for the highest and lowest poverty counties in Georgia. Those voters in the highest poverty county populations had a purge rate of 4%, while lowest poverty counties were purged at a slightly higher 4.3%.



### Black Voters Make Up a Greater Share of Newly Registered Voters than Purged Voters, but the Overall Total of Both Black and White Voters Declined

According to our findings, Black voters make up a larger share of newly registered voters in Georgia than they do of purged voters. (see below)



However, this was not enough to stop an overall decline in the number of registered Black voters in Georgia. Meanwhile, the number of white voters also declined, while the number of Asian, Hispanic, and Native American voters all increased.

Race	Change 2021-2022	Percent Change
American Indian	12,217	59.18%
Asian, Pacific Islander	5,567	2.73%
Black	-29,608	-1.28%
Hispanic	10,175	3.55%
Other	-4,390	-2.84%
Unknown	40,551	5.72%
White	-67,457	-1.65%



# Michigan

Purge Rate: 2%

Cost: ★

Transparency: ★★

Access: ★

August 1, 2021-July 1st, 2022

**2 of 83 Counties** (2.4%) were purged at a rate higher than 3%

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021*

**18-24: -18,113 (-2.5%)**

25-34: 30,209 (2.2%)

35-44: 33,437 (2.6%)

**45-54: -3,841 (-0.2%)**

**55-64: -9,159 (-0.6%)**

65+: 30,547 (3.6%)

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## Background

Michigan's Republican state legislature and Democratic governor are locked in a stalemate around the state's election procedures.

In 2021, the state's Republicans [introduced a suite of 39 bills targeting Michigan's elections](#). Their most controversial elements would add restrictions to ballot drop boxes and make it more difficult to vote by mail, despite Michigan voters' decision in 2018 to allow absentee voting for any reason. Republicans would like to require voters to have to include a paper copy of their ID with their absentee ballots and add ID requirements to in-person voting.

Republicans' legislation also aims to purge additional voters. It would require county election clerks to take new steps. One, they would need to put voters with no listed birthdate and voters who have not voted for years in line to be purged. Two, they would need to flag voters who have died. Three, the secretary of state would use additional databases to check on voters' addresses and pressure clerks to bring their lists in line.

The right-wing Michigan Freedom Fund and the Honest Elections Project [dropped its legal effort](#) to make Michigan purge its rolls more aggressively in February 2021, but the Public Interest Legal Foundation took up the same cause later in the year. Their suit is still [working its way through the courts](#).

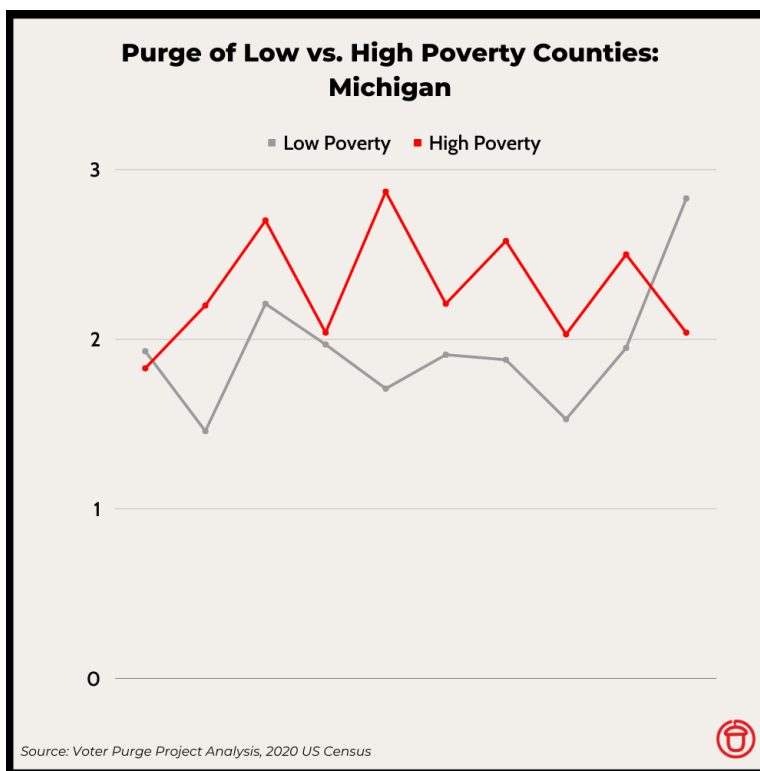
Michigan was ranked 27th in the Cost of Voting study in 2022 after placing 13th in 2020.

## Low Purge Rates Across the Board

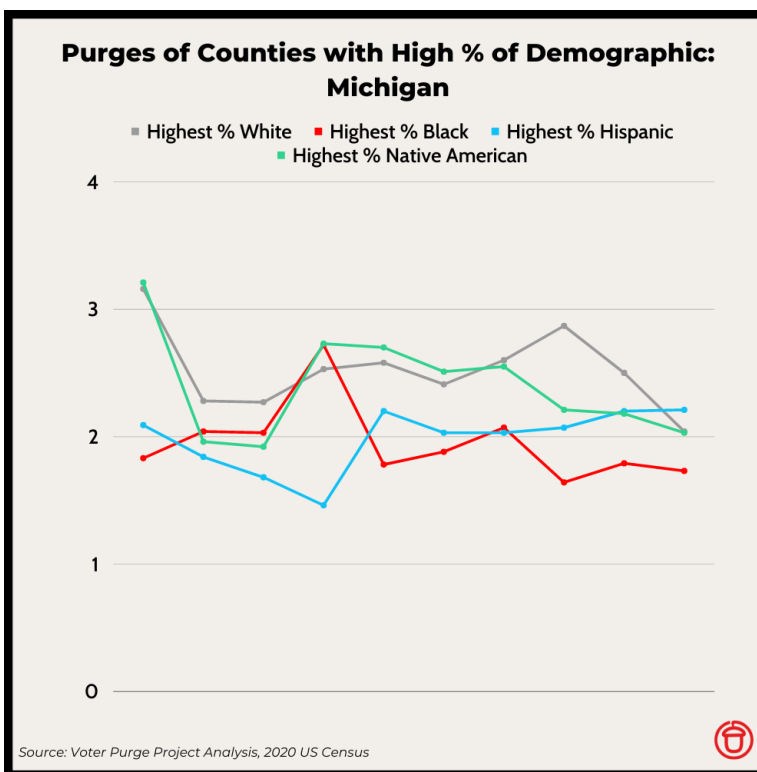
Although Michigan does not provide data on party registration or racial identity in its voter files, voters in the state appear to be safer from purges than other battleground states. Purge rates of counties did not noticeably differ from one another, and unlike in other states, no county in Michigan saw a net loss in registered voters over the course of the year.

There are issues in the voter file that could no doubt be exploited if a more aggressive approach to purging is taken up in the future. For instance, among voters who were new in 2022, 713 were classified as “challenged” and 3575 listed as “verify.”

We compared the purge rates of the highest poverty counties in Michigan to the purge rates of the lowest poverty counties. 6 of the 10 highest poverty counties were purged at slightly higher rates than the lowest poverty rates, but those rates did not differ significantly—all were under 3%. (see left)



We also compared purge rates of the ten counties with the highest white, Black, Native American, and Hispanic percentages in their populations. We did not observe noticeable trends of discrimination here. The 2 counties in Michigan purged at a rate of over 3% were the county with the highest percentage of Native Americans (Mackinac County- 15.7% Native American, 3.2% voters purged) and the county with the highest percentage of white people (Keweenaw County- 95.5% white, 3.2% voters purged). (see right)



# Nevada

Purge Rate: 10.5%

Cost: ★★★★★

Transparency: ★★★★★

Access: ★★★★★

August 22, 2021-August 20, 2022

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021*

**Democrats: -1,925 (-0.3%)**

Republicans: 17,222 (2.8%)

No party affiliation: 97,108 (17.7%)

**17 of 17 counties' voters** were purged at a rate of higher than 3%.

Democrats: 11.1%

Republicans 11.4%

No party affiliation: 8.8%

18-24 12,004 (5.60%)

25-34 30,714 (7.98%)

35-44 26,272 (7.73%)

45-54 13,495 (4.31%)

55-64 10,150 (3.07%)

65+ 20,672 (4.37%)

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## Background

Democrat-controlled Nevada has been moving in the direction of expanding, not limiting, voting rights. 2022 saw [several new election procedures](#) get implemented. Disabled voters will be able to use the same electronic system that voters living overseas use. Every registered voter will now be sent a mail ballot before the election. However, beginning this year, the secretary of state is required to actively purge deceased voters.

Nevada was one of the [seven states that together created ERIC](#): the Electronic Registration Information Center, which now includes 33 states and D.C. ERIC pulls from multiple databases in its member states to monitor for cross-state moves, deaths, etc., and [also helps register](#) eligible unregistered voters. While it's considered the most accurate of such databases, mistakes remain an issue.

Republicans tried to get a voter ID requirement on the ballot for 2022, as well as a repeal of the statewide mail balloting policy, but [failed to get enough signatures to make either happen](#).

Nevada went from ranking 28th in cost of voting in 2020 to 7th in 2022.

## Concerning Signs for Democrats

There were notable increases in registered voters of nearly every category except registered Democrats, which declined slightly. The number of unaffiliated voters went up fully 17.7% year over year (97,108), GOP voters up by 2.8% (17,222), but the number of Democrats went down by 0.3% (-1,925).

Meanwhile, the county that went for Biden by the highest percentage—Clark County, Nevada's largest—53%, also had the lowest voter purge rate of all Nevada's counties (9.6%). 10% of the

1,792,555 voters in the two counties that went for Biden were purged, but fully 14.6% of the 247,377 voters in the fifteen counties that went for Trump were purged.

By any metric we have available, the purges of voters in Nevada favored Democrats, but it's Democrats alone who have declined as a bloc.

### Examining Other Factors

Of Nevada's 16 counties and 1 independent city, we compared the 5 lowest poverty to each other and 5 highest poverty to each other and found no apparent sign of disparate treatment. Mineral County has the second highest poverty rate in Nevada (15.4%), the highest percentage of Native Americans (17.2%), and Nevada's highest purge rate (19.5%), but it is also a very low population county. There were just 3,389 registered voters there in 2021. (see right)

We compared counties with the highest percentage of white, Hispanic, and what the Census terms "other race" voters, respectively, and found no patterns of disparate treatment there either. (see right)

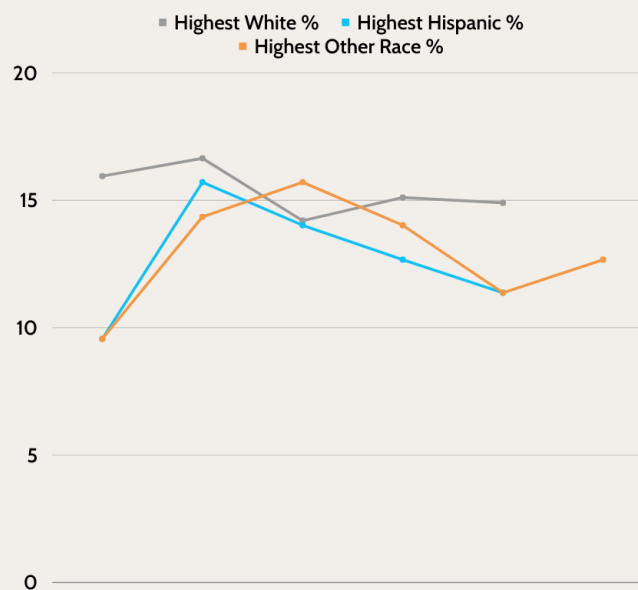
#### Purge of Lowest vs. Highest Poverty Counties: Nevada



Source: Voter Purge Project Analysis, 2020 US Census



#### Purge Rates of Counties with Highest % of Demographic: Nevada



Source: Voter Purge Project Analysis, 2020 US Census



# North Carolina

Purge Rate: 0.8%

Cost: ★★★★★

Transparency: ★★★★★

Access: ★★★★★

August 14, 2021-August 13, 2022

**0 of North Carolina's 100 counties** were purged at a rate higher than 3%.

Democrats purged: 0.9%

Republicans purged: 0.7%

Unaffiliated voters purged: 0.8%

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021:*

Democrats 23,470 (0.8%)

Republicans 66,836 (2.7%)

Unaffiliated 192,849 (7%)

18-24 5,352 (0.7%)

25-34 50,704 (3.6%)

35-44 46,054 (3.7%)

45-54 20,398 (1.6%)

55-64 20,017 (1.5%)

65+ 143,601 (6.4%)

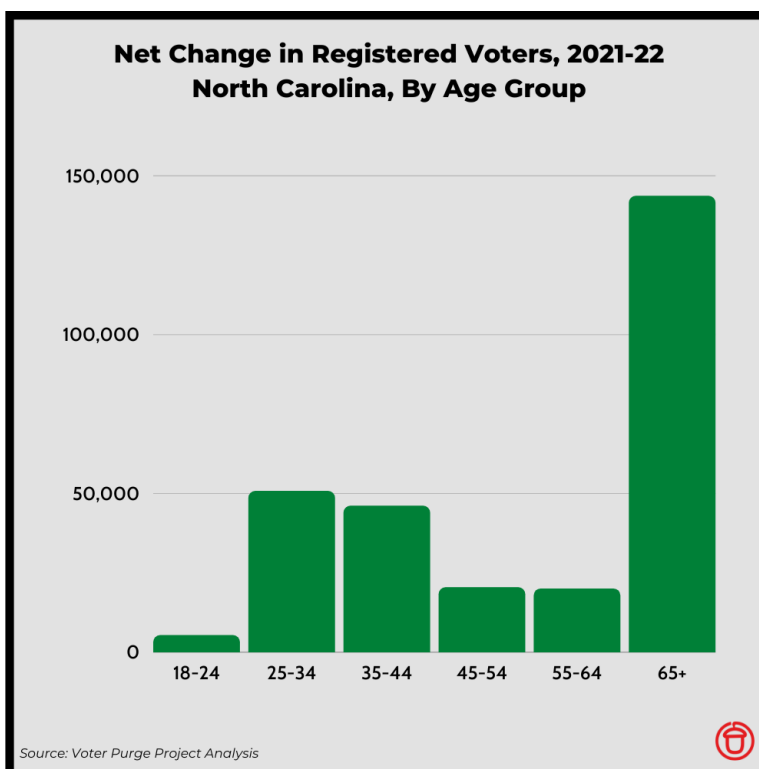
## Background

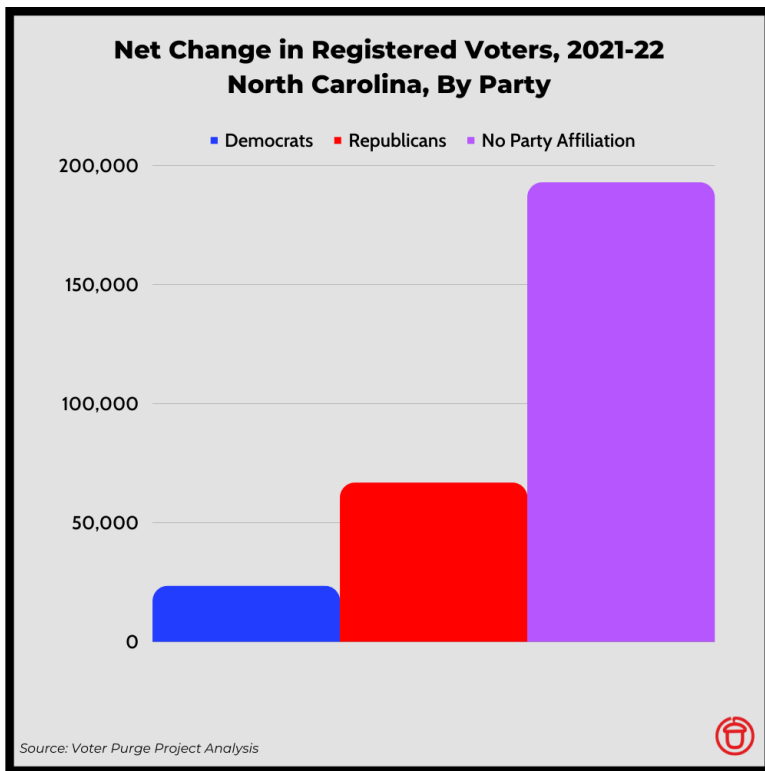
In 2018, a federal judge intervened to permanently end North Carolina's practice of allowing individuals to challenge voters' eligibility en masse, which they were sometimes doing with as little justification ["as a piece of returned mail."](#)

In 2021, North Carolina removed [nearly 400,000 voters from the rolls](#) in its biennial review prior to our period of observation. In September 2021, anti-voting rights activists [filed suit demanding purges of voter rolls in 40 North Carolina counties](#), which the League of Women Voters called ["outrageous."](#)

## An Aging Electorate

In North Carolina, the number of voters over 65 increased more than any of the battleground states we surveyed—their numbers went up 6.4%, by 143,601. This may be attributable to North Carolina's low purge rate—voters left on the list after they die and age up into the 65+ bracket.





### Unaffiliated Voters Trouncing Republicans and Democrats

In keeping with the overall trend within all 8 battleground states, there were significantly more new unaffiliated voters in North Carolina than there were either Republicans or Democrats. There was a 7% jump in unaffiliated voters from 2021 to 2022 (192,849), while Republicans increased their total by 2.7% (66,836) and Democrats increased theirs by 0.8% (23,470).

# Ohio

Purge Rate: 4%

Cost: ★★★★★

Transparency: ★★

Access: ★★★★★

September 4, 2021-September 2, 2022

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021:*

Democrats -475,606 (-30.85%)

Republicans -486,500 (-25.63%)

**88 of 89 counties' voters** were purged at a rate higher than 3%.

Democrats purged: 3.7%

Republicans purged: 3.8%

**18-24 -57,709 (-7.79%)**

25-34 20,809 (1.49%)

35-44 22,279 (1.74%)

**45-54 -3,966 (-0.32%)**

**55-64 -23,541 (-1.69%)**

65+ 51,174 (2.66%)

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## Background

Ohio paved the way for more aggressive purges of voter rolls nationwide. Their “use it or lose it” system went to the Supreme Court in 2018, and when the court deemed it constitutional, other states followed suit. The Court ruled that because not voting in several elections [is not the only factor Ohio uses to purge its rolls](#), the practice is compliant with the NVRA and constitutional precedent. Despite this, [an APM analysis found that](#) 50,610 voters were likely removed just for not voting.

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals made sure that voters removed from between 2011 and 2015 for not voting [had their 2018 ballots counted](#) if they cast provisional ballots, but the policy was set.

In 2019, USA Today [uncovered at least 1,600 voters who had been incorrectly swept up](#) in Ohio counties’—each of the 88 have their own list maintenance method and software vendors—purge of over 460,000. They found that “nearly 1 out of 3 purged voters was age 25 to 34,” and “where a party preference could be determined based on the last partisan primary in which the voter cast a ballot, Democrats outnumbered Republicans almost 2 to 1.”

In 2020, the Voter Purge Project identified some 40,000 voters [who were incorrectly set to be purged in the state](#). More than 10,000 voters who had been flagged for removal from the rolls [voted in the general election](#). This saved them from being purged but only added to the concerns around Ohio’s purge process. Ohio cut another 97,795 voters [from the rolls in January 2021](#).

Even if every voter could be guaranteed their right to vote in Ohio, questions would remain about whether those votes would count. Ohio’s state legislature has broken new ground in its refusal [to abide by court orders around voter-approved reforms to its redistricting process](#).

In 2020, Ohio ranked 35th in cost of voting 2020 but fell to 41st in 2022.

## Major Error in Voters' Party Designations?

VPP has located what appears to be a major error in voters' party designations that occurred in November 2021. Between September 2021 and September 2022, 475,606 voters who had been registered as Democrats no longer were (30.9% of all Democrats in 2021), and 486,500 Republicans (25.6%) were no longer listed as Republicans. Since there was no kind of massive drop-off in registered voters, and no election that would have prompted Ohio's counties to change their voters' status, something has gone seriously wrong here. We have made several inquiries to the Secretary of State's office to get to the bottom of it.

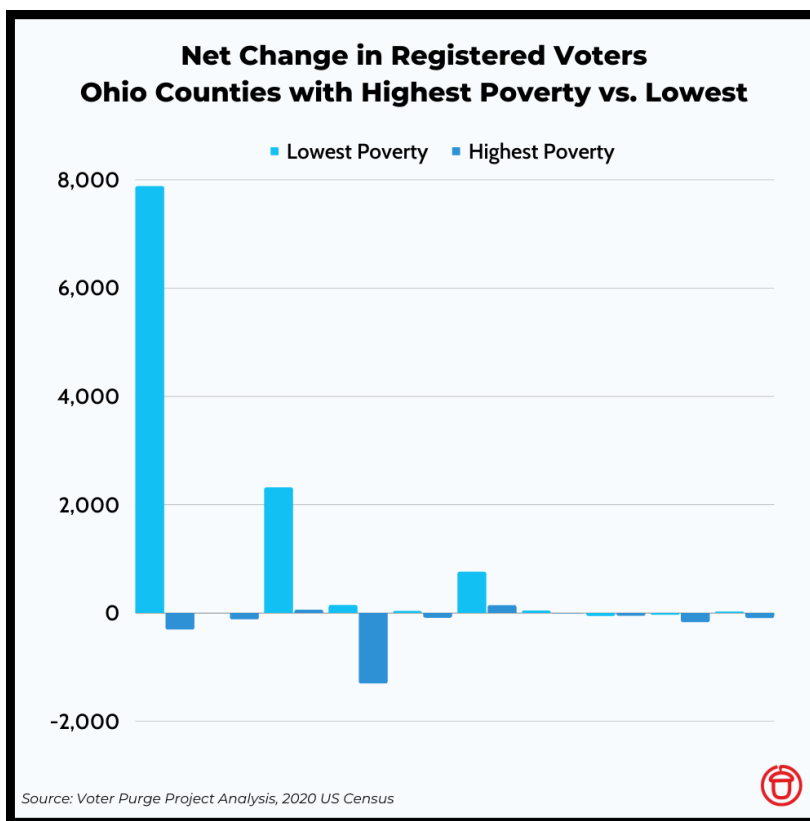
Because Ohio assigns voters their party based on which party's ballot they request on primary day, no one will be denied the right to participate in the primary of their choosing due to this change. But it is possible this change was related to influencing the state's fraught state legislative redistricting. Ohio's seven member redistricting commission approved new districts in March 2022 along party lines. The commission is required to make the "partisan lean" of the districts they create be proportional to statewide partisan preferences. However, how exactly those "statewide partisan preferences" are to be determined is contested. Indeed, the Ohio Senate's President [suggested it would be theoretically acceptable to award 81% of state legislative seats to Republicans](#), given that Republicans have won 13 of the 16 most recent statewide elections and 13 is 81% of 16.

## Registered Voters Down in Poorer Counties, Up in Low Poverty Counties

Suburban Columbus' Delaware County, one of the highest income counties in the country, has the lowest poverty rate *and* the largest net increase in voters of any county in Ohio (7,873 more voters, an increase of 6.1%). It was second only to Warren County in its percent increase. Warren is the third lowest poverty county in Ohio and the number of registered voters there increased by 6.4% (2,314 more voters).

The ten lowest poverty counties in Ohio saw their net total increase by 11,101, while the ten highest poverty counties saw their net total fall by 1,880. This is despite those low poverty counties getting purged at a slightly higher rate (4.2%) than the high poverty counties (3.9%).

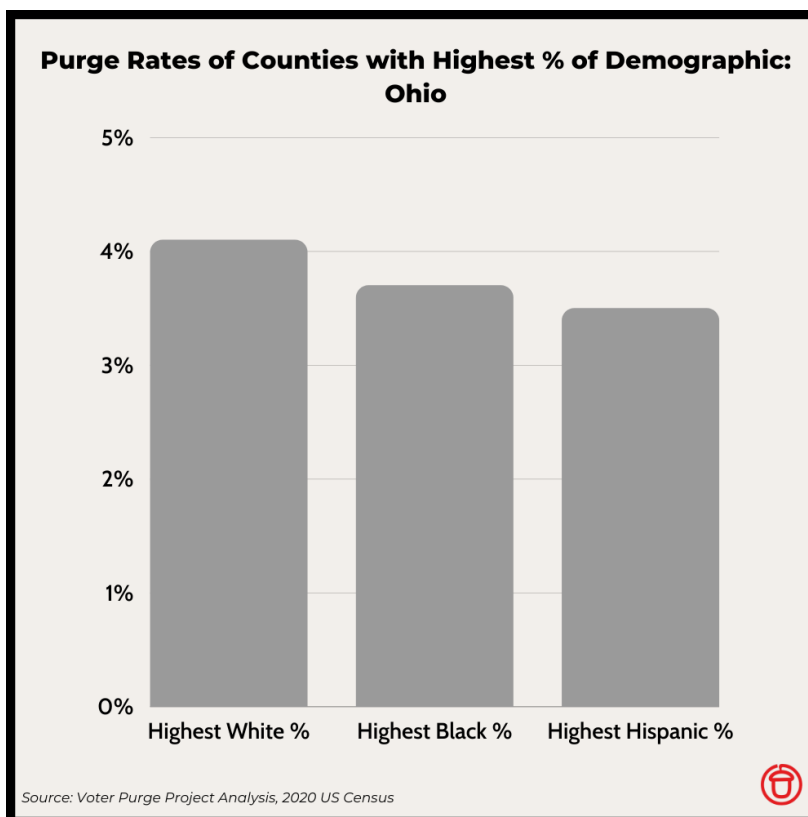
The bar chart above visualizes the net increases and decreases of the 10 lowest poverty counties in Ohio versus the 10 highest poverty counties.





## Comparing Counties with Different Demographics

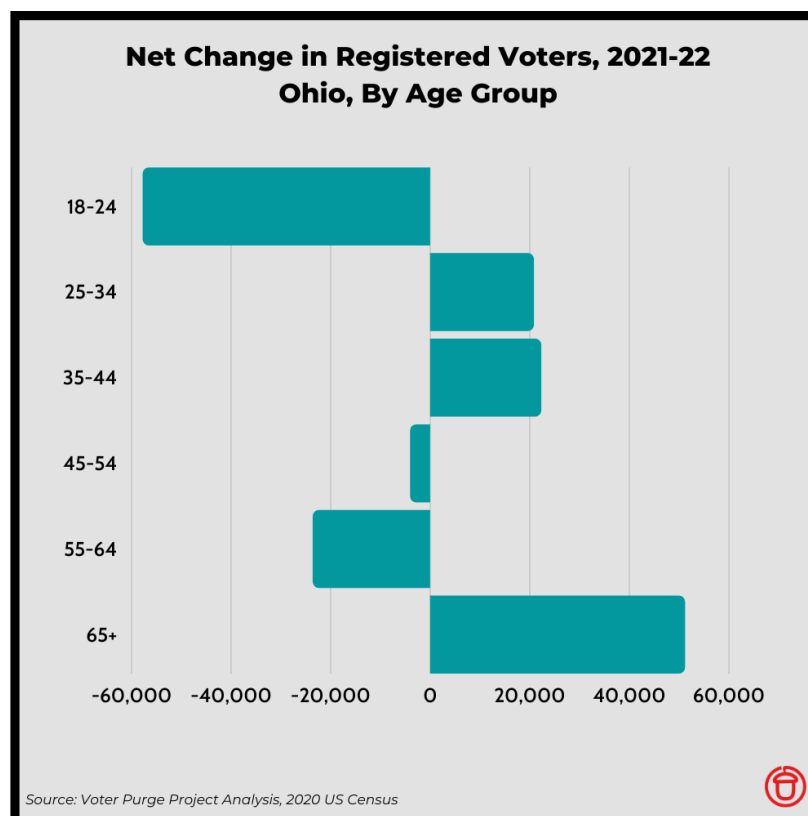
Ohio does not provide information on racial identity in its voter file, so we compared counties that have the highest rates of three main racial/ethnic identities: white, Black, and Hispanic. We found that the counties with the highest percentage of white voters were purged at the highest rate of the three (Holmes, Monroe, Vinton, Meigs, Adams, Perry, Darke, Conshocton, Hocking, and Jacson: 4.1%), followed by Ohio's four counties with a Black population in the double digits (Lucas, Mahoning, Summit, and Allen: 3.7%), followed by the three counties whose Hispanic population is in the double digits (Lorain, Defiance, and Sandusky: 3.5%) (see below).



We found that the ten counties with the highest percentage white and Black population lost voters, while the three counties with the highest percentage Hispanic population gained voters.

### Sharp Decline in Young Voters

Despite 18-24 year olds making up the largest share of newly registered voters in Ohio, the number of this set of voters declined sharply, second only to the decline in these same voters in Pennsylvania. 18-24 year olds voters made up 9.3% of Ohio's 2021 electorate when they were 740,509 strong, but in 2022, the 682,800 of them are just 8.6% of the total.



# Pennsylvania

Purge Rate: 3.6%

Cost: ★★

Transparency: ★★★

Access: ★★

August 9, 2021-August 8, 2022

*Net changes in registered voters, percent change from 2021*

**Democrats: -28,169 (0.7%)**

Republicans: 47,638 (1.4%)

No party affiliation: 31,402 (3.5%)

**61 out of 67 counties'** voters were purged at a rate higher than 3%

Democrats: 3.7% purged

Republicans: 3.6% purged

No party affiliation: 3.7% purged

**18-24 -60,542 (-7.92%)**

25-34 13,690 (0.93%)

35-44 37,060 (2.73%)

**45-54 -10,260 (-0.77%)**

**55-64 -17,709 (-1.13%)**

65+ 78,996 (3.59%)

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## Background

The right-wing Public Interest Legal Foundation filed suit against the commonwealth in 2020 seeking more aggressive voter purging, and [was successful](#) in requiring the state to use ERIC data to remove deceased voters periodically. Judicial Watch [sued Bucks, Chester, and Delaware counties and Pennsylvania's Secretary of State the same year](#) demanding they move to more aggressively purge inactive voters.

Republicans in the legislature are [currently pushing](#) legislation that would require monthly purges of deceased voters and use Department of Transportation information to purge voters who have moved. [Voting rights advocates oppose the legislation](#) on the grounds that the Department of Transportation doesn't have a mechanism to track out-of-state moves, and that it allows county election offices to use unreliable sources of information for tracking deaths.

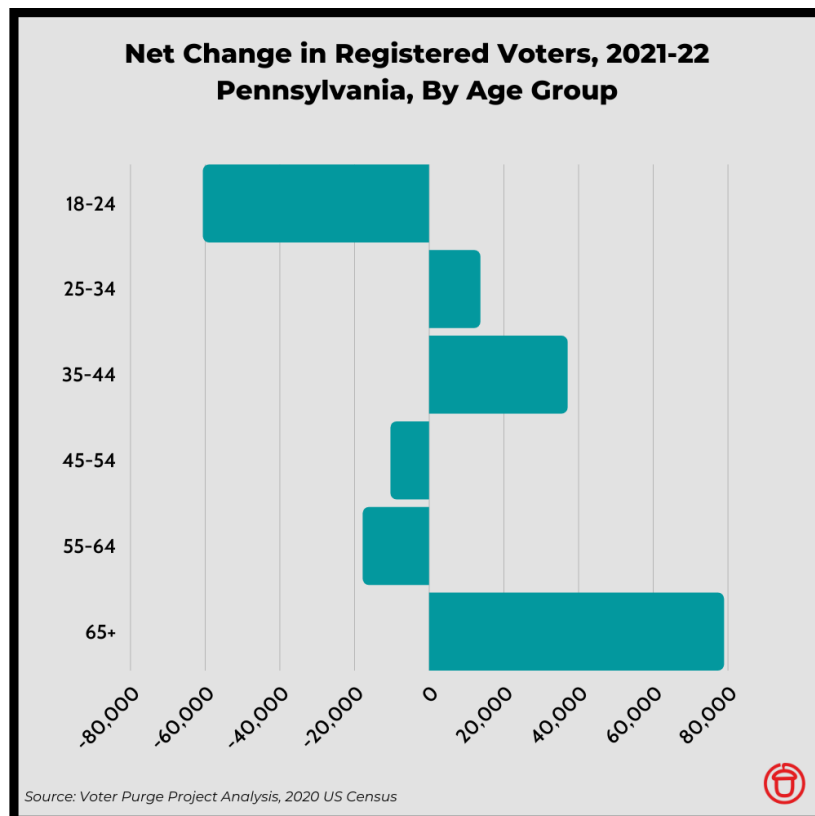
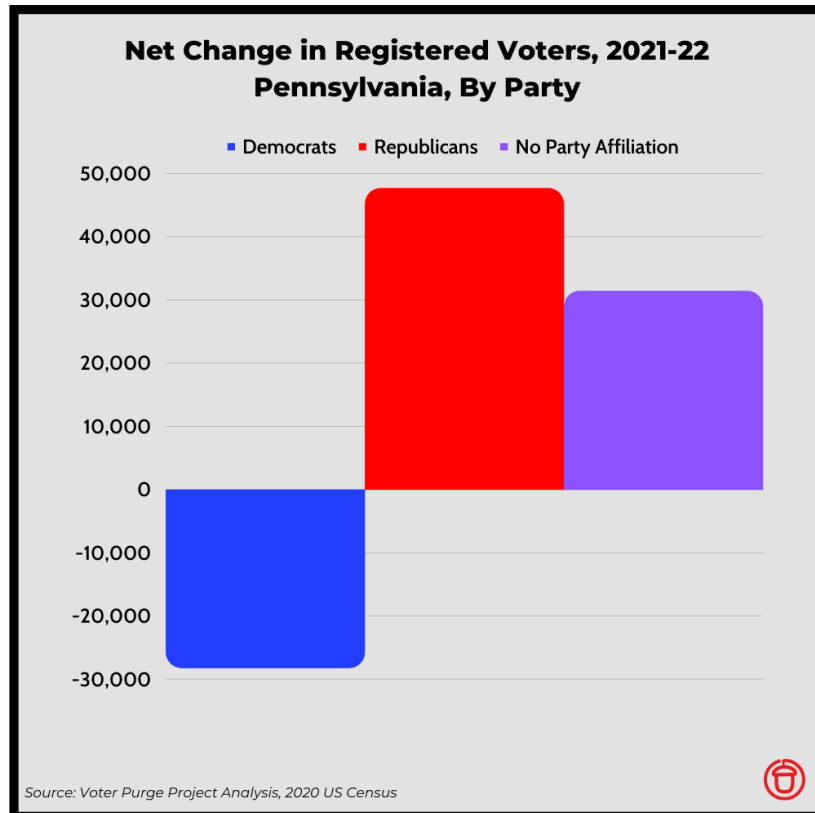
## Republicans and Oldest Voters Rising, Democrats and Youngest Voters Losing Ground

The number of registered Democrats in Pennsylvania declined by 28,169 (a 0.7% change) over the course of the year, while the number of registered Republicans increased by 47,638 (1.4% change). The number of unaffiliated voters rose by 3.5%, or 31,402. This appears to be unrelated to purges—all three groups were purged at roughly the same rate.

We compared the three counties that went for Biden in 2020 by the largest margin (a universe of 1,926,545 voters) to the 44 counties that went for Trump by the largest margin (a universe of 1,923,629 voters). Voters in the pro-Biden counties were purged at a rate of 3.6%, voters in the pro-Trump counties were purged at a rate of 3.8%.

The pro-Biden counties saw an uptick of 10,675 registered voters (0.5%) from 2021 to 2022 while the pro-Trump counties grew by just 2,971 (0.2%), demonstrating that the Republican advantage is not coming from changes in population, but likely derives from party switching.

Meanwhile, the number of voters aged 18-24 declined by 60,542 over the same period (a 7.9% drop), while the number of voters 65 and over rose by 78,996 (3.6% increase).



# Who We Are

The Voter Purge Project is a partnership between ACORN International, Labor Neighbor Research & Training Center (LNRTC), and the Ohio Voter Project.

The Voter Purge Project was born in 2019. Database engineer Steve Tingley-Hock ran a list of 235,000 Ohio voters the Secretary of State had set to purge through a database management system he created. He found that [some 40,000 of the names matched those of active voters](#). Wade Rathke with ACORN and LNRTC, having a history with voter registration and similar efforts dating back to 1970, then reached out to Tingley-Hock to expand the process to voter rolls in states across the country.

Each state provides its data for different costs, in different formats, and each has a unique system for labeling the information contained in each one of the millions of rows of voter data in their files. The first major hurdle is making the data readable and sortable by a computer. The Voter Purge Project acquires pure voter data files from a state's Secretary of State office and uses Tingley-Hock's system along with database technology and other tools developed by its New Orleans-based team to perform an "extract, transform, load" and analysis. This system "cleans" the data of the characters that won't load into the database management system and loads it into a readable database.

Critical to the VPP methodology is then a regular and consistent process of acquiring the lists, running them, and comparing historically to previous lists. This detailed repetition and analysis allows VPP to be able to monitor an individual state's list maintenance system. Such maintenance is appropriate upon an individual voter's death and within the strictures of relatively recent Supreme Court decisions the frequency of their voting participation and activity, and whether there is any just cause to believe that they may have moved to another jurisdiction or state and need to re-register or go into inactive or confirmation status that could lead to their removal. VPP essentially tracks millions of voters' political lifespan and whether or not they are properly allowed access to an election ballot.

In 2020, VPP phone-matched millions of records that were in a purge status across a number of states and implemented a texting program to notify each of these voters that they had been purged. We embedded a link to their local Secretary of State's office and election registration system, so that they could either correct any error in recording their status or re-register. In the current report, we are examining the status of purge and maintenance systems in what are usually referred to as battleground states. In a coming report at the beginning of 2023, we will issue a similar report on not just battleground states, but all states.

The Voter Purge Project was founded and operates under the premise that mistakes can be made when dealing with millions upon millions of voter records, but that these errors, whether inadvertent or deliberate, have to be ferreted out and corrected to prevent millions from being disenfranchised. As sophisticated technology has come to dominate political life and the access and operation of the American voting system at all levels from the precinct to county or parish to the state and federal level, these systems must be consistent, transparent, and held accountable. The details are in the data, and VPP has embraced this challenge as part of what is necessary to protect our democracy.

*View data for the above [here](#) for overall trends and for the following states: [Pennsylvania](#), [Ohio](#), [North Carolina](#), [Nevada](#), [Michigan](#), [Georgia](#), [Florida](#), and [Arizona](#).*