

# Abortion, marijuana drive bigger early voting in November in Ohio

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COLUMBUS, Ohio — The early vote for Tuesday's election has surpassed the entire early-vote number for the state's last election in August, according to state elections data.

The increased early voting comes as Ohioans weigh whether to approve state Issue 1, [which would add abortion rights to the state constitution](#), and Issue 2, [which would legalize recreational marijuana for those 21 and older](#). It points to unusually high voter turnout for a second state election in a row, by the standards of an off-year election, after 39% of voters cast ballots in August and soundly rejected a measure that would have made it harder for Issue 1 to pass.

Through Sunday, voters had cast 864,525 ballots, compared to 757,653 who voted early for the entire August election. The numbers include the 79,388 people who voted early and in person on Saturday and Sunday during the state's first and only weekend hours for early in-person voting.

Breaking the numbers down further, voting is up slightly in rural counties, translating to a net 18,515 increase in votes from those areas compared to August, when accounting for a smaller increase in voting from urban counties and suburban counties.

The shift could be favorable for opponents of both ballot issues. However, it's relatively small, and as always, it's not clear whether an increased early vote reflects increased overall voting, or people just changing their habits.

Early voting meanwhile was pivotal for the defeat of the August issue, with abortion-rights backers racking up huge advantages in the early vote that Election Day voting failed to offset. That measure, also called Issue 1, failed 57% to 43%.

Early voting could increase further ahead of the open of Election Day voting on Tuesday, since tens of thousands of mailed absentee ballots remain outstanding across the state. Voters may return them by hand to their county Board of Elections — they will not be accepted at polling places — by the end of Tuesday. Voters also

can mail them, although they must have been postmarked on Monday and arrive by Saturday in order to count.

In Ohio, Election Day voting still accounts for the majority of ballots cast. In August, about 3.1 million Ohioans voted in the special election.

Polls open Tuesday at 6:30 a.m. and remain open until 7:30 p.m. Voters must bring a valid photo ID, such as a driver's license, state ID or passport, with them in order to vote. Voters in line at 7:30 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

## **How do voting numbers vary by area?**

Voters in 73 rural counties have cast 376,645 early ballots ahead of the Tuesday election, compared to 314,125 who voted early in these counties overall in August. That represents an increase of 62,430 votes, or a jump of about 20%.

Meanwhile, voters in Ohio's eight urban counties have cast 363,250 ballots, compared to 333,877 early votes in August. That is a 29,373-vote increase, about 8% more than in August.

Voters in six remaining suburban counties have cast 119,536 early votes, up 14,632 votes from the 104,904 who voted early overall in August. That's a 14% increase.

The net result is an increase in rural early voting that's worth about 18,515 votes, or 2% of the overall early vote.

## **What about Cuyahoga County?**

In Cuyahoga County, a Democratic stronghold, 96,562 people have voted early, according to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections. This is a slight discrepancy from the state data, which pegs the number at 96,508.

Both numbers compare to the 96,219 who voted for the August election. Using the county numbers, this would place Cuyahoga County at 100% of the August vote, below the 114% statewide average.

Meanwhile, roughly 21,479 Cuyahoga County absentee ballots remain outstanding, as of Friday, the most recent day numbers were available. It's typical for around 90% of absentee ballots to be returned, which likely means another 12,000 ballots or so will be coming in soon.