

Use of Same-Day Registration in North Carolina *General Election 2016*

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SOUTHERN COALITION
for SOCIAL JUSTICE

2016 General Election

Same-day registration (SDR) was a popular and effective tool in the last presidential election here in North Carolina, and its continued success in encouraging political participation in this state should be celebrated.

What is same-day registration?

First used in North Carolina in 2007, same-day registration (SDR) during early voting was implemented as part of a larger effort to improve North Carolina's dismal voter turnout and registration statistics. As of 1988, North Carolina was ranked 47th in the nation for voter turnout, with only 44.5% of eligible residents reporting to the polls. In order to encourage greater civic participation, the General Assembly in the early 2000s introduced and passed various bills intended to make it easier for eligible residents to register and vote, such as early voting, pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds, out-of-precinct voting and, most notably here, same-day registration. Thanks, in part, to these provisions, North Carolina has seen its registration numbers increase by 35%, and its turnout rates increase by 10% , since the year 2000.

SDR enables North Carolina's voting-age citizens to report to any early voting location in their county, register, and vote in one transaction. In order to register same-day, voters must not only attest to their eligibility to vote; they must also, without exception, provide proof of identity and residence by providing an acceptable document showing the voter's current name and current address.

SDR serves as a fail-safe, allowing qualified voters to remedy any issues with their voter registration and ensure they are properly registered so that they can exercise their most important fundamental right and civic duty: voting.

Acceptable documents

- North Carolina driver's license or other government-issued ID
- Bank statement
- College campus document
- Government check
- Paycheck
- Property tax statement
- Vehicle registration
- Public housing document
- Public assistance or disability agency document
- Prescriptions issued by government doctor
- Any other government document¹

Use of Same-Day Registration:

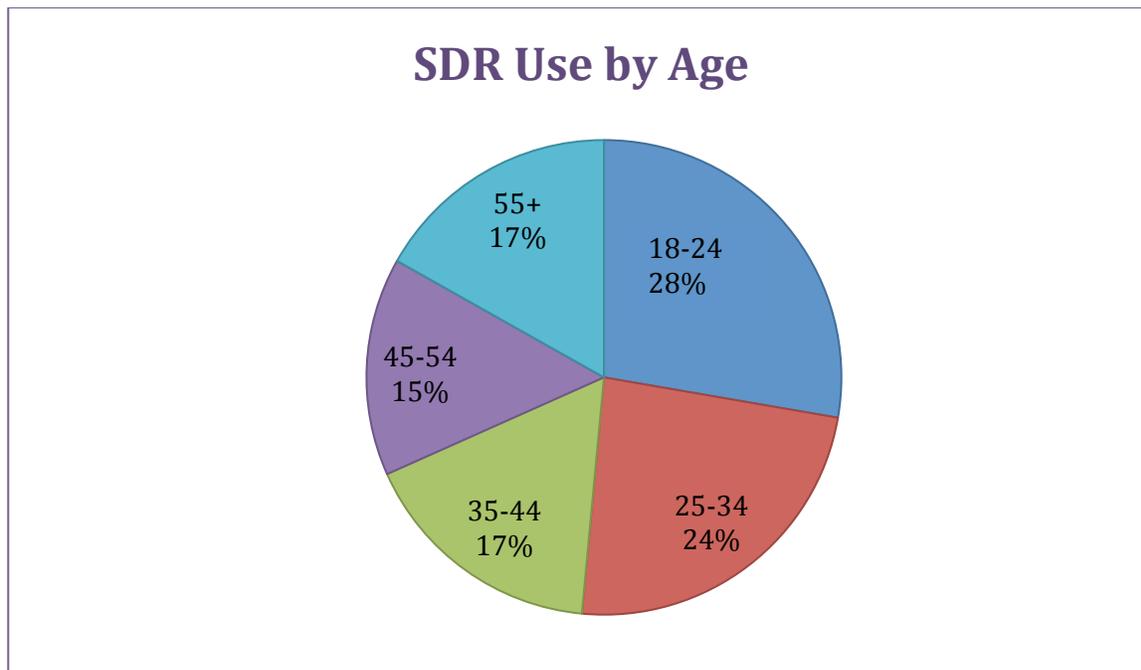
2016 General Election

Who uses SDR?¹

A wide array of North Carolina voters take advantage of SDR. In the November 2016 Election, more than 100,000 North Carolinians used SDR, an increase from the 97,100 who used SDR in the 2012 general election.²

	2008 General ³	2012 General	2016 General
One-Stop Users:	2,411,116	2,557,960	2,876,074 ⁴
SDR Users:	103,535	97,100	100,258
% of One-Stop Voters Using SDR:	4.3%	3.8%	3.5%
% of Total Voters Using SDR:	2.4%	2.1%	2.1%

Though relied upon somewhat more heavily by younger voters, who tend to be newer to and less familiar with the election process, SDR was utilized widely by North Carolinians of all ages in the 2016 General Election⁵:



¹ All 2016 General Election demographics were calculated using publicly available data on the North Carolina State Board of Elections website downloaded on 12/14/16.

² NCSBE 2012 SDR Report.

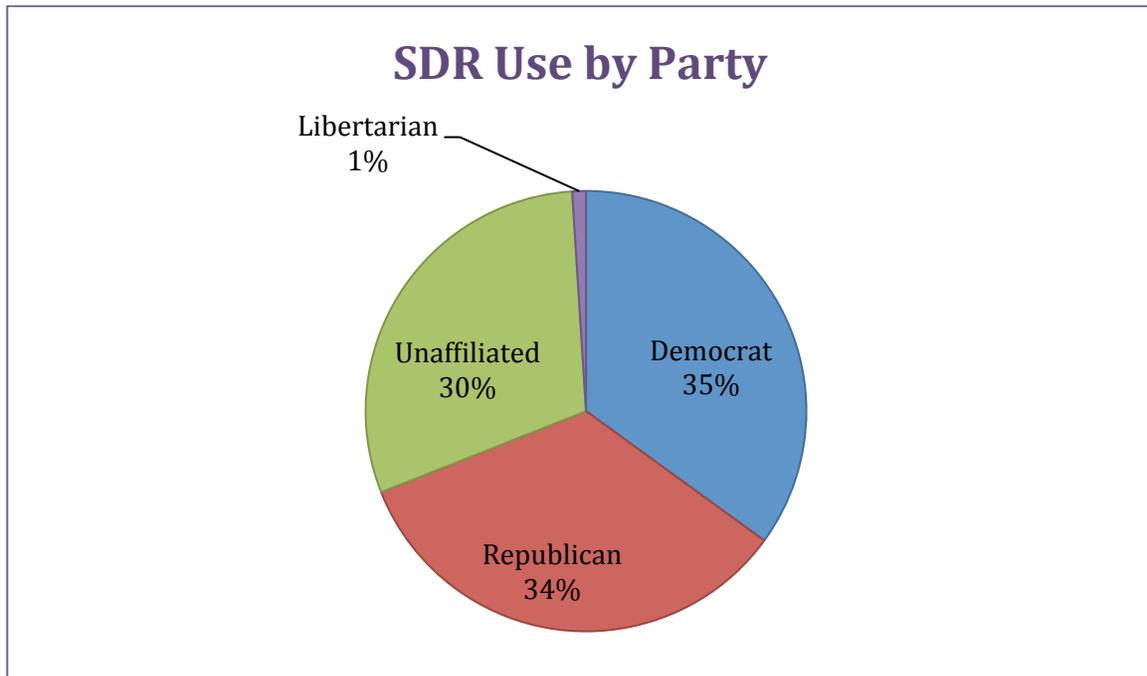
³ NCSBE 2008 SDR Report.

⁴ <http://www.ncsbe.gov/Data-Stats/2016-Election-Data-and-Statistics>

⁵ Due to rounding, charts may not equal 100%

Use of Same-Day Registration: *2016 General Election*

Similarly, SDR was used roughly equally by each of the three major political party affiliations in the state:

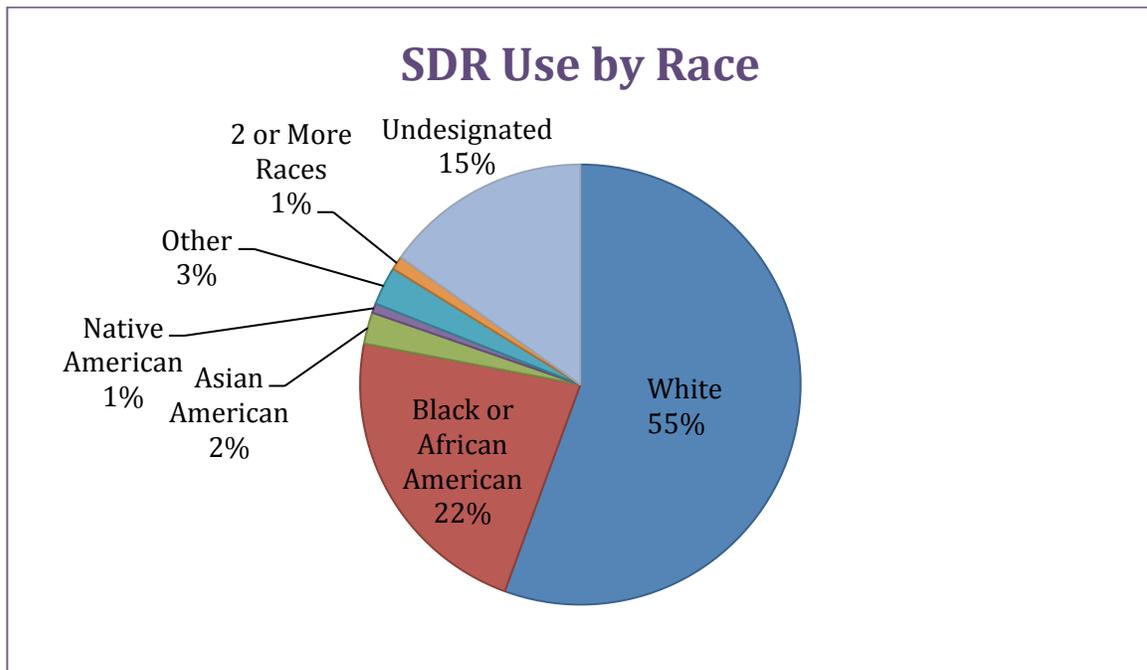


While slightly more Democrats utilized SDR than Republicans, Republican SDR turnout was proportionally slightly higher. The 34,329 Republican same-day registrants comprised 1.6% of all registered Republicans statewide, whereas the 35,528 Democratic same-day registrants comprised 1.3% of all registered Democrats statewide.⁶

North Carolinians of many racial identities took advantage of SDR, as well:

⁶ Registration statistic based on totals as of 11/8/2016.

Use of Same-Day Registration: 2016 General Election



These figures demonstrate a disproportionately lower use of SDR by white North Carolinians, who comprised approximately 69% of North Carolina’s total registered voters as of Election Day.

Why would someone need to use SDR?

SDR modifies election procedures to allow for use of improved technology and serve an increasingly mobile society. According to the United States Census Bureau, 11.2% of the American population moves every year.⁷ This growing mobility is accompanied by an increased need to re-register from one election to the next—moving to a new county requires a new registration, not just an update on the address of the previous registration. This mobility in turn increases the likelihood that even the most diligent and best-intentioned voter will encounter an incident or error preventing his or her successful registration by mail. Individuals use SDR to ensure that they are not disenfranchised by such error.

For example, in the spring of 2016, Tara Dodson moved from Brunswick County to Guilford County. She visited a DMV office in her new county to update her address and took the opportunity to register to vote, as well. In early November 2016, Ms. Dodson looked herself up on the North Carolina State Board of Elections website to confirm her Election Day polling place, only to discover that due to a DMV error, she was still registered to vote in Brunswick County. However, because of the elapsed

⁷ United States Census Bureau, Migration/Geographic Mobility, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-189.html>.

2016 General Election

time, Ms. Dodson no longer met the residency requirements to legally vote in Brunswick County and, through no fault of her own, had missed the deadline to register by mail in Guilford County. Fortunately, she was able to utilize SDR on the last day of early voting to compensate for the administrative error, saving her from the headache of having to vote provisionally on Election Day and from potential disenfranchisement.

“There are glitches in the system, and people get kicked out; it’s not their fault.”

-- Kimberly Apple, Rockingham County

Common reasons people use SDR

- Voter registered by mail but failed the mail verification process due to clerical or administrative error.
- Voter registered at a public assistance agency that failed to convey the registration to the appropriate County Board of Elections.
- Voter registered at a drive or event and the political party or group failed to convey the registration to the appropriate County Board of Elections.
- Voter had citizenship rights restored after the mail-in registration deadline.
- Voter was a college student unaware that he could register in the county where he attends college.
- Voter had life circumstances preventing him from meeting the mail-in deadline.
- Voter was a first-time voter in the county who wants to take advantage of the convenience and security of registering and voting in one trip.

While this scenario is common, it is only one of many scenarios in which SDR can save the day. Callie Beshears, a student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, found herself in a similar predicament in November 2016. Ms. Beshears calls Wilkesboro home and registered to vote in Wilkes County through a campus-wide registration drive at UNCC, which is in Mecklenburg County. Ms. Beshears went home to Wilkesboro during the early voting period in order to head to the polls for the very first time with her mother. When she arrived at the early voting site, she was surprised to learn that the election officials could not find her name as a registered voter. Through some unknown error, either technological or human, Ms. Beshears was not on the voter rolls despite having filled out a mail-in registration form. Fortunately for Ms. Beshears, she was able to show her driver’s license as proof of identity and permanent residence in order to register and cast her first ballot as planned.

While SDR is extremely useful to those who have moved recently, it also can be useful to those who have not moved in many years and participate in elections less frequently.

For example, Kimberly Apple of Rockingham County had last voted in the 2008 presidential election and had not moved since that election. Nonetheless, when she

2016 General Election

arrived at an early voting site in her county in November 2016, she was informed that she had been removed from the voter rolls. Ms. Apple’s registration was likely removed as part of a statutory list maintenance process, but Ms. Apple does not recall receiving the requisite “confirmation mailer” from the Board of Elections attempting to confirm her address, nor any notice that she might be taken off the rolls. “There are glitches in the system, and people get kicked out; it’s not their fault,” said Ms. Apple, who was relieved that she could show her ID and use SDR to register and vote that day.

“They don’t teach that in high school. It’s more about ‘do your duty and vote,’ but not about how to do that.”

--R. Trey Rouse, Harnett County

Even in the absence of any issue with processing or maintaining a person’s voter registration, new voters young and old enjoy the increased enfranchisement that SDR affords them. R. Trey Rouse, a 20-year-old student at Campbell University, found that he had little time to learn the ins and outs of North Carolina election law between attending classes and working a job. “They don’t teach that in high school. It’s more about ‘do your duty and vote,’ but not about *how* to do that,” Mr. Rouse explained. In late October, Mr. Rouse overheard people discussing SDR while he was at work. Because of SDR, Mr. Rouse was able to go to the polls with his father, register, and vote for the very first time—despite his busy work and school schedule. Similarly, Robert G.,⁸ a 68-year-old Cleveland County resident, found himself newly interested in the political process in November 2016 and wanted to vote for the very first time. Mr. G. was unaware of the 25-day deadline for registration by mail and was pleased that despite “missing” that deadline, he could still take advantage of the convenience of being able to register and vote all in the same trip.

How secure is SDR?

Requirement	SDR	Mail-In Registration ⁹
Proof of Identity	X	
Proof of Residence	X	
Registration Form	X	X
In-Person Attestation	X	
Mail Verification	X	X

⁸ Mr. G asked not to have his last name published in this report, but his name and vote history have been verified through publicly available data

⁹ Requirements if the registrant provided Social Security number or NCDL number.

Use of Same-Day Registration:

2016 General Election

SDR is as secure as registering via mail, if not more so. A voter who registers by mail may be required to provide documentation when reporting to vote for the first time only if she did not include certain identifying numbers on her registration form. This means that many individuals using registration by mail will never have to show any documents to an election official in order to vote. By contrast, all same-day registrants have to provide a document that proves their identity and in-county residence in order to take advantage of SDR, regardless of whether they provide identifying numbers on their voter registration forms. In addition, all same-day registrants must sign the registration application in the presence of an election official and attest under penalty of a Class I felony that they are who they say they are. Further, each registrant, whether same-day or otherwise, goes through a mail verification process.

Conclusion

Since its inception in 2007, same-day registration has helped to increase formerly dismal turnout at the polls, and has assisted hundreds of thousands of North Carolina citizens in exercising their fundamental right to vote. North Carolinians of all races, ages, and political affiliations take advantage of this secure method of registration, and they did so for a multitude of reasons, whether it be administrative or technological error, recent change in circumstances, or pure convenience. If current trends hold true, the continued use of SDR will only lead to greater enfranchisement of and participation by North Carolina citizens in their government.