Early voting starts nationwide

By JAY BOOTH
Staff Writer

Most states offer the opportunity to vote early in person, where a voter fills out their ballot at a voting location before Election Day, which is tabulated after the polls close. However, they can have minimal processing done, to the level of where they were submitted and the party of the voter who cast the vote.

Due to the hyper-polarized environment where, essentially, a maximum of 10% of the voting population actually votes for both parties as opposed to one-party support in every election.

This gives a slight indication of partisan enthusiasm and maybe a bit of insight into who will have a good lead on election night, whose voters tend to lean Republican, whereas early voting, mail-in and absentee ballots lean Democratic.

Now, due to differences in state election processes, changing voting laws and purging of voter rolls and multiple other factors, reading too much into these numbers can be foolish and even fatal for predicting how the general election will unfold. Nonetheless, they do still show some statistics of enthusiasm, especially by region. Even racial groups and other demographics may show trends that are to be seen more clearly on election night.

Such a trend is easily visible in Georgia, with higher relative turnout in the greater Atlanta area, compared to struggling turnout in the rural regions. As Georgia has a very competitive gubernatorial (governor's) election and a border-competitive Senate race, these turnout figures will be heavily influential on who will end up winning these contests in the most left-trending swing state.

The Atlanta metro region is surging in population, which is helping Democrats make these races more competitive—they managed to flip both Senate seats in the state in 2020 and 2022 and won the presidential contest in 2020. This, plus a surge in turnout in the region, could be a death knell for the Georgia Republicans, where gubernatorial nominee Rick Jackson looks favored in the polls. However, it wouldn't take much of a turnout difference for him to fall short to former Atlanta mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms.

Similarly, in New Jersey, returns are looking abysmal for Republicans, flipping the idea that 2024 would be the new normal in the state, and making it appear that it was instead a one-off.

Former Vice President Kamala Harris, the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee, who only won the state by a smidge under six points, struggled heavily with Hispanic voters in the northeast of the state across the Hudson from New York City. These voters appear to be coming back to Democrats and are turning out in ways they didn't in 2024, continuing a trend established in 2025 with them helping carry New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill to a 14.4% victory.

Now, in some states, a registration lag is hindering the applicability of the early vote tabulations to the general election.

In West Virginia, for example, which President Donald Trump won by over 40% points in 2024, has only a narrow Republican voter registration advantage. Voters there who had voted Democratic through the Clinton era still haven't changed their voter registration despite voting Republican for over two decades. So, the fact that Democrats lead there by 20 points doesn't mean they will suddenly de-seat incumbent Senator Shelley Moore Capito. Instead, it shows that those voters, ancestral Democrats, are showing up, but they are likely to vote Republican on their ballots.

Shifting to the neighbor to the north, Ohio, Democrats outvote Republicans by 9 percentage points in a state that Trump won by 11.2% in 2024. While Ohio, as part of the Rust Belt (OH, PA, IN, MI, WI, IL) has favorable turnout trends in midterm years as is (rural white voters that carry the state for Republicans in presidential years are low-propensity, meaning they tend not to show up for "smaller" elections), this difference is still somewhat stark and is much better than 2024. The final tally for early vote in Ohio in 2024 was a 10-point Republican lead.

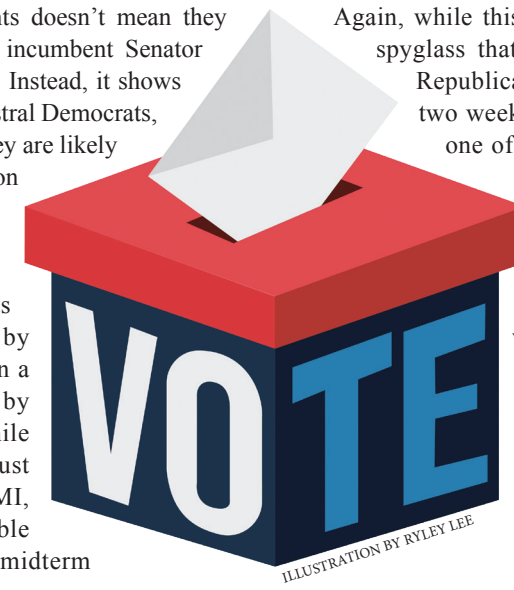

ILLUSTRATION BY RYLEY LEE

But this pattern also isn't consistent. Trump +1.7 Pennsylvania, for example, had a D+22 early vote electorate in 2024, which wasn't enough to overcome the large Trump-favoring electorate on election night.

However, compared with 2024, Democrats are performing better in several races. Again, while this isn't some magical spyglass that paints a picture of Republican decimation in two weeks, if I had to choose one of the parties to be the Chair of, I'd rather be the Democrats this year.

The question that remains is whether they can hold off a strong enough Republican turnout on election ight to clinch victories in competitive contests across the country.

Jaxson Dart vs Eli Manning
How quarterback longevity has evolved on the New York Giants

By LUCA RATHGEBER
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Anyone who was a fan of the NFL during the 2010s would have witness a legendary generation of quarterbacks; those being legends with unprecedented longevity, including quarterbacks like New England Patriots' Tom Brady, Pittsburgh Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger and Green Bay Packers' Aaron Rodgers. However, often missing from this group of ironmen is New York Giants legendary quarterback Eli Manning. Manning started 234 games for the team with a 210-game consecutive start streak.

When Manning retired after the 2018 season, the Giants drafted quarterback Daniel Jones from Duke University as his successor. However, Jones struggled with inconsistency and injury woes, which led the team to let him go after the 2024 season. In this roughly six-year, Manning-less stretch, fans constantly complained about the inconsistent quarterback play and the constant quarterback switches. This was rarely a concern during the Manning era.

Now, fast-forward to the 2025 NFL draft. The Giants are in the market for hopefully their next franchise quarterback. With the third overall pick, they selected edge rusher Abdul Carter, whilst many fans were hoping for a quarterback, potentially in Ole Miss's Jaxson Dart or the University of Colorado's Shedeur Sanders. Their wish would eventually come true, as the Giants traded back into the first round to select Dart.

For the first time in years, there was some optimism that the Giants would have a consistent starter under center. Then, after a successful rookie year in which Dart threw for 15 touchdowns through 12 starts, the hype deepened. However, that would all change in week two of the 2026 season. After Dart got hit by Los Angeles Rams defenders Bryon Young and Josaiah Stewart, he suffered damage to his MCL, PCL and meniscus.

After backup quarterback Jameis Winston struggled to gain traction as the new signal-caller, fans once again began reminiscing about the days when Manning would consistently play sixteen-start seasons.



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY ANGELILLO

So, the merry-go-round of quarterbacks the Giants have had opens a broader question: What happened to quarterback longevity?

A big reason is due to the way the game itself is changing. Especially in the 2020s, there has been a stark rise in dual-threats, also known as "running quarterbacks." These types of quarterbacks are required to move in a way that the traditional "pocket passer" would not. Constantly scrambling out of the pocket and improvising provides a severely increased risk for injury, because they leave the protection of the offensive line and move into the minefield of defenders.

Harking back to the 2010s, there were not many dual-threat passers. Other than perhaps Panthers quarterback Cam Newton, the majority of them led offenses that thrived with precise pocket precision. This offensive approach allowed the aforementioned quarterbacks like Manning and Brady to consistently play full, 16-game seasons. However, it seems as if every year, numerous star quarterbacks consistently go down with minor or major injuries.

But there is an interesting trend to look at, specifically with the Giants. That being their 3-1-1 record, even after Dart went down. The outlook post-week two was very bleak for head coach John Harbaugh's squad, especially after the disastrous blowout loss to the Rams post-Dart injury. However, after week two, they went 2-0-1.

This statistic is remarkable considering Dart's commanding presence in their week one win over the Dallas Cowboys, where he threw for three touchdowns. A major reason why young quarterbacks like Dart struggle to mesh into their offenses is underdevelopment. Oftentimes, especially in today's age, rookie quarterbacks are thrown into poorly managed offenses that jeopardize their health. This is primarily due to sacks taken from subsequent poor offensive lines.

The Giants' offensive line has been stellar this season, which aided in Winston finding his footing in Harbaugh's offense. Winston's most recent performance against the Washington Commanders, in which he threw for over 300 yards and three touchdowns, displayed an alternative play style to Dart's. This is a more traditional pocket passer approach, as opposed to Dart's playstyle, which sometimes is referred to as reckless.

Now, let's address something that many fans are likely thinking: how does Dart improve his playstyle to potentially give the Giants their first competent comparison to Manning? Despite Dart's injury coming from inside the pocket, his rookie year came with backlash from fans and coaches that his refusal to slide while scrambling could potentially shorten his NFL career.

"But he is not going to change his style of play, so that is where I'm like, 'I don't know if this guy is going to last,'" an anonymous NFL General Manager said.

That is another very important point to bring up. Dart's style of play is largely tied to his personality, which is very brute and determined. He has swagger and wants to scrape every extra yard he can, through relentless improvisation: even if it comes at the cost of his body. He puts a lot of confidence in his raw athletic abilities, which, again, is something very new to today's game.

So, despite Dart's season-ending injury, the Giants have managed to climb to a 3-1-1 start through week six, with strong coaching from Harbaugh. Since Manning retired, the team has failed to find his successor. Whilst his play style has raised some concerns in the past, Dart has provided strong hope for the future, as he is set to return in 2027, while backup Winston has provided short-term hope for this ongoing season.