

# Early voting numbers are up in Ohio with less than a week before Election Day

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With less than a week left to vote early, officials are seeing an increase in turnout and expect the number of in-person voters and mail-in ballots to rise before the Nov. 7 election.

As of Oct. 24, Melanie Amato, director of communications for the Secretary of State's office, said there have been more than 200,000 in-person early voters, which is up from the 192,000 in-person voters at this time ahead of the August special election. For comparison, the August special election saw nearly 642,000 Ohioans vote early.

Amato said the Secretary of State's office has received about 110,000 absentee ballots by mail, up from about 93,000 mailed absentee ballots at this time ahead of the August election.

## **What's on Ohio's ballot?**

On the ballot are two statewide issues that some county elections officials say could be encouraging people to vote: Issue 1 and Issue 2.

If passed, Issue 1 would prevent the state from banning access to abortion, contraception, miscarriage care and other reproductive decisions. Abortions could be prohibited after fetal viability, typically about 22 to 24 weeks gestation, unless one is required to save the pregnant patient's life or health.

If passed, Issue 2 would allow Ohioans age 21 and older to buy and possess 2.5 ounces of cannabis and 15 grams of concentrates and grow up to six plants individually and no more than 12 in a household with multiple adults. Also, products would be taxed 10%, with revenue going toward administrative costs, addiction treatment programs, municipalities with dispensaries and a social equity and jobs program.

Amato said the two statewide ballot issues are likely driving much of the interest in this election, but competitive local races and levy campaigns tend to energize local turnout as well.

## What do the numbers look like statewide?

On Oct. 11, the first day of early voting, 16,122 people cast in-person ballots statewide. Franklin County had the most in-person ballots cast with 1,524, and Hamilton County followed with 924.

There were 117,669 absentee ballots mailed out; Cuyahoga mailed out 26,977, a big difference from the second highest — Franklin County with 18,393.

## Where are people voting early?

Early voting has drawn many voters out to the polls, but some counties are experiencing an increase in voting by mail.

There's been over 40,000 absentee ballots sent out in Franklin County, which Aaron Sellers, spokesperson for Franklin County Board of Elections, said is high compared to the August election. Sellers said this election is looking like a more traditional early vote cycle.

"It's been interesting because we voted more people through this cycle than we did in August, but it doesn't feel like it," Sellers said.

In Franklin County, there has been a total of over 20,000 in-person ballots cast as of Thursday morning. There haven't been any lines going out the doors yet, but Sellers anticipates that will happen the last week of early voting.

For an odd-year general election, Hamilton County Board of Elections Director Sherry Poland said turnout in-person and by mail has been high, and Hamilton County is slightly ahead of where it was at this time in early voting for the August election.

Poland said she wouldn't be surprised to see 20,000 more voters the last week of early voting.

"It does seem like there's an increase in comparison to most odd-year general elections," Poland said. "A lot of time, questions bring that out. I know, the last time marijuana was on the ballot, that was in an odd election in 2015, ...we saw a high turnout at that time, too."

Pete Zeigler, deputy director for Summit County Board of Elections, said turnout has been good for an off-year election and also believes that could be credited to the statewide issues attracting attention.

"Four years ago, in, let's say, the 2019 general election, for the whole election, there were 18,000 of all-types of absentee ballots cast in the county and for this election, already, we're at over 30,000 absentee, between in-person, mail and all the other variants we have, like nursing home and such," Zeigler said.

## How to vote early in-person in Ohio

Absentee ballots can be cast in-person at local board of elections offices or the county's designated early voting center.

All locations have the same hours:

- Oct. 30: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 31: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Nov. 1-3: 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 4: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Nov. 5: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

## New voter ID law

A new state law no longer allows voters to use utility bills and other documents as identification to receive a ballot.

Now, a photo ID is required for in-person voting, either on Election Day or during the early voting period at county boards of election. To cast a ballot by mail, voters can provide a copy of their photo ID, driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number.

Free state IDs are available to residents at local Bureau of Motor Vehicles deputy registrar locations. More information can be found at [bmv.ohio.gov](http://bmv.ohio.gov).

## When is the November election in Ohio?

Polls open Tuesday, Nov. 7 at 6:30 a.m. and close at 7:30 p.m. To check your polling location, head to the Secretary of State's website.