

Georgia On Republican Minds

Senate Republicans are looking to expand their majority in 2026 with a priority race being the Georgia Senate seat held by Jon Ossoff. Governor Brian Kemp has just passed on running for the Senate, so Republicans will need a candidate who can turn out the base and win a majority in a state that has been challenging for Republicans. In 2020, President Biden won Georgia by less than a point, but even in 2024 with a more decisive national win for Republicans, the margin for President Trump in Georgia was only 2.2%. In today's Discussion Points, we are reviewing highlights from the last race against Ossoff and what it will take for Republicans to win back this Southern seat.

Voter Groups	November 2020	Runoff
	Perdue-Ossoff	Perdue-Ossoff
Men	+12	+8
Women (56% of Nov 2020 GA electorate; 55% of runoff electorate)	-6	-10
Party ID	R+4	R+1
Independents	-8	-4
Moderates	-29	-26
18-44	-10	-26
45+	+12	+14

Women: Women comprised a particularly high percentage of the 2020 GA general (56%) and runoff electorates (55%). This compares to 52% nationally at the House level. There was a gender gap in the vote result, with the Republican candidate David Perdue losing women by 6 in the general and 10 in the runoff. There were similar margins in Kelly Loeffler's general election and runoff against Warnock. With women comprising particularly high percentages of the 2020 Georgia electorate, the gender gap was a significant disadvantage for Republican candidates to overcome.

Party ID: Despite losing both Senate seats, Republicans had party ID advantages. There was a +4 Republican party ID advantage in the general election, but only +1 in the runoff. In 2024, the Republican party ID advantage in the presidential race was +1 again. Given these results, turning out the base only will not be enough for 2026.

Trouble in the middle: In the November general election, Perdue lost independents by 8 and by 4 in the runoff. Moderates played a significant role especially in the runoff as the runoff electorate was more moderate (44%) than conservative (38%) or liberal (19%). The double digit losses among moderates (-29 in the general; -26 in the runoff) were a factor in the outcome. **14% of the runoff electorate identified as liberal Democrat, and 27% were conservative Republicans — meaning the conservative Republican base in that electorate was twice as large as the liberal Democratic base. Yet the Republican candidates still fell short.**

The youth factor: In the runoff, there were major differences in vote by age, with voters under 45 voting for the Democratic candidates by 26 points in each race.

Republicans should heed the lessons from Georgia for the upcoming Senate showdown. For more insights into 2026 Senate races, see our [recent analysis of Maine and North Carolina](#).

Have a good weekend.

David & Myra