



Executive Summary: 2024 AAPC Foundation Voter File Analysis

Analysis prepared by TargetSmart and DataTrust

Actual voter file data of 2024 voters disrupts the conventional wisdom that the outcome was primarily driven by voters changing their minds. Instead, it points to a more structural story—one of turnout disparities, registration shifts, and organizational advantages. For political professionals planning for 2026 and 2028, the implications are clear: ground game matters, and voter file data remains one of the most reliable signals of electoral change.

KEY FINDINGS

The study reveals **a consistent and broad-based decline in Democratic registration across all four states**. While Republican registration generally remained steady or increased modestly, the most notable growth came from unaffiliated voters, whose numbers surged across demographic groups—including Black, Hispanic, and rural voters. This trend suggests growing volatility and independence among voters who had traditionally leaned Democratic, particularly among younger and non-white populations.

In terms of turnout, the data shows **a drop in three out of the four states, regardless of party affiliation**. However, Democratic turnout declined more than Republican turnout in most cases, especially in Arizona, where the gap exceeded one percentage point. These turnout drops were particularly stark among Black and Hispanic voters, who had turned out in high numbers for Joe Biden in 2020. In 2024, many of these same voters simply did not participate—contrary to narratives that they switched sides. As a result, Donald Trump's performance improved among these groups, not due to persuasion, but due to differential turnout.

The rural GOP base saw continued growth. Republican registration and turnout among rural voters increased substantially, and the Trump campaign succeeded in running up the vote totals even higher in rural areas in 2024 than in 2020. This dynamic underscored the effectiveness of the GOP's long-term investment in field operations and voter registration infrastructure in battleground states. Despite overall lower turnout across all groups, these registration gains gave Trump a critical edge.

Changes in the electorate's composition also reflected these underlying shifts. **Democrats' share of the voting electorate fell in all four states, while Republicans and unaffiliated voters gained ground.** These changes closely mirrored the shifts in registration, indicating that the GOP's gains were not just cosmetic—they materially reshaped who showed up to vote.

Strategically, the data suggests that Trump's victory was made possible not just by who voted, but by who didn't. **Years of GOP groundwork in registering voters, especially in communities where they had previously underperformed, paid off decisively.** At the same time, the Democratic Party and the Biden/Harris campaign failed to respond effectively, despite having visibility into these trends long before the election. Their inaction on voter registration and turnout efforts, particularly among core constituencies, proved costly.

The bipartisan analysis was conducted by Democratic firm TargetSmart and Republican firm DataTrust, providing a unique and rigorously empirical view of voter behavior trends in the 2020 to 2024 electoral cycle. Unlike polling or modeled sentiment data, this research is based entirely on actual voter registration and turnout records—offering a behavioral, not hypothetical, look at how the electorate changed across four battleground states: North Carolina, Arizona, Nevada, and Pennsylvania.