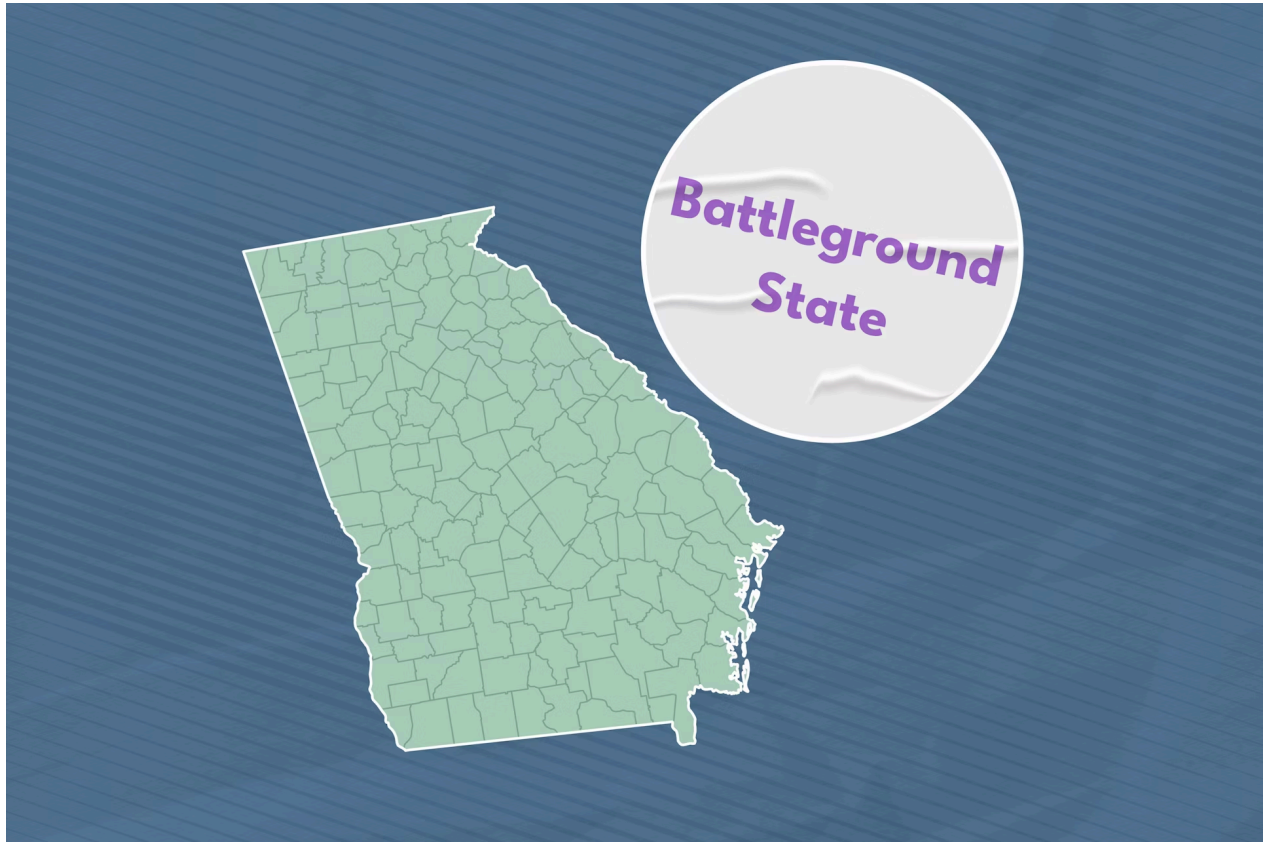


## 2024 Battleground State Preview: Georgia



Georgia will be one of the marquee battleground states in 2024—with 16 vital Electoral College votes up for grabs. The Peach State has been a critical battleground in only three of the last eight presidential elections, and it has the highest concentration of Black voters and college-educated voters among all the 2024 Presidential battleground states.

Below, we examine the electoral and economic trends that Georgia has seen over the last decade of which campaigns should be readily aware heading into the 2024 election.

### Georgia: The Tossup State

In 2020, Georgia moved into the presidential tossup column for the first time in several election cycles. Here are three numbers to know:

**11,800:** Republicans have won the state in six of the last eight presidential races since 1992. But in 2020, Biden won the state by 11,800 votes (0.2%).

**2-to-1:** In 2020, Trump (+ allies) outspent Biden (+ allies) 2-to-1 in ads in Georgia—the GOP's \$38 million to the Democrats' \$19 million. <sup>1</sup>

**26:** Former third-party voters were a crucial part of Biden's coalition in 2020. And in Georgia, Biden won 2016 third-party voters by a 26-point margin over Trump (51%-25%). <sup>2</sup>

Moderate voters were key to Biden's victory in 2020 and Senator Warnock's victory in 2022. As Quentin Fulks, Raphael Warnock's former campaign manager, said: "Some of these moderates are going to be looking for a place to go. These aren't extreme individuals. We can't just look at someone and say, 'Oh, you're a Republican, so we can't talk to you.' We have a record we can sell them." <sup>3</sup>

### Georgia: The Non-College Economy

Georgia has the lowest concentration of non-college voters among the Presidential battleground states. Nevertheless, these voters still make up a massive part of the population, and understanding who they are is critical to winning the state.

- **Just under two-thirds of adults over 25 don't have a college degree.** While Georgia is one of the swing states with the lowest concentration of non-college voters, two-thirds of adults over the age of 25 in the state do not currently hold a four-year degree. <sup>4</sup> Trump marginally won non-college voters in Georgia 51-47% in 2020, while Biden inversely won college-educated voters 52-46%. <sup>5</sup>
- **Urban residents are almost twice as likely to have a college degree as their rural peers.** In the rural areas of Georgia, around 23% of adults over 25 have a college degree, compared to the 39% of their counterparts in urban areas. <sup>6</sup>
- **Non-college and college workers are both seeing low unemployment rates.** In 2022, the unemployment rate in Georgia for workers with a college degree was only 1.8%, and for workers without a degree it was slightly higher—but still quite low—at 2.8%. <sup>7</sup>
- **There is a high concentration of college-educated Black adults in urban places.** In Georgia's urban areas, almost a third of Black adults over the age of 25 have a college degree, compared to around a quarter of Black adults in cities across the country. <sup>8</sup> Comparatively, 15% of Black adults living in rural parts of Georgia have a four-year degree.
- **The state is seeing a start-up surge.** Business applications filed by individuals likely to employ others had increased over 50% at the end of 2023 in the state compared to 2019—significantly higher than the 38% jump seen nationally. <sup>9</sup>
- **Unions have less sway.** Just 5% of workers in Georgia are union members. <sup>10</sup> In other swing states, unions have been key to Democratic victories, but Democrats will need to look to other networks in Georgia to galvanize support.

In 2024, it is likely we will see an electorate that looks very much like it did in 2020—when non-college voters made up 60% of the Georgia electorate. For Biden to carry the state, he will need to win 48% of non-college voters if his performance among college-educated voters remains steady. <sup>11</sup>

## Georgia: Geographic Challenges

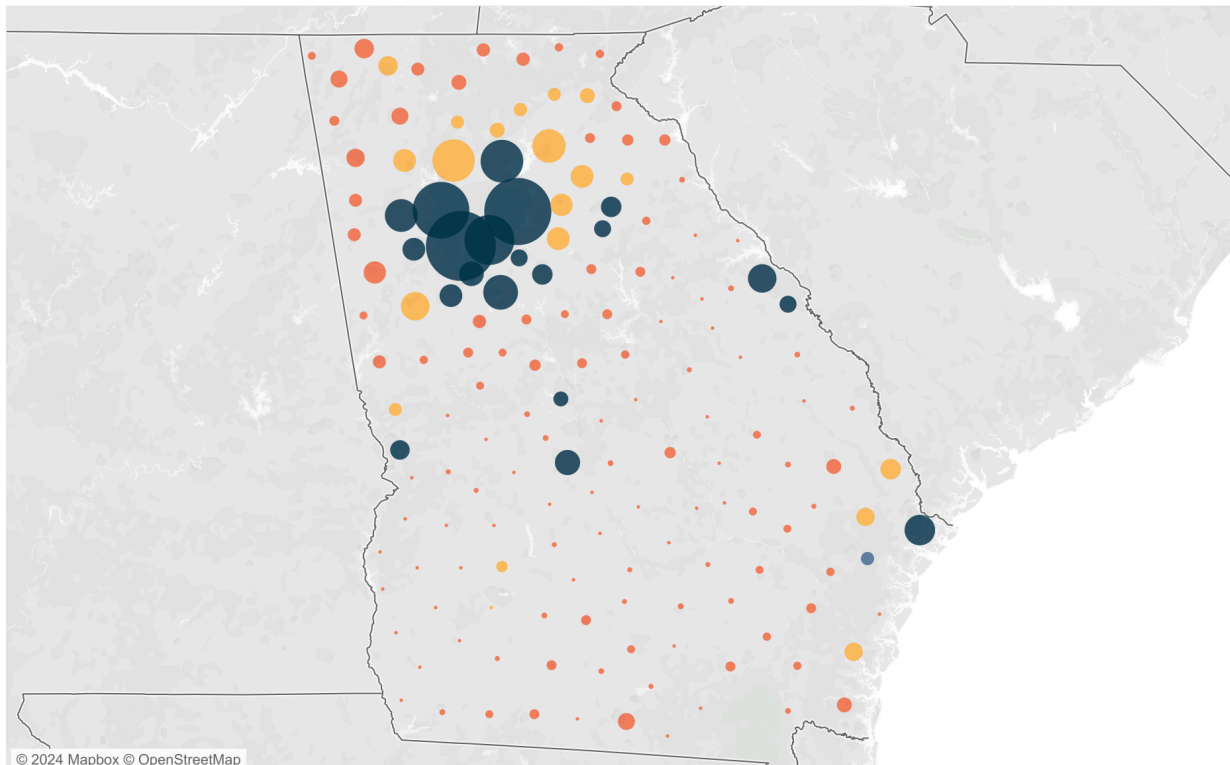
Georgia's economic and demographic trends can, in part, explain the electoral swings that have played out in counties across the state in recent election cycles.



### Georgia Presidential Election Vote Growth & Swings (2012 to 2020)

Swings by county from 2012 to 2020 (head-to-head contest)

■ GOP Vote Growth & Swung Right
 ■ GOP Vote Growth But Swung Left
 ■ DEM Vote Growth But Swung Right
 ■ DEM Vote Growth & Swung Left



**Note:** Size of bubbles represents the growth in the number of votes (D & R) from 2012 to 2020 in the presidential head-to-head. 2020 presidential margins are the head-to-head results.  
**Source:** Georgia SOS...

**Democrats are seeing substantial growth in heavily college-educated, metro counties.** From 2012 to 2020, there were over 1 million more votes cast statewide. Of those, Democrats netted 317,000 more votes than Republicans. But in the metro counties, Democrats gained 427,000 net votes over Republicans from 2012 to 2020—an 11-point swing to the left.

**Republicans have seen growth in rural, heavily non-college counties.** From 2012 to 2020, the GOP gained 110,000 net votes over Democrats in rural Georgia—a 9-point swing to the right.

**Democrats grew their share of the vote most substantially in the Atlanta metro area.** In the five core Atlanta metro counties (Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett), Dems netted 411,000 votes over the GOP from 2012 to 2020.

**The growing Black electorate was key to Biden’s 2020 victory.** Stacey Abrams and Georgia Democrats’ strategy leading up to 2020 hinged on registering and activating enormous segments of Georgia’s Black electorate (aided by the state’s 2016 automatic voter registration law). According to Catalist, Biden won 94% of the Georgia Black electorate in 2020—a marginal one-point swing to the left from Obama’s performance in 2012.<sup>12</sup>

The key to winning Georgia is the college-educated vote and the Black vote (and the overlap between those groups). If Republicans limit their losses with college-educated voters and make inroads with Black voters in the metro counties, it may well determine if the state flips back red this year.

## Conclusion

Georgia is crucial for Democrats in 2024. The realignment in sunbelt battleground states has opened a new path to victory for Biden and Democrats, but the challenges of reconstituting the 2020 Democratic coalition are tall. Meanwhile, without Georgia, Donald Trump’s path to victory becomes severely limited. Whichever party actively competes for the college-educated vote and disaffected voters of color will likely carry this battleground.

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