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NYC VOTES

New York City Campaign Finance Board

The Campaign Finance Board (CFB) is a nonpartisan, independent city agency that empowers New Yorkers to make a greater impact on their elections.

Voter Assistance Advisory Committee

The Voter Assistance Advisory Committee (VAAC) advises the CFB on voter engagement and recommends legislative and administrative changes to improve NYC elections.

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2021 Elections Turnout Summary

		Primary	General
	Eligible Voters	3,828,835	4,919,037*
	Voters	1,013,427	1,147,555
	Citywide Turnout	26.5%	23.3%
Turnout by Borough	Manhattan	33.4%	26.3%
	Bronx	19.1%	17.5%
	Brooklyn	27.5%	22.4%
	Queens	25.0%	22.9%
	Staten Island	22.4%	33.7%
Turnout by Age	18–29	17.9%	11.1%
	30–39	21.7%	16.3%
	40–49	24.0%	22.1%
	50–59	28.8%	28.7%
	60–69	35.3%	35.5%
	70–79	37.7%	37.9%
	80 and up	23.2%	23.2%
Turnout by Vote Method	Absentee	11.7%	7.0%
	Early	18.8%	14.8%
	Election Day	69.5%	77.5%

* Also total number of registered voters

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

2021 Election Overview

In the 2021 general election, New York City voters elected a brand new Mayor and the most diverse City Council in history. Ranked choice voting was also used for the first time ever in a primary election and voters largely embraced it, with 88.3% of ballots ranking some of the 374 candidates that appeared on the ballot.

In the primary election, 26.5% of New Yorkers turned out to vote, making the 2021 primary election the highest voter turnout of any mayoral primary in the last several decades. However, in the general election, turnout fell to a historic low of 23.3%.

Turnout disparity remains high on the borough level. Turnout was highest in Manhattan for the primary election (33.4%) and lowest in the Bronx (19.1%). Turnout was highest in Staten Island for the general election (33.7%) and lowest in the Bronx (17.5%). These differences were higher than the turnout difference on the borough level in any NYC mayoral primary or general in the last decade.

- The turnout difference between the highest and lowest turnout community district was over 30% for the 2021 primary election and over 25% for the 2021 general election.

Compared to the most recent similar competitive mayoral primary in 2013, turnout in the 2021 primary increased for all age groups, except for voters older than 80. Youth turnout among voters under 30 increased in this primary election, compared to the 2013 primary. However, youth turnout decreased in the 2021 general election, compared to the 2013 general election.

- The average age of voters in the 2021 general election was over six years older than the average registered voter.

- Voters aged 70-79 had the highest turnout rate of all age groups for both the primary and general election.

Figure 0.1: Turnout for each age group 2013 vs 2021 primary election

Age Group	2013 Primary Turnout	2021 Primary Turnout	Percent Increase or Decrease
18–29	10.6%	17.9%	7.3%
30–39	15.3%	21.7%	6.4%
40–49	21.1%	24.0%	2.9%
50–59	28.6%	28.8%	0.2%
60–69	34.6%	35.3%	0.7%
70–79	35.3%	37.7%	2.4%
80+	26.2%	23.2%	-3.0%

Figure 0.2: Turnout for each age group 2013 vs 2021 general election

Age Group	2013 General Turnout	2021 General Turnout	Percent Increase or Decrease
18–29	11.8%	11.1%	-0.7%
30–39	17.0%	16.3%	-0.7%
40–49	23.8%	22.1%	-1.7%
50–59	31.8%	28.7%	-3.1%
60–69	37.9%	35.5%	-2.4%
70–79	39.0%	37.9%	-1.1%
80+	28.6%	23.2%	-5.4%

Once again, the 2021 general election ballot contained five ballot proposals, but this year those questions were posed to voters statewide. For each of the five ballot proposals in the 2021 general election, over 20% of New York City voters chose to leave the question blank on their ballots. Voters in Staten Island were more than twice as likely to vote on the proposal than voters in Brooklyn.

Though the last few years has been the story of expanded absentee voting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, absentee voting fell dramatically in popularity compared to 2020.

- 11.7% of primary election voters voted by absentee ballot in 2021, compared to 37.4% of voters who voted by absentee ballot in the 2020 primary and;

- 7% of general election voters voted by absentee ballot in 2021, compared to 21.4% of voters in the 2020 general election.

Most voters chose to vote on Election Day in 2021, with 68.8% choosing to do so in the primary election and 77.5% in the general election. Early voting fell in popularity in the 2021 general compared to 2020, but increased in popularity in the 2021 primary. This lack of trend led the CFB to further analyze who makes up the early voting electorate in our Early Voting Analysis section.

Figure 0.3: 2020 and 2021 vote method comparisons
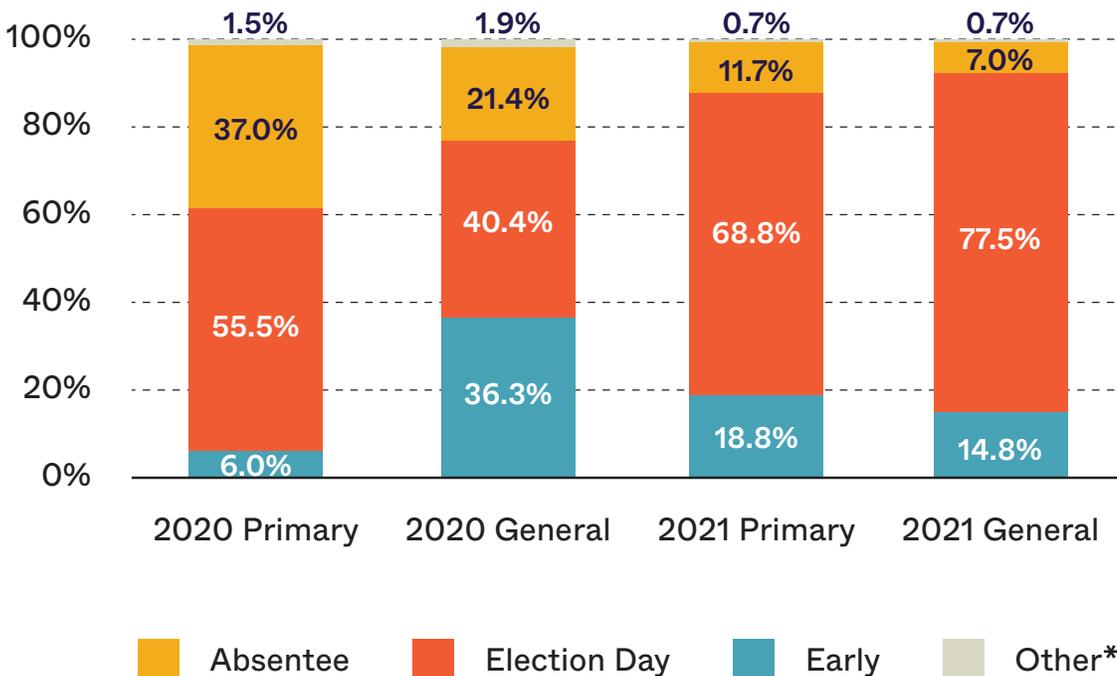
Early Voting Analysis

Early voting continues to be a fairly new vote method for New Yorkers, and 2021 marked only our fourth and fifth elections with this in-person voting option available to voters. In the 2021 primary election, 18.8% of voters chose to vote early, while 14.8% voted early in the general.

Figure 0.4: Distribution of voting method in 2021 primary and general elections
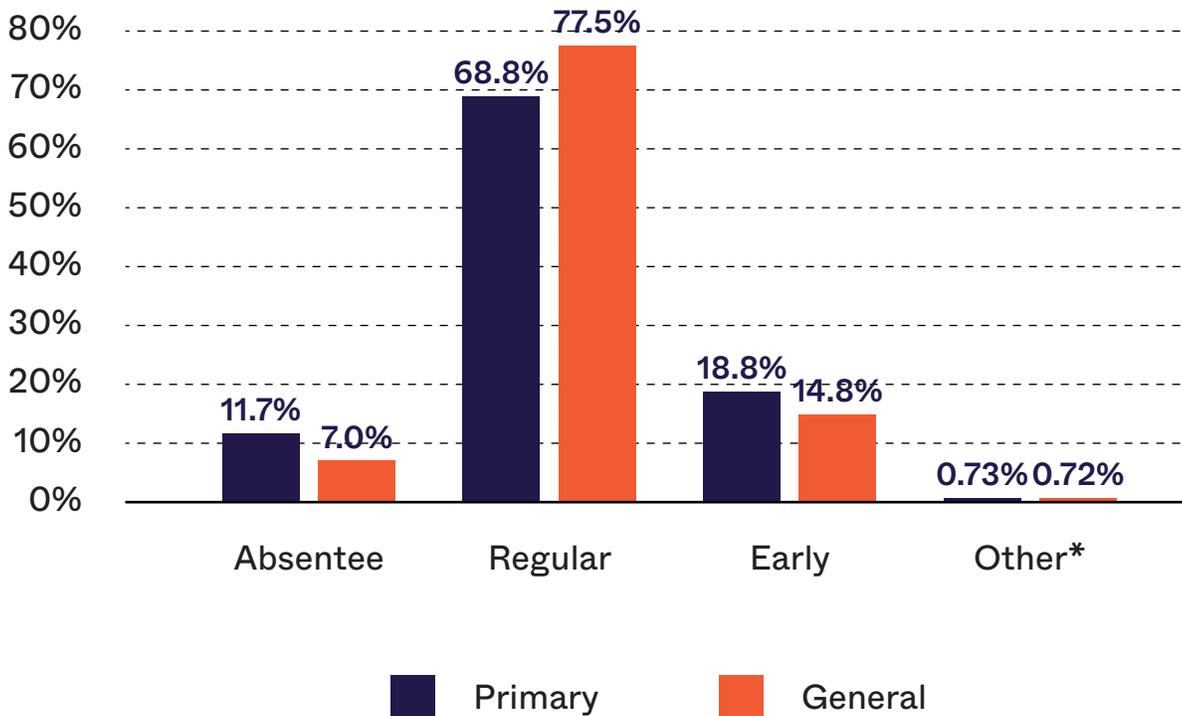
* Combines ballot categories "Special Ballot, Affidavit, and Military Ballots"

Note: Percentages sum to over 100% because of rounding.

Early voting seems to be gaining popularity in NYC, especially in higher turnout elections. The 2020 general election had a peak of 36.3% of all voters voting early. The 2021 primary early voting electorate tripled from the 2020 primary.

Figure 0.5: Voting distribution across early voting days for 2021 primary and general elections
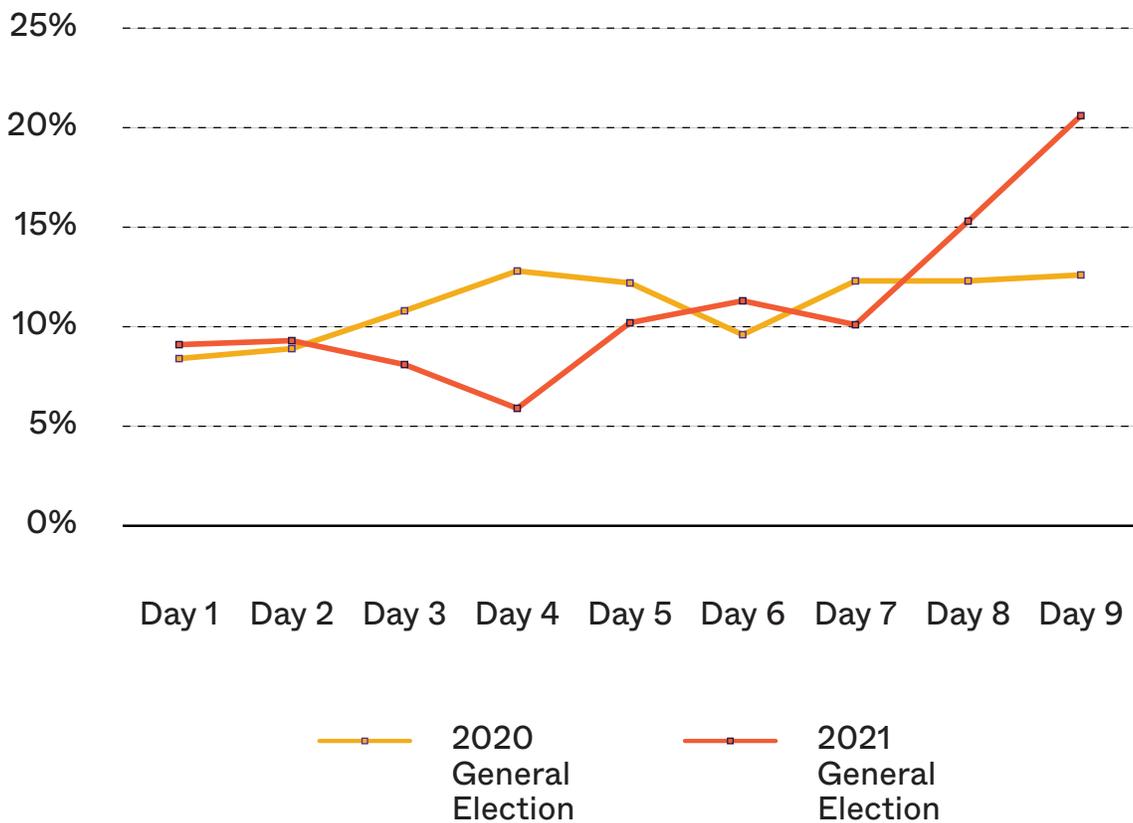
In our analysis of the last five elections that included an early voting option, in-person voters who were more likely to vote early instead of on Election Day were:

- older voters

- voters who lived within a half-mile of their assigned early voting site

- voters who have previously voted early, and

- new voters.

Ranked Choice Voting Analysis

In November 2019, New Yorkers approved a City Charter amendment to use ranked choice voting in special and primary elections to elect the city offices of Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, and City Council member. The first ranked choice voting elections took place in 2021, with four special elections for City Council in February and March and a citywide primary election for all five city offices on June 22, 2021.

After the primary election, the City BOE provided a Cast Vote Record (CVR), an anonymized table of candidate rankings by individual ballot, which allowed the CFB to dig deeper into voter behavior using this new system. The CFB consolidated the 25 CVR files released by the BOE to analyze voter ranking behavior across offices instead of by individual race.

We found that 88.3% of voters ranked candidates for at least one office on their ballot. When broken out by political party: 89.3% of Democrats ranked multiple unique candidates in at least one race, and 56.6% of Republicans ranked multiple unique candidates in at least one race.

In the 13-candidate Democratic mayoral primary, 46.2% of Democrats utilized all five of their ranks and 13% ranked only one unique candidate. In the two-candidate Republican mayoral primary, 48.3% of Republicans only ranked one unique candidate. Voters who ranked a single choice in the mayoral race did not always continue this behavior in other races on their ballot—19.3% of voters who ranked only one mayoral candidate ranked multiple candidates in their respective council races.

When looking at the proportion of voters who utilized all possible unique ranks in their council race, all the top races were Democratic races, and the top three districts all had 12 or more candidates running. As shown in Figure 0.6, the top three districts with the most voters using all possible ranks for their council race were Council Districts 26 (Queens), 27 (Queens), and 9 (Manhattan). These three races featured a higher than average number of candidates on the ballot, with the average council district having six candidates to rank.

Figure 0.6: Top 3 council races with ballots utilizing five rankings

Council District			Percent of Ballots	Number of Candidates
26	Queens	Democrat	48.2%	15
27	Queens	Democrat	47.1%	12
9	Manhattan	Democrat	42.2%	13

Out of 759,375 possible unique combinations of five rankings in the Democratic mayoral primary,[1] voters utilized 74,996, or only 9.9%, of possible unique combinations. Of those combinations, 38,003 (50.7%) were voted by only a single voter. The most common Democrat mayoral ranking sequence was Eric Adams in first rank with the next four ranks blank—6.3% of valid Democrat mayoral ballots voted this sequence.

We also looked at certain unique ranking behaviors, such as the number of single choice and bullet voters and whether those voters were consistent in how they ranked throughout their ballot. The CFB also looked at which voters were utilizing write-ins, chose to skip certain races, mismarked their ballot, or had fatal errors that invalidated races on their ballot.

Finally, we created a ranking score, a standardized way of comparing different districts or offices to one another, without penalizing voters living in districts with fewer candidates on the ballot. Overall, the citywide average ranking score was 52.0, indicating that the average New Yorker utilized a little over half of their available rankings.

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1   Assuming 13 named candidates, one write-in, and the ability to leave a ranking blank (also known as an undervote), there are 759,375 possible unique combinations in the Democratic mayoral race. There were five ranking choices in this race.

The CFB tested whether demographic or other voter data impacted this ranking score. In our statistical model, we found that only the number of candidates running in a council race impacted the ranking score—more candidates on the ballot increased voters' ranking scores.

Figure 0.7: Relationship between average ranking score of Democratic voters and number of candidates running
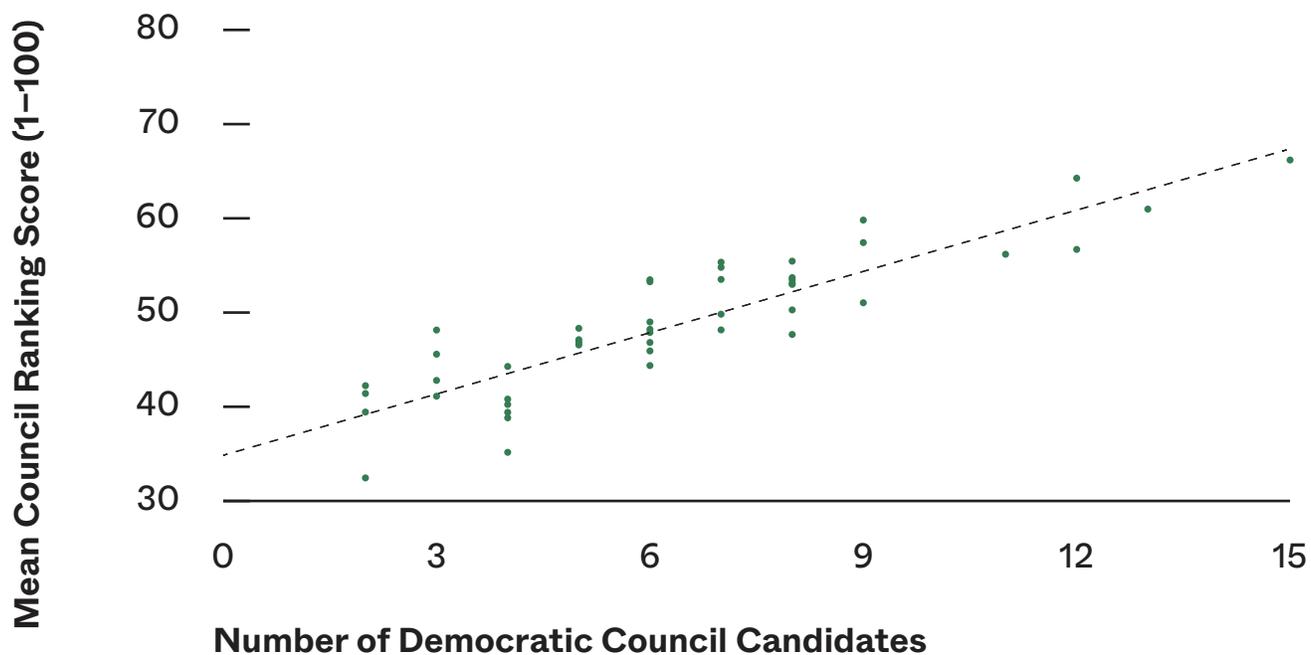
Policy & Legislative Recommendations

In three years, the voting landscape in New York has changed significantly. Early voting, more accessible absentee voting, and a reformed cure process have all taken effect since 2019. Though the state faced setbacks this past year with same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting, the CFB will continue to support these and other voting reforms. This year, our policy and legislative recommendations aim to make elections procedures transparent and straightforward and make voting methods accessible and easy.

Language Access

- **Recommendation 1:** Pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York to ensure consistent translation and interpretation services.

Early Voting

- **Recommendation 2:** Adopt a more equitable poll site assignment process to make the voting experience less frustrating.

- **Recommendation 3:** Implement borough-based vote centers that are more convenient for more voters.

- **Recommendation 4:** Publish timely early voting and poll site data to support voter outreach efforts.

Absentee Voting

- **Recommendation 5:** Pass no-excuse absentee voting, restarting the Constitutional amendment process.

- **Recommendation 6:** Create a fully electronic accessible absentee voting system.

- **Recommendation 7:** Revise the absentee ballot request deadline to reduce voter confusion.

- **Recommendation 8:** Update the absentee ballot tracker daily to keep voters informed about the status of their vote.

Voter Registration

- **Recommendation 9:** Streamline voter registration milestones into a single deadline to simplify the process for voters.

- **Recommendation 10:** Amend State Election Law to reduce the voter registration deadline to ten days before an election.

- **Recommendation 11:** Pass same day voter registration, restarting the Constitutional amendment process.

Ranked Choice Voting Results Reporting

- **Recommendation 12:** Publicize a schedule for ranked choice voting results reporting.

- **Recommendation 13:** Reorganize the cast vote record to aid researchers in analysis.

Year in Review

Year in Review

This edition of the Voter Analysis Report looks back at another historic year in New York City, when the 2021 elections gave voters the chance to inject a wave of new energy into city government.

Still dealing with an ongoing global pandemic and the troubling undercurrents of misinformation poisoning our national politics, our City yet again demonstrated its boundless capacity for resilience. Term limits cleared the way for voters to choose a new slate of city leaders, from mayor down to the City Council. After a year of unrelenting changes to our election system, New York started the new year ready for a yet another fresh challenge: preparing the electorate to vote on ranked choice voting (RCV) ballots. Despite the challenges, New York City's collective commitment to building a more open, participatory, and inclusive democracy never wavered.

The 2021 primary election represented an extraordinary milestone in NYC political history. Years of work at the City and State levels to make elections more open, accessible, representative, and equitable culminated in the highest turnout for a primary election in a generation, as New Yorkers elected the most diverse and representative government New York City has ever seen.[2]

The factors that made the 2021 election unique were long in the making. In November 2019, New York City voters approved a Charter amendment to establish ranked choice voting in primary elections for city offices starting in 2021, with 73.5% of participating voters voting in favor. The positive results demonstrated in other localities and states with ranked choice voting—offering voters a greater say, providing candidates with incentives to reach more voters, giving opportunities to more diverse candidates—suggested benefits for city voters in the new system compared to single choice elections with runoffs.

Also in 2019, the City Council voted to build on reforms enacted in 2018 that dramatically expanded the matching funds program for candidates for city office, increasing the matching rate for small-dollar contributions and increasing the overall levels of funding provided to

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2   Hogan, Gwynne and David Cruz. "The Next City Council Set To Be Most Diverse, Progressive, And Hold First-Ever Female Majority." *Gothamist*, 7 Jul 2021.

candidates. Taken together, the changes aimed to make running for office more accessible for more New Yorkers than it had ever been.[3]

After decades of bipartisan adherence to the status quo, many voting reforms first undertaken by State Legislature in 2019 were fully implemented or realized in 2021. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 forced even more changes to the way elections were conducted in New York. Legislation expanded access to absentee voting to ensure New Yorkers who wished to avoid transmission of the COVID-19 virus at poll sites could vote safely. As a result, the volume of absentee votes significantly expanded, requiring the City Board of Elections (City BOE) to quickly and dramatically scale up their capacity and the legislature to enact additional laws that further improved the process for voters. (The voting reform agenda is discussed further in the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section of this report.)

At the national level, as the year started, a persistent and concerted effort by former President Donald Trump to raise baseless concerns about the legitimacy of the 2020 elections fueled a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol that aimed to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power from one administration to the next. Dozens of New Yorkers who traveled to Washington, D.C. to take part would ultimately be arrested for their roles in the insurrection.[4] Preparations for the 2021 elections in New York City were kicking into high gear at a moment when the national discussion about the way we vote in America was reaching new depths of rancor and bitterness, driven by partisans refusing to accept the outcome of the 2020 election.

However, reformers in New York were not deterred. As the 2021 state legislative session began later in January, the Senate voted for the second time to advance amendments to the State Constitution that would allow same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting; in May, the Assembly followed suit. Both measures were put in front of the voters in the November general election, creating an opportunity to take another significant step forward in the effort to make elections in New York State more accessible and equitable.

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3   Clark, Gregory, Hazel Millard, and Mariana Paez. "Small Donor Public Financing Plays Role in Electing Most Diverse New York City Council." *Brennan Center for Justice*, 5 Nov, 2021.

4   Pozarycki, Robert. "Assaulting Democracy: These New Yorkers were arrested for alleged role in Jan. 6 Capitol attack." *AMNY*, 5 Jan, 2022.

Also in the first few months of the year, four vacancies on the City Council created an early test for the new ranked choice voting system, with two special elections each in Queens and the Bronx during the months of February and March. While the mechanics of filling out a ranked choice ballot are straightforward, the Charter amendment recognized that additional voter education would be required to acclimate voters to this new style of voting, giving the CFB, and its voter engagement initiative NYC Votes, a mandate to conduct outreach and engagement to support its implementation. The City BOE for their part stood up a special elections operation that involved hand-counting results for all four specials, because the State BOE had yet to certify their selected tabulation software.

The early-year special elections provided a valuable and important test run for CFB's RCV education campaign, and provided the CFB and City BOE the opportunity to closely align messaging and outreach plans. The challenge of introducing New Yorkers to ranked choice voting focused an extraordinary effort across government, non-profits, advocacy organizations, and community-based groups to coordinate messaging, explain the layout of the new ballots and the intricacies of the counting process, educate voters, and get them prepared to cast their votes with confidence. (See the NYC Votes in 2021 section for a detailed review of the NYC Votes RCV campaign.)

With voters wary of further changes to election rules, questions about the new system persisted through the early months of 2021. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the city's economy created uncertainty for the city's finances, leaving fewer resources for the campaign than lawmakers had hoped. In response, the City Council enacted Local Law 21 of 2021, which created new standards for the NYC Votes education campaign in 2021 and in 2023 and 2025 as well.

Even with additional resources devoted to educate voters, opponents of ranked choice voting continued to sow doubts about the impact of the system, calling it a form of "sophisticated voter suppression" that would disadvantage Black voters and communities underrepresented in the electorate.[5] Advocates working in these communities disputed this view, saying "attempts to frame RCV as too complicated or discourage voters from fully exercising their rights to vote are wrong and harmful" to those communities.[6] A lawsuit filed in State Supreme Court in December 2020 sought an injunction to block the implementation of ranked choice voting before the special elections; Judge Carol Edmead denied the plaintiffs' request, and in May denied a second attempt to block its use in the primary election.

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5   Maldonado, Samantha. "Did Ranked Choice Voting Work in NYC? It Depends Whom You Ask…" *The City*, 19 July, 2021.

6   Geringer-Sameth, Ethan. "'This Is The System We Chose': New York City's First Ranked-Choice Mayoral Vote Unfolds." *Gotham Gazette*, 22 June, 2021.

As the largest jurisdiction to adopt ranked choice voting, national attention focused on NYC ahead of the June primary election. The possibilities offered by ranked-choice elections and small-dollar matching funds helped to create the largest, most diverse field of candidates for office in the city's history.

More New Yorkers than ever before chipped in to support candidates—an analysis by *The City* before the primary election found that the number of people donating less than $100 to a mayoral campaign had tripled since the last open mayoral election in 2013— empowering "both small donors and under-represented candidates who may lack the resources and network to wage a campaign."[7] The field also comprised the biggest number of well-funded mayoral campaigns in recent memory, with seven candidates receiving matching funds including several women of color, and a total of $126 million paid out to all participating candidates.[8]

These factors, along with the urgency of choosing new leadership for the city in the middle of a pandemic, combined to push voter interest to its highest level in decades. Voter turnout in the primary hit 26.5% citywide—far below the participation level for a presidential-year election, but still the highest voter turnout in a city primary since 2001. (See the On the Ballot in 2021—Primary Election section for more detailed breakdowns of turnout in the primary election.)

Following a coordinated RCV educational campaign by NYC Votes, the City BOE, City government partners, and the civic non-profit sector—along with the individual efforts of candidates who embraced an RCV strategy—voters used the new system enthusiastically. NYC Votes' analysis of the cast vote record shows that 88.3% of voters ranked more than one candidate on their ballot in at least one race. (See the Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Analysis section for more information on how voters ranked their ballot.) In exit polling conducted after the primary by Edison Research for Rank the Vote NYC, 95% of voters reported they found ranked choice voting easy to use; 78% said they understood ranked choice voting extremely or very well. Importantly, there was little variation between demographic groups in these findings.[9]

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7   Choi, Ann. "Small Donors Shine in Record-Breaking NYC Mayoral Election Year."
     The City, 7 June, 2021.

8   NYC Campaign Finance Board "Board Approves $2.9M in Public Funds." 28 Oct, 2021.

9   Rank the Vote NYC. "Rank the Vote NYC Releases Edison Research Exit Poll on the Election." 28 June, 2021.

While voters largely understood how to vote and embraced the benefits, the largest test of ranked choice voting was not without room for improvement. On primary election night, the City BOE included only first-choice, in-person votes in the unofficial results reporting. Absentee canvassing procedures prevented the City BOE from including absentee ballots in the unofficial results on primary election night and also delayed release of a complete ranked choice voting tally, which caused some degree of confusion. (Recommended changes to ranked choice voting results reporting are discussed further in the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section of this report.)

The software used by the City BOE to tabulate the ballots was approved by the State BOE only in May—two and half weeks before the start of early voting—leaving the City BOE no opportunity to test the software under real-world conditions before the primary. (Tabulation in the February and March special elections was performed by hand.) When the results of the first ranked choice tabulation were announced on June 29, they mistakenly included 135,000 test ballots in the totals; because of a staff error, those additional results were not cleared from the BOE systems before running the official tabulation. Though the high-visibility mistake came at a crucial moment in the election, it was identified quickly, an explanation was provided within hours, and a revised count was issued the next day.

When the final results were ultimately certified on July 20, a nine-point first-rank margin for Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams in the Democratic mayoral primary had shrunk to a victory of less than a single percentage point in the eighth and final round of tabulation.

Up and down the ballot, the candidates who claimed victory in the primaries held out the promise of a more representative and equitable city government. *The New York Times* noted that the winners of City Council primaries "include[d] more than two dozen women, who will be positioned to take a majority of the Council's seats, for the first time ever. There are several activists from working-class backgrounds, several L.G.B.T.Q. people of color and at least six foreign-born New Yorkers."[10]

Following the first June primary for city offices in nearly 50 years, the November general election generated less intense interest from the voters. After the vigorous multi-candidate campaigns of the primary, the lion's share of general election races featured two major candidates at most. Wide disparities in party voter enrollment citywide, and in most council districts, left few competitive races to capture voters' attention. The general election was conducted under single choice voting, with plurality winner rules. The Democratic nominees for citywide offices were elected with wide majorities; New Yorkers also elected five

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10   Gold, Michael. "The Next City Council Will Look More Like New York."
       The New York Times, 8 July, 2021.

Republicans to the City Council, increasing their numbers to a level roughly commensurate with their representation among registered city voters. (See the On the Ballot in 2021 section—General Election for more detailed breakdowns of turnout in the general election.)

The ballot also featured five amendments to the State Constitution for New Yorkers to vote yes or no on—including the measures to enact same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting. Voting rights advocates and supporters of these long-sought reforms applauded their inclusion on the ballot but failed to coordinate a comprehensive campaign in favor of the ballot questions.

Meanwhile, in the weeks before the election, the state Conservative Party began a vigorous campaign against the questions, blanketing the airwaves, distributing lawn signs, and conducting digital outreach—in most counties around New York State, but outside of the City. The messaging relied heavily on the same baseless insinuations of voter fraud and "ballot harvesting" used as pretext to question the legitimacy of elections and restrict access to the ballot in states like Texas and Georgia.[11] The $3 million "Just Say No" campaign, supplemented by a media tour arguing the proposals "threaten our democracy," rolled out in late October, with little time for supporters to unify around a response.[12] (The ballot proposals campaign is discussed further in a case study in the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section of this report.)

While both questions earned 60% approval on recorded votes in New York City, they were defeated handily statewide. Voters outside the city opposed Question 3 (same-day registration) and Question 4 (no-excuse absentee ballots) by 64% and 61% respectively. Enthusiasm against the questions outside the city was high—only 6% of voters left the constitutional questions on their ballot blank, while more than 21% of New York City voters failed to record a vote on the ballot questions. (See the On the Ballot in 2021 section— General Election for more information about ballot proposal drop-off rates.)

Combined with the low turnout in New York City—23.3%—lower than in the primary, and the lowest in a mayoral general election in nearly 70 years—the lack of enthusiasm for the questions meant that support in New York City was not sufficient to overcome the organized opposition. For policymakers and legislators who anticipated a victory that would provide further momentum in the years-long push to get more New Yorkers onto the voter rolls and into the polls, the defeat marked a dispiriting setback—but not the end of the effort.

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11   Bergin, Brigid. "How Warring Democrats Lost A Battle Over Voting Rights 'Even In Deep Blue New York." *Gothamist*, 5 Nov, 2021.

12   Rubinstein, Dana. "Why New Yorkers Rejected Ballot Proposals on Voting and Redistricting." *The New York Times*, 3 Nov, 2021.

Instead of checking same-day registration and no-excuse absentee voting off the to-do list, they persist as policy goals for the New York voting rights community. (For more details on the NYC Votes legislative agenda for 2022, see the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section.)

2021 is a story of two very different elections. The primary election featured an unprecedented number of candidates conducting an intense competition for votes. It saw a broad coordinated effort to engage, inform, and prepare New Yorkers to adopt a new style of voting. New Yorkers met the moment, showing up in robust numbers and ready to embrace a new system of voting that promised to provide a more complete representation of their preferences.

When tasked with returning to the polls in November for the general election, the electorate failed to respond with the same enthusiasm. The energy that fueled higher-than-average participation in the June primary did not carry through to the fall, which continued a trend of non-competitive, low-interest general elections for local office.

For NYC Votes and our partners throughout the city, the work of bringing more New Yorkers into the process of electing their local leaders of government must continue and expand. In conjunction with increased outreach to underrepresented communities, bold policy initiatives are needed to increase city voters' engagement in local elections.

Some of those policies are already on the books, and have been or are in the process of being implemented for voters. In 2021, because in-person voter registration activities were dramatically curtailed by the pandemic, the State Legislature enacted automatic voter registration and universally accessible online voter registration, creating opportunities to get more New Yorkers on the voter rolls starting in 2023. In late 2021, the City Council passed legislation to allow permanent residents and people with work authorizations to vote in city elections, extending the franchise to a new class of New Yorkers who pay taxes, rely on city services, and are stakeholders in the city's future regardless of their naturalization status.

Other bold structural ideas should be considered to maximize turnout and engagement across and beyond political parties, especially two raised recently by CFB Chair Frederick P. Shaffer: non-partisan elections and moving City elections to even years.[13] With the turnout disparity between the 2021 primary and general elections, policymakers should consider big, structural policy changes, such as non-partisan elections, with fresh eyes. Now that we use ranked choice voting to elect city offices in primary elections, should we explore holding a single, non-partisan ranked choice election, open to all city voters?

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13   CityLand. "177th CityLaw Breakfast with Frederick P. Schaffer, Chair of the NYC Campaign Finance Board." 11 Mar, 2022

Looking towards another major policy change: though it was considered the height of progressive-era reform to move city elections to odd years, so as not to compete with federal and state races,[14] an unintended result in the modern era has been anemic turnout compared to on-cycle, even-year elections. Is it possible that consolidating city elections with state or presidential elections would involve more city voters into the process of choosing their leaders?

The policy and legislative recommendations in the pages that follow propose a comprehensive set of ideas, supported by experience and research, to continue the progress we've made in recent years towards perfecting a more open, accessible, and equitable system of elections for New York—including passage of the New York Voting Rights Act. We celebrate the hard-won successes of these past few years and look forward to the work ahead. In the next Voter Analysis Report, we look forward to exploring the big, structural elections policy changes that are being talked about currently to address low voter turnout.

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14   Williams, Keith. "The Odd Timing of City Elections in New York." *The New York Times*.
      7 Sep, 2017.

NYC Votes in 2021

NYC Votes in 2021

The CFB is mandated by the New York City Charter to conduct voter education and engagement. Specifically, our mandate is to encourage registration and voting by all eligible New York City residents; identify groups of voters that are underrepresented in the city electorate; and to focus on increasing registration and turnout, particularly by underrepresented voters. This focus on underrepresented voters makes our mandate unique from other cities and states around the country that have similar pro-voter agencies and organizations. It also makes our mandate unique from the City BOE, which must notify and educate voters in a uniform way, whereas the Charter specifically requires our programs to prioritize potential voters who have been left out of political discourse.

To identify underrepresented voters, our policy & research team conducts in-depth research analyzing voter registration and turnout in New York City which we publish in this annual report. Our team defines underrepresented voters as those with lower turnout who lack power in politics.[15] We focus on the following groups of underrepresented voters:

- Young voters under the age of 30;

- Immigrant voters, including New Americans, voters with limited English proficiency, and new city-only voters;

- Voters with disabilities; and

- Voters who were previously disenfranchised due to a felony conviction.

We have also conducted research into systemic barriers that prevent voters from participating in local elections. What we hear most often is that voters lack the information they need to meaningfully participate, such as information about what offices are on the ballot, which candidates are running, and how local elections can make a difference in their everyday lives and impact the issues that they care about. This of course intersects with other barriers that voters face, such as the lack of translation and language support for people with limited English proficiency (LEP), as well as inaccessible voter information and voting options.

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15   For more information on this analysis, please see CFB's 2019–2020 Voter Analysis Report.

To provide voters with the information that they need to participate and reduce barriers to the ballot, we use the following model in conducting voter education:

- **Inform** the broadest possible audience; and

- **Engage** more deeply with underrepresented voters.

This section will address how we applied this model during the 2021 citywide elections, including how we conducted ranked choice voting (RCV) education as a case study for jurisdictions looking to implement this model in their local elections.

Informing voters about local elections

One of our strategic goals during the 2020–2021 election cycles was to be a trusted source of information. This goal was particularly crucial during a period when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the way that New Yorkers register and vote and when false and misleading election information formed a growing threat to elections at a national, state, and local level.

To help voters recognize the CFB as a trusted source of election and voting information, we prioritized a significant rebranding of NYC Votes. We engaged with Big Duck, a Brooklyn based marketing agency, to assist us in developing a strategy to best reach our target audiences and provide them with the tools and information that they need. We defined the NYC Votes brand as approachable, helpful, independent, activating, and open. We then worked with Pentagram, a world-renowned design studio, to create a new visual identity that we carried through all of our platforms, including redesigns of the Voter Guide, our voter-facing website voting.nyc, and all of our print and digital materials.

Get Out the Vote advertising campaigns

NYC Votes worked with Once-Future Office, a multi-disciplinary design studio, to translate our new brand identity into a new advertising campaign encouraging eligible New Yorkers to vote and driving them to visit our website voting.nyc. Our advertising campaigns delivered over 200 million total impressions (over 100 million each for the primary and general election) across all channels, with a total advertising budget of $1.9 million. We also significantly increased our use of video—increasingly the medium of choice for social media users—with over 15 million digital video views. Over 4 million of those views were on TikTok, where we piloted influencer-led campaigns in November with a primary focus on youth.

Between May 14th and November 2nd, our websites had over 985,000 unique visitors. Of the 823,000 who visited voting.nyc, approximately 600,000 of them were driven by digital advertising. We also saw the percent of people who reached the site organically increase from 20% in the 2020 election to 30% in 2021, likely reflecting improved search engine optimization for the redesigned site as well as NYC Votes being a "source of truth" in the local election where there are fewer places for voters to look for information.

Additionally, we earmarked 10% of our budget for advertising in languages other than English. This resulted in 7 million impressions from community and ethnic media. In total, about 90,000 website visitors used translated versions of our website, mostly in either Spanish or Chinese. We also saw mobile use of the site continue to increase, with over 77% of visitors accessing the site on a mobile device.

In addition to driving voters to our website, we provided options for those registering to vote. We partnered with TurboVote, a technology and data-focused voting platform, to provide a place for people to register if they had limited options for registering to vote online. Between January 1st and October 1st, we had over 10,000 users of our TurboVote site, with over 7,500 requesting assistance to register to vote.

Voter Guide
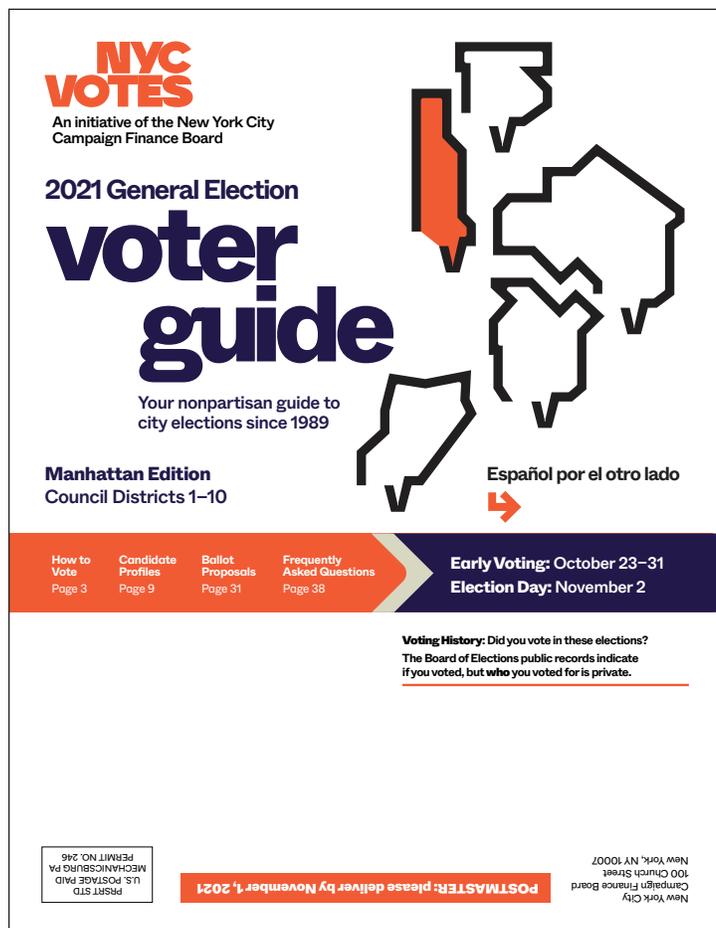
As in every local election year, we mailed a print Voter Guide to every registered voter for both the primary and general elections, nearly 4.8 million households. Additionally, voters could access copies of the Voter Guide at public library branches, offices of city and state elected officials, and other community partner locations. We also produced the Voter Guide online, which included additional information about the candidates and included filmed statements from candidates who opted to participate in the Video Voter Guide. Those video statements included American Sign Language interpretation and closed captioning.

Overall, candidate participation in the Voter Guide was high, with over 85% of candidates on the ballot appearing in the print Voter Guide and over 71% of candidates on the ballot filming a video statement for the primary and general elections.

Figure 2.1: 2021 candidate participation in the Voter Guide

	Primary Election	General Election
Number of candidates on the ballot	374	139
Number of profiles in the Voter Guide	332	118
Number of candidates with a video statement	274	99

Voting.nyc redesign

We worked with Blue State Digital, a New York-based digital strategy and design firm, to overhaul the voting.nyc website and make it a go-to source of information for voters. The redesign applied the new brand guidelines and focused on improving the user experience of the online Voter Guide by creating candidate selection tools for voters and surfacing need-to-know information. It better integrated opportunities for voters to sign up for our email and text alert list, see key upcoming election dates, and get information about upcoming NYC Votes events.

The redesign of the website won an international Umbraco Gold Award for Best Partner Solution, with the awards jury calling the end result, "[a]n incredible community-driven site that grows intuitively with the end-user. Design and clarity of UX make it a site that will be used as a benchmark in their sector."

Citywide debates

The CFB is responsible for putting on the official citywide debates program. Candidates running for Mayor, Comptroller, or Public Advocate who receive public funds are required to participate. To qualify for the debates, candidates must meet nonpartisan and objective criteria for both an initial debate and a "leading contenders" debate.

The 2021 debates had the highest viewership numbers in program history. Due to the high interest in this election, we worked with broadcast sponsors to host additional debates during the election cycle.

Primary election debates

Given the competitiveness of the field for Democratic mayoral candidates, we held three debates between May and June. WABC was selected to host the first required debate, and WNBC/Telemundo was selected to host the second required debate for leading contenders. We also worked with Spectrum News NY1 to add a debate to the schedule in May. For each of these debates, eight candidates appeared: Eric Adams, Shaun Donovan, Kathryn Garcia, Ray McGuire, Dianne Morales, Scott Stringer, Maya Wiley, and Andrew Yang.

- **NY1:** This debate drew a 0.92 Nielsen HH rating. This was the highest audience rating for the station since 2011 when Nielsen tracking became available. By comparison, in 2013, NY1's August 21 mayoral primary debate drew a 0.67 Nielsen HH rating (which we converted to 50,159 viewers in the 2013 Post-election Report). The NY1 2017 mayoral primary debate reached 54,817 viewers, while their general election debate reached 101,812 viewers.

- **WABC:** Reached 681,580 viewers in the 18+ demographic. These stats are for WABC broadcast only. This represents at least a 16% viewership increase over the 2013 debate sponsored by ABC (not a CFB debate). This debate also marked the first time candidates provided descriptions of themselves, which the CFB posted on Twitter, to provide greater access to the debate for voters who are blind or have low vision.

Figure 2.2: Primary election debate viewship

Date	Sponsor	Viewership
May 13, 2021	Spectrum News NY1	59,236 households
June 2, 2021	WABC	681,580 viewers (television only)
June 16, 2021	WNBC/Telemundo	479,203 total viewers (all platforms)

There was no official debate for the Republican mayoral primary because no candidates met the minimum threshold, but Spectrum News NY1 held a debate between Curtis Sliwa and Fernando Mateo on May 26, 2021.

Two Comptroller debates were held in June, with 8 candidates appearing in both (Brian Benjamin, Michelle Caruso-Cabrera, Zachary Iscol, Corey Johnson, Brad Lander, Kevin Parker, Reshma Patel, and David Weprin). Spectrum News NY1 hosted the first debate on June 10th and reached over 23,000 households. WNBC/Telemundo hosted the second debate on June 20th, and drew in over 217,000 viewers across all platforms.

General election debates

There were two mayoral debates in the general election between the Democratic nominee Eric Adams and the Republican nominee Curtis Sliwa. The first was hosted by WNBC/Telemundo and drew 611,921 viewers live. The total viewership of 1,308,329 was 7% higher than when WNBC/Telemundo hosted similar debates in the 2013 general election between Bill de Blasio and Joe Lhota. The second debate was hosted by WABC on October 26th, and reached 1,017,568 viewers in the 18+ demographic. This included 7,000 viewers on ABC's website and connected apps, and 22,000 viewers on their YouTube channel.

There were no official debates for the Comptroller or Public Advocate races; in both cases, only one candidate met the official debate criteria. Spectrum News NY1 hosted an unofficial debate for the Public Advocate's race on October 19th, in which Devi Nampiaparampil and Jumaane Williams both appeared.

Other events with BRIC

NYC Votes also tested out hosting events in partnership with BRIC, an arts and media organization located in downtown Brooklyn, both moderated by Brian Vines. For the primary election, we cohosted a #BHeard Town Hall along with The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce that featured eight candidates running for Brooklyn Borough President (Robert Cornegy, Kimberly Council, Khari Edwards, Anthony T. Jones, Antonio Reynoso, JoAnne Simon, and Lamor Miller-Whitehead). Debate questions provided by community partners covered education, criminal justice and police reform, housing and homelessness, the economy, and arts and culture.

For the general election, we cohosted a Know Your Voting Rights Townhall. Public Advocate Jumaane Williams gave opening remarks, and an engaging discussion took place between Assemblymember Latrice Walker, Chair of the Assembly Election Law Committee; Michelle Bishop, Voter Access & Engagement Manager at the National Disability Rights Network; Lucia Gomez, Political Director of the NYC Central Labor Council – AFL-CIO; Esmeralda Simmons, Esq., Founder – Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College; and Omar Suarez, Director of Partnerships and Outreach at the CFB.

Engaging with underrepresented voters

Our staff conducts trainings, workshops, and community presentations throughout the year, and also develops programming to engage more deeply with underrepresented voters. Our Youth Engagement Coordinator continued to deliver civic engagement workshops, and also managed the second cohort of our signature youth ambassador program, described in more detail below. Our Field Coordinator worked with volunteers to pilot relational organizing and test new techniques, while conducting large-scale get out the vote (GOTV) activities, also described in more detail below.

Youth ambassador program

2021 NYC Votes Youth Ambassadors, Nikita Chernin and Felicia Trestin, register voters at a Fall Community Fair on Staten Island hosted by Councilmember Debi Rose's Office

In 2021, we expanded on our successful pilot of the We Power NYC program that we initiated in 2020. Unlike previous years, the 2021 program was a paid internship in order to ensure equity. We engaged with underrepresented youth by providing resources and training so the youth ambassadors were able to effectively increase voter turnout in their communities and among their peers. We had over 1,100 young people apply for 16 spots in the program. We prioritized selecting youth who had a strong interest in civic engagement but due to socioeconomic standing may not have had as much access to other internships and job opportunities as their peers from more affluent communities.

We ultimately had a total of 15 ambassadors, with six from the Bronx, four from Brooklyn, one from Manhattan, two from Queens and two from Staten Island. Ten of our 15 ambassadors spoke languages other than English, including Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Russian, and American Sign Language.

2021 NYC Votes Youth Ambassadors (from left to right: Nafisatou Tunkara, Siara Chowdhury, and Felicia Trestin) make posters on set while filming the NYC Votes 2021 Primary Election PSA

We provided programming throughout the year, including a civic engagement curriculum that encompassed voter mobilization training and ranked choice voting training; local history lessons about Robert Moses, the Young Lords, and Shirley Chisolm; social media trainings and live takeovers of the NYC Votes Instagram account; and media training and opinion writing workshops. Our youth ambassadors filmed PSAs for Queens Public TV; were featured in several RepresentNYC episodes for Manhattan News Network; appeared on the NextGen Politics podcast; were quoted in articles for *Gothamist* and *Staten Island Advance*; and published an op-ed about the need for candidates to reach out to young people in the *Gotham Gazette*.

In addition, our ambassadors were tasked with hosting GOTV events in both the spring and fall. Throughout the year, they hosted 27 events that reached over 1,000 youth and community members. They also participated in every text bank hosted by NYC Votes and recruited their peers and community members to participate along with them.

Upon completion of the program, ambassadors rated the program highly and gave positive feedback on how much they learned about civic engagement and voting. They noted the development opportunities that were offered and the skills that they gained, with several calling the program life-changing.

Get Out the Vote outreach

NYC Votes and our dedicated group of volunteers sent over one million text messages in 2021. During the June primary, we worked in collaboration with DemocracyNYC at the Mayor's Office to text all eligible voters with a cell phone. NYC Votes focused on lower propensity voters who are typically missed by campaigns. We texted voters under 40, segmenting them by vote method (absentee, early voting, or Election Day voting) in the 2020 general election; low-propensity voters over the age of 30; and voters under 30 plus

all voters in our priority neighborhoods who are registered to vote but do not participate. We focused on sending these voters messages about why they should vote in the primary election. DemocracyNYC messaged higher-propensity voters and focused on messages about ranked choice voting. We texted over 630,000 voters with 226 volunteer shifts.

For the November general election, we pivoted to focusing on unaffiliated voters who were not eligible to vote in June, as well as doing a second pass of our priority groups from June. We sent text messages to all voters under the age of 60 who were unaffiliated or registered to a party that did not have a primary in June, all 18- to 29-year-old voters, and 30- to 39-year-old voters in our priority neighborhoods or those who had registered within the last two years. In total, we texted over 380,000 voters with 156 volunteer shifts.

Ranked choice voting education

Ranked choice voting (RCV) was added to the city charter in 2019 by referendum, and went into effect for the 2021 election cycle. RCV was used in all special and primary city elections for the offices of Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, and City Council. Instead of selecting only one candidate, voters could now choose up to five candidates by ranking them in order of preference.

As part of the charter amendment, the CFB was mandated to conduct a voter education campaign to familiarize voters with this new voting method. We carefully considered how to balance this new mandate with our charter mandate to increase participation of underrepresented voters. We ultimately took a different approach than many organizations that emphasized RCV-first messaging, which was critical for informing voters who regularly turn out to elections of the coming change, but was not designed to engage lower propensity voters who needed messages focused on why they should participate in city elections. We designed a communications strategy that aimed to hook voters with a GOTV message and drive them to resources about which candidates were running for office and how they could use RCV to express their preferences. We released a roadmap to the City Council and the NYC Elections Consortium in fall 2020 to preview our plans for voter education. Later, the Council passed legislation that largely codified our existing plans, with additional training and education requirements for government agencies that have contact with the general public.

Communications strategy and new RCV tools

Bite, snack, meal

Help voters consume information in manageable parts.

Bites: gives key information to take action

Snacks: might be enough to satisfy, or tempt to go further

Meals: next level of information

Bite: shortest possible information

Snack: enough information for an experienced voter

Meal: full details or instructions

We engaged with the Center for Civic Design, whose staff have extensive experience working with election officials on designing voter communication and implementing RCV, to research the needs of city voters so that we could learn how to engage with them most effectively. Together, we designed a bite/snack/meal approach to serve the level of information that would be relevant to voters and get them what they needed to participate.

Most voters only wanted a "bite," or the minimum amount of information they needed to know about the mechanics of casting their ballot. We presented that information through tools like the citywide postcard mailing and through social media. Some voters wanted a "snack" that was a bit more in depth, such as information about why this change to voting was made and that it came through a voter referendum. We included more in-depth information in the Voter Guide and on voting.nyc. Voters could find more information on a dedicated page that included a two-minute explainer video that we created with Mighty Oak, a Brooklyn-based, minority/women owned design and animation studio, as well as frequently asked questions and a practice ballot. A smaller subset of voters wanted a full "meal," including information about how counting ballots works, how RCV affects election outcomes, and how winners are declared. Voters in this category wanted more in-depth information

Ranked Choice Voting is here!

In primary and special elections for city offices, you can now rank up to five candidates in order of preference instead of choosing just one. The June 28th primary election will **not** use Ranked Choice Voting because it is for state and federal offices.

Ranked Choice Voting | What do I need to know?

Copy link

Watch on ▶ YouTube

about this vote method in order to feel more comfortable using it. For these voters, we had more in-depth information about how ballots are counted and what results look like.

The site redesign and the accompanying rollout of RCV education tools won an Anthem Award in the Civil and Human Rights category. It was a Silver Winner for Best Local Awareness Program.

Train-the-trainer presentations and community outreach workshops

In addition to the tools we created to reach a mass audience, CFB staff conducted dozens of "train-the-trainer" presentations and RCV education workshops. The majority of voters would not experience RCV until the June primary, although voters in Council Districts 11, 15, 24, and 31 that had special elections in February and March were able to use this new voting method earlier than the primary.

Therefore, we prioritized our outreach at the start of 2021; from January through March, our focus was on direct education for special election voters, and delivering train-the-trainer workshops to organizational staff citywide who would be doing their direct voter contact in June. After the March special elections were completed, we pivoted to delivering community outreach workshops directly to voters.

We conducted outreach to all elected officials in the city, offering to work with their offices to give trainings and workshops to their constituents. We partnered with elected officials in City Council and the state legislature, Borough Presidents in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens, and community boards across the city.

In partnership with the City BOE's Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, we conducted two trainings on RCV for voters with disabilities that explained in detail how to vote an RCV ballot on the ballot marking device. We also partnered with the Mayor's Office DemocracyNYC initiative to provide trainings in the designated citywide languages and with the NALEO Education Fund and Dominicanos USA to provide Spanish-language trainings.

Additionally, we gave presentations to political clubs, unions, libraries, CUNY, and community-based organizations to reach as broad an audience as possible. Overall, our staff conducted 177 trainings, directly reaching an audience of over 10,000 voters.

On the Ballot in 2021

On the Ballot in 2021

The 2021 primary election, held on June 22nd, was the first citywide election with ranked choice voting for five city offices: Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, and City Council. The primary election included single choice races for District Attorney, NYS Supreme Court, Civil Court, and Surrogate Court.

In the November 2nd general election, New Yorkers voted again for these offices as well as five ballot proposals on voting rights, environmental rights, jurisdiction of the New York City Civil Court, and the State's redistricting and apportionment process. All ballots in the general election were single-choice.

This year was the second year that New York held a single primary election in June, rather than holding separate primary elections for federal offices in June, and state and local offices in September. It was also the second election cycle that New Yorkers voted in during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the first election cycle when most New Yorkers were vaccinated against COVID-19.[16] These two key differences in timing and context of the elections make it more difficult to directly compare turnout to past election periods.

Throughout this section, we will be comparing the 2021 citywide election to the 2017 and 2013 citywide election years. Typically, we compare turnout in an election to turnout four years prior, which is the most recent comparable election. However, in many cases, the 2013 citywide elections are a better point of comparison to 2021.

The 2021 election included many "open races," meaning races without an incumbent, because many officials elected in 2013 were term-limited to two terms of four years each. For example, former Mayor Bill de Blasio was term-limited and not able to run in 2021, meaning the Mayor's race was open; 36 of 51 City Council races were open as well.[17] Open races generate more media attention and more enthusiasm from voters. Because voters were likely more similarly motivated to vote in 2013 and 2021 than in 2017, the 2013 election may be a stronger point of comparison to the 2021 election than the 2017 election.

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16   PIX11 Web Team. "NY Covid latest: Monday, June 14, 2021." *PIX11*, 14 June, 2021.

17   Out of 36 total City Council seats with open races, there were a total of 41 races on the Democrat, Republican, and Conservative party lines in the primary election.

Figure 3.1: Historic voter turnout by election cycle 2017–2021

Year		On the Ballot in NYC	Primary	General
2017	NYC	Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, City Council	14.6%	25.2%
2018	Federal	U.S. Congress	11.3%	46.0%
	State	Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller, State Senate, State Assembly	28.4%	
	NYC	Ballot Proposals	—	
2019	NYC	Council District 45, Queens District Attorney	11.9%	17.2%
	NYC	Public Advocate, Ballot Proposals	—	
2020	Federal/ State/ NYC	President, U.S. Congress, State Senate, State Assembly, Queens Borough President	25.7%	61.9%
	NYC	Council District 37	—	
2021	NYC/ State	Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, City Council, District Attorney, Judges	26.5%	23.3%
	State	Ballot Proposals	—	

Voter Registration

By the end of 2021, the New York City voter rolls contained nearly five million active registered voters, representing a voter registration rate of 90.9%.[18]

Figure 3.2 General election turnout shown with registered voters and citizens of voting age

1,147,555 Actual Voters
(23.3% of Registered Voters)

4,919,037 Registered Voters
(90.1% of Citizens of Voting Age Population)

5,457,412 Citizens of Voting Age Population

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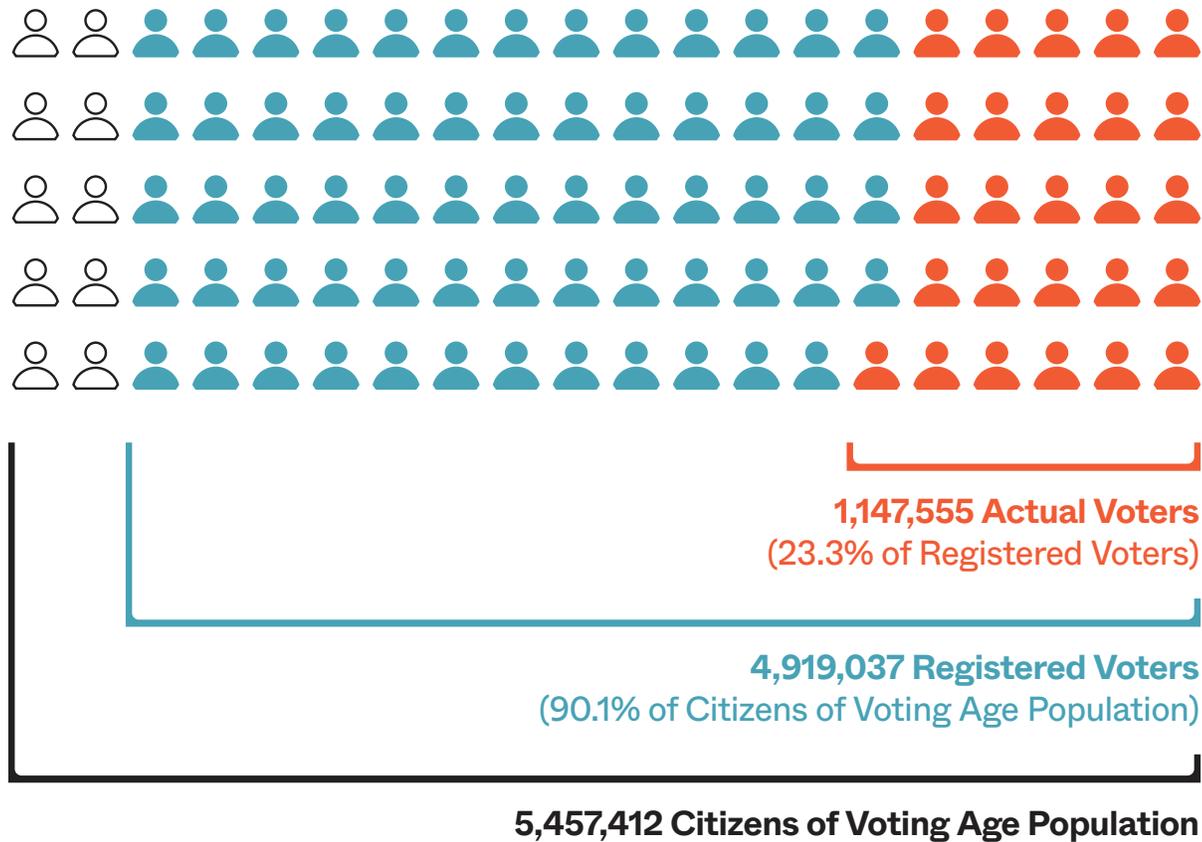
18   The estimate for the eligible voting population in NYC comes from the 2019 American Community Survey. Therefore, the estimate of the proportion of the voting age population who is registered to vote does not account for population increase in NYC from 2019 to 2021.

A total of 127,641 new voters registered to vote for the first time in 2021. Of these 127,641 new registrants, 49,956 registered before the deadline to vote in the primary election, and 100,225 registered before the deadline to vote in the general election.

Among those who were eligible to vote in the 2021 primary, 39.8% of newly registered voters turned out to vote. The turnout rate among newly registered voters exceeded the overall turnout rate in the primary election by over 13%. However, in the general election, the turnout rate among newly registered voters was lower than the overall turnout rate. While 23.3% of all eligible voters turned out to vote in the general election, only 18.5% of newly registered voters did the same. This might indicate that unregistered City residents were encouraged to register for the first time specifically to vote in the competitive City primary elections.

Figure 3.3: Newly registered voter turnout compared to overall turnout

Newly Registered Voters   All Voters
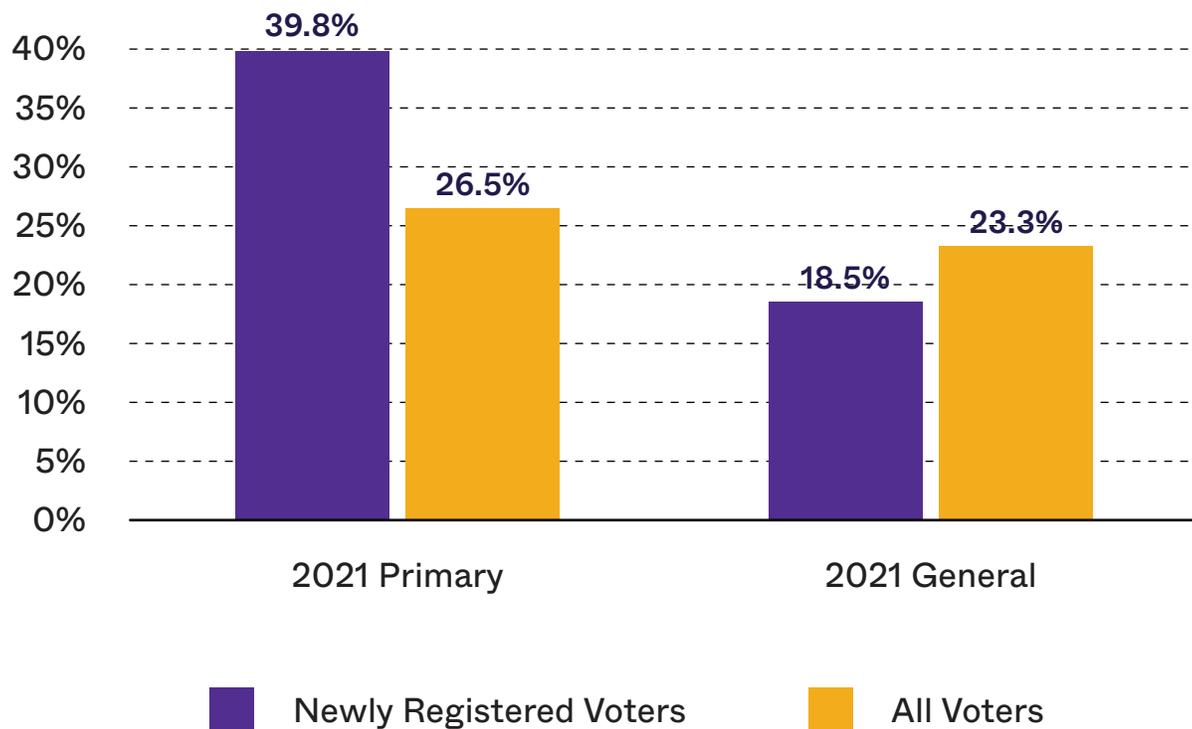
Newly registered voters skew young, as shown in Figure 3.4. The average age of newly registered voters in 2021 was 32, while the average age of all registered voters was 49. However, newly registered voters came from all age groups: close to 1% of newly registered voters were older than 80.

Figure 3.4: Age distribution of newly registered voters
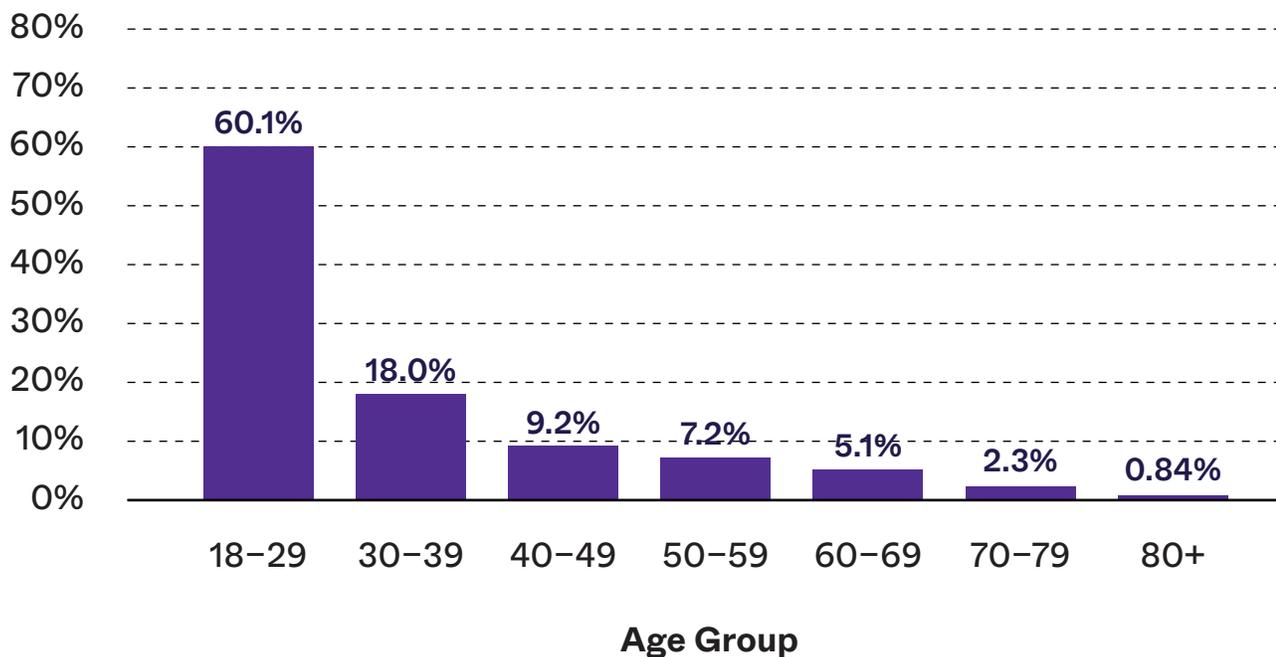
Voter turnout among newly registered voters varied by age, with younger newly registered voters turning out to vote at a lower rate than older newly registered voters, as shown in Figures 3.5 and 3.6. In the primary election, voter turnout among newly registered voters exceeded overall voter turnout across all age groups. In the general election, voter turnout among newly registered voters exceeded overall turnout only for voters under 50 and voters over 80.

Figure 3.5: Newly registered voter turnout by age compared to overall turnout for the 2021 primary election

Newly Registered Voters — All Voters

Age Group	Newly Registered Voters	All Voters
18–29	31.1%	17.9%
30–39	38.4%	21.7%
40–49	41.3%	24.0%
50–59	41.8%	28.8%
60–69	48.9%	35.3%
70–79	52.1%	37.7%
80+	44.6%	23.2%
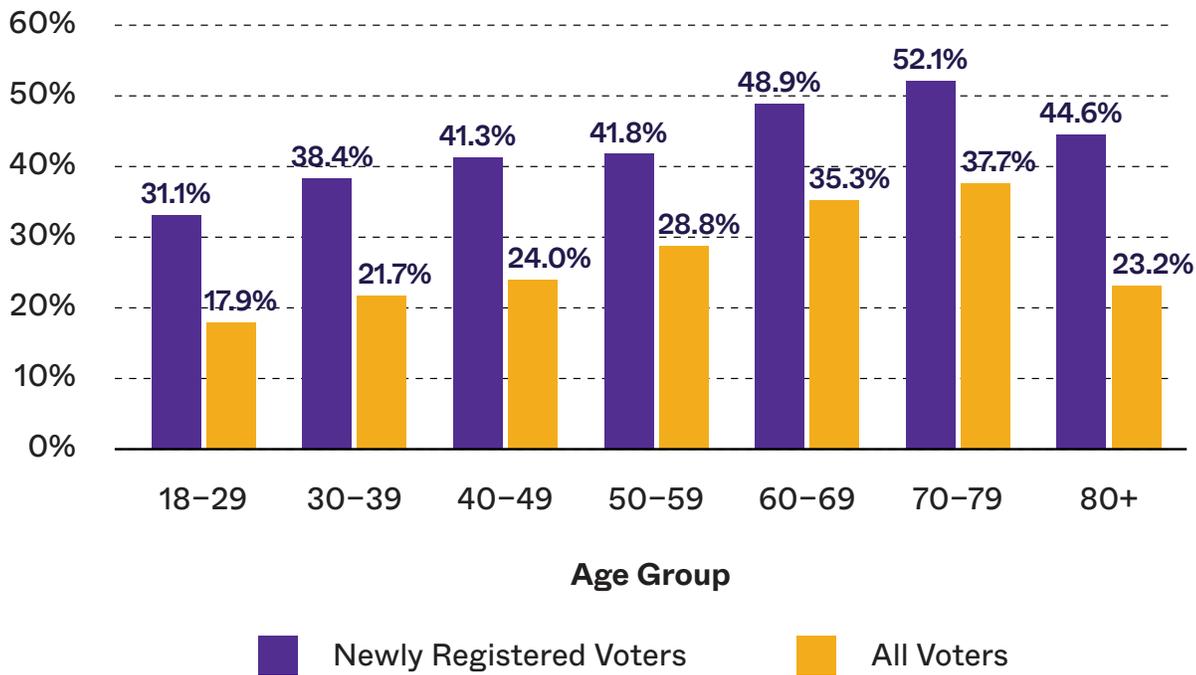
Figure 3.6: Newly registered voter turnout by age compared to overall turnout for the 2021 general election

Newly Registered Voters — All Voters

Age Group	Newly Registered Voters	All Voters
18–29	14.1%	11.1%
30–39	20.4%	16.3%
40–49	24.2%	22.1%
50–59	28.5%	28.7%
60–69	31.1%	35.5%
70–79	34.3%	37.9%
80+	28.2%	23.2%
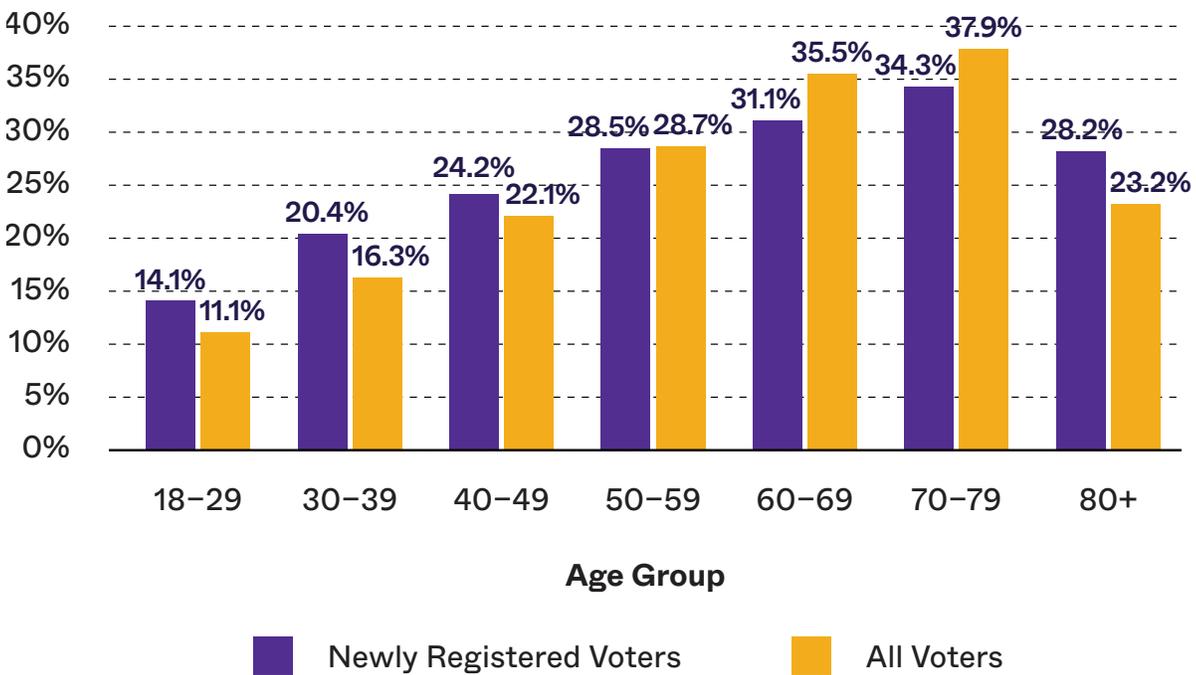
The 2021 Primary Election

New York conducts closed primary elections, which means a voter must be registered to the political party holding a primary to vote in that election. In 2021, all registered Democrats and Republicans were eligible to vote only in their respective party's primary, and those voters who are not registered with a political party or registered in a party that did not hold a primary election, were not eligible to vote in the June primaries.[19] Just over 1 million voters in NYC voted in the 2021 primary, making up 26.5% of eligible registered voters.

Figure 3.7: Primary Election 2021—Citywide Voter Turnout[20]

Voters	Registered Eligible Voters	Turnout
1,013,427	3,828,836	26.5%

Turnout in the 2021 primary election was 26.5%, which is slightly over 3% more than turnout in the 2013 primary election (23.3%). In 2017, primary election turnout was only 14.9%. Though the COVID-19 pandemic could have had some effect on turnout in the primary election, it did not seem to stop New Yorkers from turning out to vote at a relatively high rate. The section on voting method further discusses the diminishing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on elections.

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19   Council District 19 (Queens) also held a Conservative party primary, the only Conservative party primary held in the entire City in 2021.

20   Turnout rate is calculated as the ratio of the number of votes cast in an election to the number of registered voters eligible for the election. Turnout calculations for the 2021 primary are based on the New York City Board of Elections voter history file compiled in September 2021.

Location of voters

Turnout for the 2021 primary was highest in Manhattan (33.4%) and lowest in the Bronx (19.1%). This is a greater discrepancy than the difference in turnout between the highest and lowest turnout boroughs in the 2017 primary (17.1% vs 12.3%) and the 2013 primary (29.0% vs 19.1%). In 2013 and 2017, the highest turnout borough was Manhattan and the lowest turnout borough was Staten Island.

Figure 3.8: Primary elections 2013, 2017, and 2021 turnout by borough

Borough	2021		2017		2013	
	Voters	**Turnout**	**Voters**	**Turnout**	**Voters**	**Turnout**
Manhattan	274,264	33.4%	121,250	17.7%	191,926	29.0%
Bronx	117,445	19.1%	68,889	12.3%	95,704	19.1%
Brooklyn	336,591	27.5%	162,194	15.7%	225,169	23.9%
Queens	233,836	25.0%	90,013	12.0%	145,677	21.1%
Staten Island	51,291	22.4%	14,536	11.5%	21,369	17.7%
Citywide	1,013,427	26.5%	457,111	14.5%	679,845	23.3%

Turnout by Community District ranged from 14.0% in Bronx Community District 1 (Melrose, Mott Haven, and Port Morris) to 44.3% in Brooklyn Community District 6 (Park Slope and Carroll Gardens). Figure 3.9 shows the community districts whose turnout exceeded and underperformed the citywide turnout.

Figure 3.9: Primary election 2021 voter turnout by community district

District	Area	Turnout
Park Slope, Carroll Gardens	BKO6	44.3%
West Side, Upper West Side	MN07	41.6%
Brooklyn Heights, Fort Greene	BK02	40.3%
Greenwich Village, Soho	MN02	37.6%
Upper East Side	MN08	36.9%
Crown Heights North	BK08	35.4%
Stuyvesant Town, Turtle Bay	MN06	35.0%
Chelsea, Clinton	MN04	34.3%
Sunset Park, Windsor Terrace	BK07	32.3%
Crown Heights South, Wingate	BK09	32.2%
Battery Park City, Tribeca	MN01	30.9%
Forest Hills, Rego Park	QN06	30.8%
Riverdale, Kingsbridge, Marble Hill	BX08	30.7%
Sunnyside, Woodside	QN02	30.5%
Flatbush, Midwood	BK14	29.0%
Midtown Business District	MN05	28.6%
Central Harlem	MN10	28.5%
Lower East Side, Chinatown	MN03	28.2%
Bayside, Douglaston, Little Neck	QN11	28.2%
Bedford Stuyvesant	BK03	28.0%
Williamsburg, Greenpoint	BK01	27.9%
Borough Park, Ocean Parkway	BK12	27.9%
Manhattanville, Hamilton Heights	MN09	27.6%
Astoria, Long Island City	QN01	27.2%
Queens Village, Rosedale	QN13	27.1%

Turnout	District	Area
26.0%	BK17	East Flatbush, Rugby, Farragut
25.8%	BK10	Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights
25.7%	QN08	Fresh Meadows, Briarwood
25.6%	QN07	Flushing, Bay Terrace
25.3%	BK18	Canarsie, Flatlands
24.7%	MN12	Washington Heights, Inwood
24.6%	QN14	The Rockaways, Broad Channel
24.6%	SI01	Stapleton, Port Richmond
24.6%	QN03	Jackson Heights, North Corona
24.4%	BX10	Throgs Neck, Co-op City, Pelham Bay
23.6%	QN12	Jamaica, St. Albans, Hollis
22.8%	SI02	New Springville, South Beach
21.8%	QN04	Elmhurst, South Corona
21.6%	QN05	Ridgewood, Glendale, Maspeth
21.4%	MN11	East Harlem
21.0%	BK04	Bushwick
20.8%	BK16	Brownsville, Ocean Hill
20.7%	BX12	Wakefield, Williamsbridge
20.0%	SI03	Tottenville, Woodrow, Great Kills
19.7%	BK15	Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach
19.6%	BX09	Soundview, Parkchester
19.4%	QN09	Woodhaven, Richmond Hill
19.0%	BK05	East New York, Starrett City
18.6%	BX11	Pelham Pkwy, Morris Park, Laconia
18.4%	BK11	Bensonhurst, Bath Beach
18.2%	BK13	Coney Island, Brighton Beach
17.9%	QN10	Ozone Park, Howard Beach
17.7%	BX04	Highbridge, Concourse Village
16.9%	BX07	Bedford Park, Norwood, Fordham
15.9%	BX05	University Heights, Fordham, Mount Hope
15.0%	BX03	Morrisania, Crotona Park East
14.6%	BX02	Hunts Point, Longwood
14.1%	BX06	East Tremont, Belmont
14.0%	BX01	Melrose, Mott Haven, Port Morris

0%   10%   20%   **26.5%** Total NYC Citywide Turnout   40%   50%

Age of voters

The average age of voters in the 2021 primary was 54, nearly five years older than the average registered voter.[21]

Figure 3.10: Average age of voters in the 2021 primary election

	All Registered Voters	**Primary 2021 Voters**
Mean Age[22]	49	54

Youth turnout generally falls short of overall turnout, apart from most presidential elections. In the 2021 primary, turnout among voters aged 18 to 29 was 8.6% lower than overall turnout. However, turnout among this group of young voters did increase compared to the 2013 primary election.

Figure 3.11: 2021 and 2013 primary turnout by age

| **Age Group**	**2021 Primary Turnout**	**2013 Primary**
18–29	17.9%	10.6%
30–39	21.7%	15.3%
40–49	24.0%	21.1%
50–59	28.8%	28.6%
60–69	35.3%	34.6%
70–79	37.7%	35.3%
80+	23.2%	26.2%

21   Actual average: 53.6

22   Actual average age for all registered voters was 48.8 and for primary 2021 voters it was 53.6

Voters under 30 years old in Brooklyn Community District 6 (Park Slope and Carroll Gardens) turned out to vote at a particularly high rate of 39.7% in the primary. This was also the community district with the highest overall turnout rate (44.3%). In Brooklyn Community District 1 (Williamsburg and Greenpoint), voters under 30 turned out to vote at a higher rate than the average turnout rate in the district (30.4% and 28.0% respectively). In all other districts, voters aged 18–29 turned out to vote at a rate lower than the average turnout rate in the district.

In NYC overall, voters aged 60–69 made up the largest portion of the electorate in the primary, and voters aged 80+ made up the smallest. This is a change from the 2017 primary in which voters aged 80+ made up a larger portion of the electorate than voters aged 18–29.

Figure 3.12: Primary election 2021 distribution of voters by age group
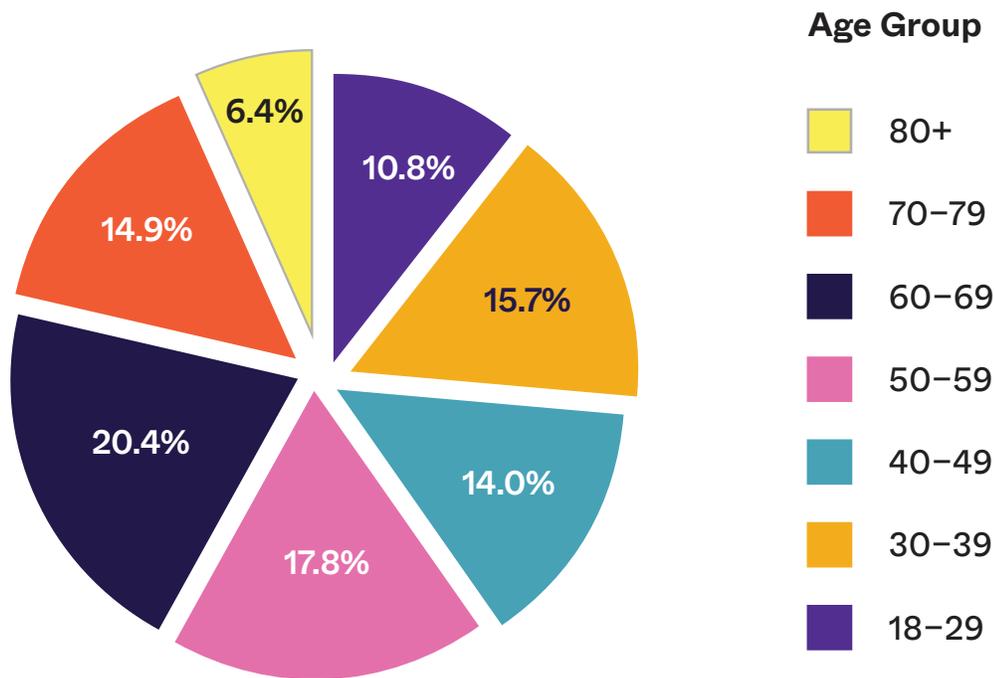
The 2021 General Election

All registered voters, regardless of political party affiliation, were eligible to vote in the 2021 general election. Also, unlike the primary election where ranked choice voting was used for city offices, every office on the ballot was elected using single choice voting.

Turnout was lower in the general election than the primary election. In the general election, 1,147,555 out of 4,919,037 eligible registered voters in NYC voted (23.3%). This lagged behind turnout for the 2017 general election (25.2%) and the 2013 general election (25.4%). Turnout for the 2021 general was a historic low for a mayoral race, which could be a result of the relative lack of competitiveness in this election.[23]

Figure 3.13: General election 2021–citywide turnout

Voters	Registered Eligible Voters	Turnout
1,147,555	4,919,037	23.3%

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23   Bergin, Brigid. "New York City Voter Turnout Hits Record Low For A Mayoral Election." *Gothamist*, 1 Dec, 2021.

Location of voters

Staten Island had the highest voter turnout for the general election, a change from the primary election when Manhattan had the highest turnout of all five boroughs. Staten Island also had the highest turnout in the 2013 and 2017 general elections—this may indicate that Republican voters, who make up a large portion of Staten Island electorate, are more highly motivated to participate in general versus primary elections. Like the primary election, turnout was lowest in the Bronx; this was also the case in the 2017 and 2013 general elections.

Figure 3.14: General elections 2013, 2017, and 2021 turnout by borough

Borough	2021 General		2017 General		2013 General	
	Voters	Turnout	Voters	Turnout	Voters	Turnout
Manhattan	274,879	26.3%	265,953	26.7%	268,595	27.8%
Bronx	133,923	17.5%	150,410	20.8%	141,359	21.8%
Brooklyn	345,238	22.4%	351,265	24.6%	339,055	25.6%
Queens	286,445	22.9%	281,010	24.4%	258,219	24.5%
Staten Island	107,070	33.7%	99,600	34.4%	74,748	28.2%
Citywide	1,147,555	23.3%	1,149,469	25.2%	1,082,976	25.4%

In the general election, turnout by community district ranged from 12.2% in Bronx Community District 6 (East Tremont & Belmont) to 39.1% in Staten Island Community District 3 (Tottenville & Great Kills).

Age of voters

The average age of voters in the 2021 general election was 55, exceeding the average age of all registered voters in the city by over six years, and almost three years more than the average age of voters in the 2021 primary.

Figure 3.15: Average age of voters in the 2021 general election

	All Registered Voters	General 2021 Voters
Mean Age[24]	49	55

Unlike the primary election, when youth turnout was substantially higher in the 2021 primary than the 2013 primary, youth turnout in the 2021 general election lagged slightly behind youth turnout in the 2013 general election.

Figure 3.16: General elections 2013 and 2021 turnout by age

Age Group	2021 General Turnout	2013 General Turnout
18–29	11.1%	11.8%
30–39	16.3%	17.0%
40–49	22.1%	23.8%
50–59	28.7%	31.8%
60–69	35.4%	37.9%
70–79	37.9%	39.0%
80+	23.2%	28.6%

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24   Actual averages: all registered voters-48.7; general 2021 voters: 55.0

Young voters in the 2021 primary election made up a larger proportion of the electorate than in the 2021 general election. While 10.8% of all voters in the primary were age 18–29 years old, they made up only 8.9% of all voters in the general.

Figure 3.17: General election 2021 distribution of voters by age group
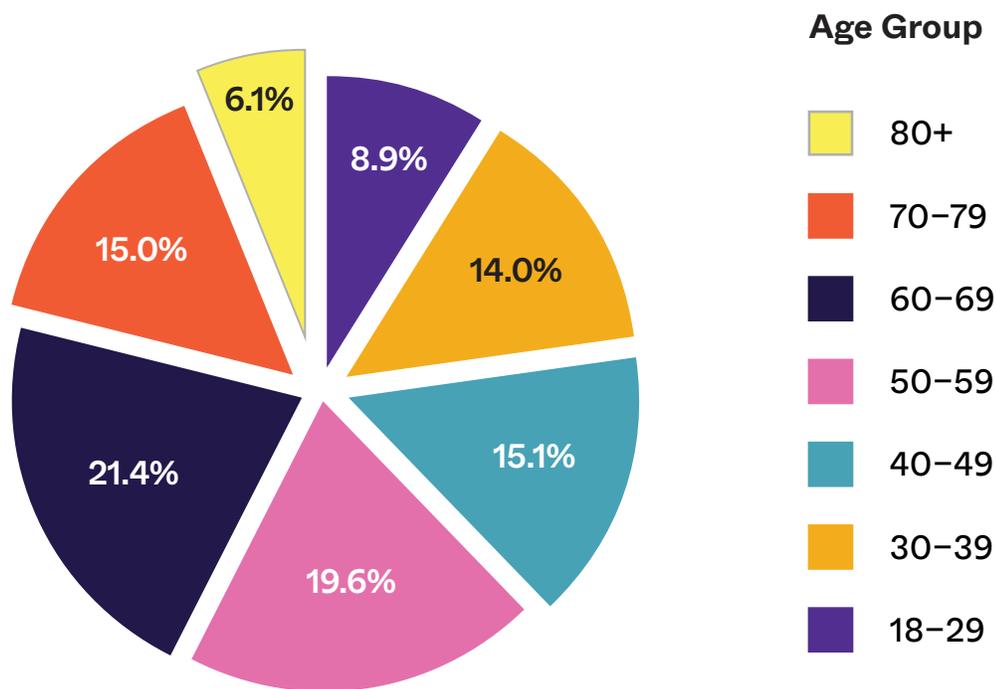
Ballot proposals

In the general election, New Yorkers voted on ballot proposals, as is becoming a more regular occurrence—ballot proposals were on the ballot in 2018 and 2019 and will also appear on the 2022 general election ballot. Each of the five ballot proposals in the 2021 general will or would have amended the New York State Constitution.

- **Ballot Proposal 1** would reform the redistricting process in New York by amending the redistricting timeline and approval process. It would also freeze the number of State Senators at 63 and require the state to include non-citizens and incarcerated individuals in the census.

- **Ballot Proposal 2** would add the right to "clean water, air, and a healthful environment" to the New York State Constitution's Bill of Rights.

- **Ballot Proposal 3** would eliminate the requirement that voters be registered to vote at least ten days before an election to vote in that election.

- **Ballot Proposal 4** would allow all New Yorkers to vote by absentee ballot, striking the provision that requires absentee voters to provide a reason that they are unable to vote in-person.

- **Ballot Proposal 5** would increase the dollar limit for the claims the New York City Court can hear and decide on from $25,000 to $50,000.

City voters overwhelmingly voted to pass all five ballot questions. However because these were statewide ballot proposals, when out-of City voters were factored in, only two ballot proposals passed, while ballot proposals 1, 3 and 4 failed to pass. Total "yes" and "no" vote percentages for the City and State are shown in Figure 3.18. (A Case Study in the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section discusses the ballot proposals campaign in New York State.)

Figure 3.18: Percent "yes" votes for ballot proposals citywide and statewide

Ballot Proposals	City	State
Ballot Proposal 1: Redistricting	62%	45%
Ballot Proposal 2: Environment	83%	69%
Ballot Proposal 3: Voter Registration	61%	43%
Ballot Proposal 4: Absentee Voting	60%	44%
Ballot Proposal 5: Civil Court	78%	63%

The drop-off rates among City voters were much higher than the drop-off rates among all voters in New York State, which ranged from -11.1% to -15.0%.[25] The drop-off percentages listed in Figure 3.19 refer to the percent of voters who chose to not vote on each ballot proposal. There was a relatively high rate of drop-off between the total number of ballots cast in the general election and the number of votes cast for each of the proposals. This may be a result of voters experiencing decision fatigue, a concept that describes how more people abstain from decision-making as they are asked to make more and more decisions.[26] For each ballot proposal, over one fifth of voters chose to leave the question blank on their ballot. All five ballot questions had similar drop-off rates.

City voters last encountered ballot proposals in the 2019 General Election when voters decided on five proposals to amend the City Charter as recommended by the 2019 Charter Revision Commission. In both 2019 and 2021, the last proposal listed on the ballot had the highest rate of drop-off. However, the 2019 ballot was considerably shorter than the 2021 ballot, and 2019 drop-off rates for every ballot question were smaller compared to 2021. Although drop-off rates in NYC were much higher than what we saw in 2019, they were slightly less than what we saw with ballot questions in 2018 when drop-off rates ranged from -25.4% to -26.3%.[27] (The CFB's 2019–2020 Voter Analysis Report directly compares the 2019 and 2018 ballot questions.)

25   New York State Board of Elections. "2021 General Election–November 2, 2021."

26   Hedlin, Simon. "Do Long Ballots Offer Too Much Democracy?" *The Atlantic*. 3 Nov, 2015.

27   2018–19 Voter Analysis Report. "Drop-Off In Voter Participation for Ballot Proposals."

Figure 3.19: Ballots cast for ballot proposals in general election 2021 and general election 2019

	2021		2019[28]	
	Votes	Drop-off	Votes	Drop-Off
Total Ballots Cast	1,149,172	—	796,253	—
Ballot Proposal 1: Redistricting	885,791	-22.9%	693,053	-13.0%
Ballot Proposal 2: Environment	911,797	-20.7%	684,317	-14.1%
Ballot Proposal 3: Voter Registration	906,747	-21.1%	671,927	-15.6%
Ballot Proposal 4: Absentee Voting	902,763	-21.4%	670,528	-15.8%
Ballot Proposal 5: Civil Court	884,811	-23.0%	661,584	-16.9%

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28   The 2019 Charter Revision Commission also put five proposals on the 2019 General Election ballot. Ballot Proposal 1 dealt with Elections, Ballot Proposal 2 was related to the Civilian Complaint Review Board, Ballot Proposal 3 covered Ethics & Governance, Ballot Proposal 4 dealt with the City Budget, and Ballot Proposal 5 covered Land Use.

Drop-off rates for the ballot proposals varied considerably by borough. Brooklyn had the highest rate of drop-off for each of the five proposals and Staten Island had the lowest rate. For each proposal, the drop-off rate among voters in Brooklyn was over double that of the drop-off rate among voters in Staten Island. This may be a result of Republican and Conservative party voters being targeted with independent expenditure campaigns opposed to several ballot proposals. (A Case Study in the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section further discusses the ballot proposals independent expenditure campaign.)

Figure 3.20: Ballots cast for ballot proposals in general election 2021 by borough

	Total Ballots	Ballot Proposal 1	Ballot Proposal 2	Ballot Proposal 3	Ballot Proposal 4	Ballot Proposal 5
		Drop-Off	Drop-Off	Drop-Off	Drop-Off	Drop-Off
Manhattan	279,217	-22.8%	-19.7%	-20.1%	-20.2%	-21.7%
Bronx	129,075	-26.2%	-22.9%	-25.0%	-25.4%	-26.6%
Brooklyn	346,203	-28.8%	-26.8%	-27.2%	-27.6%	-29.1%
Queens	287,514	-18.8%	-16.7%	-17.1%	-17.5%	-19.3%
Staten Island	107,163	-11.6%	-11.5%	-10.3%	-10.7%	-12.4%

Write-in votes

A small number of voters chose to write-in candidates in the general election's mayoral race. In each borough, the proportion of votes for mayoral candidates that were write-in votes was less than 1%. The borough with the lowest percentage of write-in votes was Staten Island, and the borough with the highest percentage of write-in votes was Manhattan. Voters in Manhattan were nearly four times as likely as voters in Staten Island to vote for a write-in candidate, though the percentage was still under 1% of total votes.

Figure 3.21: Write-in votes in the mayoral race in the 2021 general election

	Total number of votes	Number of write-in votes	Percent write-in
Manhattan	272,584	2,493	0.9%
Bronx	126,399	355	0.3%
Brooklyn	339,191	2,781	0.8%
Queens	281,750	1,140	0.4%
Staten Island	105,344	244	0.2%
Citywide	1,125,258	7,013	0.6%

Figure 3.22 shows the ten most popular write-in candidates for mayor. All variations and misspellings of candidates' names are included in the calculation for the total number of votes. For example, there were 1,426 votes for Kathryn Garcia, but 145 votes for various misspellings of her name, such as 35 votes for "Kathryn Garica." The CFB reports the total number of votes for Kathryn Garcia as 1,571. However, the BOE reports the votes for Kathryn Garcia and "Kathryn Garica" separately (e.g. 1,426 votes for Kathryn Garcia and 35 votes for "Kathryn Garica").[29]

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29   New York City Board of Elections. "2021 General Election–November 2, 2021."

More than half of the ten most popular write-in choices for the mayoral race in the general election were candidates for Mayor in the 2021 primary election. Those candidates are highlighted in Figure 3.22 by an asterisk. The remaining write-in candidates were a former NYC Mayor, candidates for President in 2020, and the last is a Congresswoman representing Queens and the Bronx.

Figure 3.22: Top 10 write-in candidates for mayor in the 2021 general election

	Write-in candidates	Total number of votes
1	Kathryn Garcia*	1,571
2	Maya Wiley*	1,410
3	Andrew Yang*	247
4	Scott Stringer*	243
5	Michael Bloomberg	119
6	Paperboy Prince*	80
7	Dianne Morales*	54
8	Donald Trump	36
9	Bernie Sanders	30
10	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	28

* Indicates 2021 mayoral primary candidate

Voting Method Comparisons: 2021 Primary and General Elections

In the 2020 general election, we witnessed an explosion in the number of New Yorkers voting by absentee ballot. Changes to State Election Law in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowed any New Yorker to vote absentee by simply checking the box on the absentee ballot application for "temporary illness or physical disability."

All voters in the city were still permitted to vote by absentee ballot in the 2021 primary, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to rage on. However, in both the 2021 primary and general, the majority of voters chose to vote on Election Day. This was a change from the 2020 general election when most voters chose to vote early or by absentee ballot.

Figure 3.23: 2020 and 2021 voting method comparisons
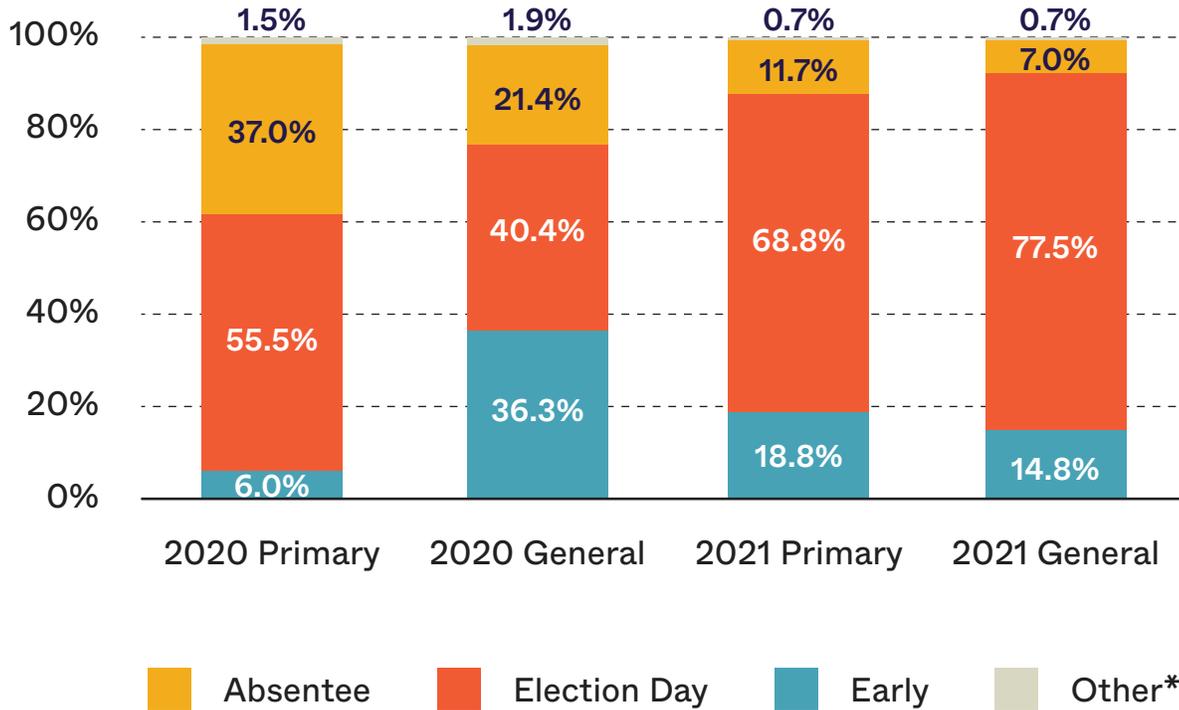
At the community district level, the percentage of voters who voted by absentee ballot in the 2021 primary ranged from 4.9% in Brooklyn Community District 4 (Bushwick) to 23.9% in Queens Community District 4 (Elmhurst and Corona). The percentage of voters who voted by absentee ballot in the 2021 general election ranged by from 3.4% in Brooklyn Community District 4 (Bushwick) to 13.9% in Manhattan Community District 8 (Upper East Side).

Older voters were more likely than younger voters to vote by absentee ballot in both the primary and the general, as shown in Figures 3.24 and 3.25. The average age of absentee voters in the primary was nearly six years higher than all voters in the primary (59.5 vs 53.6) and the average age of absentee voters in the general was over seven years higher than all voters in the general (62.7 vs 55.0). Voters aged 80+ were the group most likely to vote by absentee ballot in both elections. Many older voters likely chose to vote from home due to the greater health threat of COVID-19 to elderly populations and are also more likely to qualify for permanent absentee ballot status through illness or disability.

The average age of absentee voters in the 2021 primary and general is higher than the average age of absentee voters in the 2020 primary and general.[30] Fewer people in the 2021 elections overall requested absentee ballots than in the 2020 elections, and the higher average age of the absentee ballot voters may also be influenced more generally by living patterns of NYC residents during the 2020 pandemic—younger voters may have been living outside of the city in 2020 but returned and voted via a different method in 2021, thus no longer driving down the average age of absentee voters.

Figure 3.24: Primary election 2021 voting method by age group

Absentee   Election Day   Early   Other*

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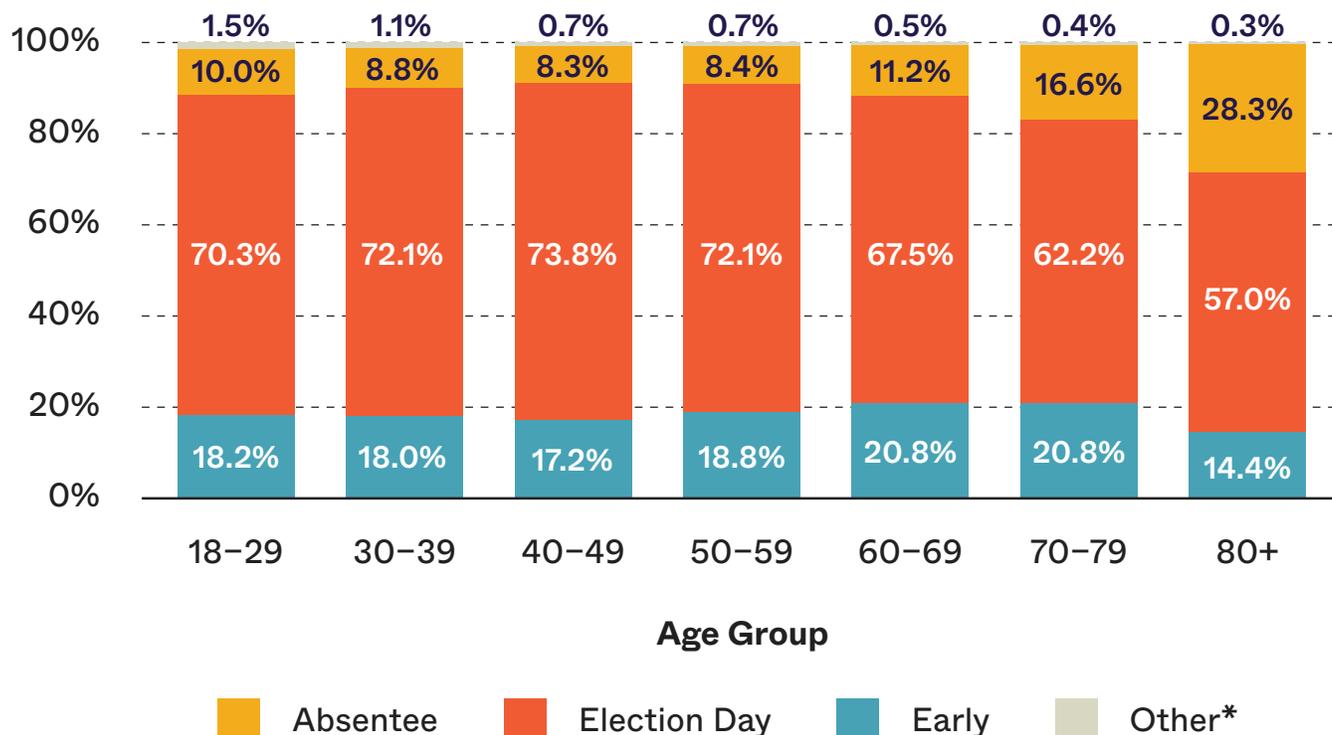
30   NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. "COVID-19: Data - Trends and Totals."

Figure 3.25: General election 2021 voting method by age group
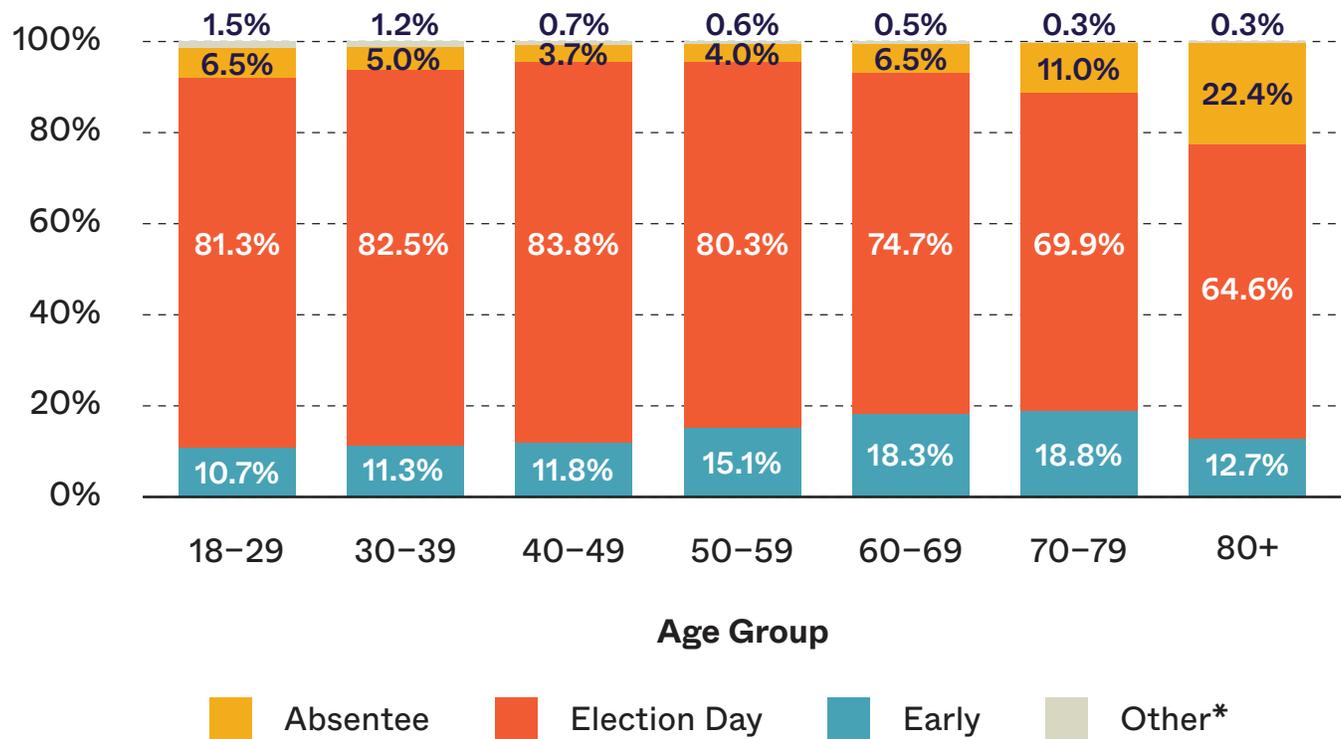
Early Voting Analysis

Early Voting Analysis

In the last Voter Analysis Report, we took an initial look at some of the characteristics of early voters, such as those newly registered, voting for the first time, and those who voted early in at least one prior election. This year, we also look more closely at the factors that may influence a voter's decision to vote early, such as age, distance to assigned early voting site, and election participation rates. Finally, we constructed an early voting score that measures a voter's tendency to choose early voting over other voting methods.

Who is Voting Early?

The 2021 election cycle marked the third year of early voting in NYC. The early voting period for the 2021 primary election began on Saturday, June 12th and continued through Sunday, June 20th. During this period, 190,744 voters cast ballots at their assigned early voting site, just shy of 5% of all eligible registered voters in NYC.

Of those who voted, 18.8% chose to vote early, compared to 36.3% of voters in the 2020 general election. Although early voting rates nearly halved from the 2020 general, they tripled from the 2020 primary where only 6.0% of voters voted early. We have not yet had a full four-year cycle to compare similar election years to each other, however new voters continue to adopt early voting as their vote method of choice.

For the 2021 general election, the early voting period stretched from Saturday, October 23rd to Sunday, October 31st. During this period, 169,486 voters cast their ballots, making up 3.6% of eligible registered voters and 14.8% of the total number of voters who voted in the general election. For each borough, the final day of early voting was also the most popular. This was also the case in the 2021 primary election. The distribution for early voting across the nine early voting days is shown in Figure 4.1; as in previous years, early voters tend to increase over the course of the week.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of early voters across early voting days

	Day of the week	Operating hours	2021 General	2021 Primary	2020 General
Day 1	Saturday	8:00am–5:00pm	9.1%	8.8%	8.4%
Day 2	Sunday	8:00am–5:00pm	9.3%	7.9%	8.9%
Day 3	Monday	7:00am–4:00pm	8.1%	6.1%	10.8%
Day 4	Tuesday	10:00am–8:00pm	5.9%	10.8%	12.8%
Day 5	Wednesday	10:00am–8:00pm	10.2%	10.4%	12.2%
Day 6	Thursday	10:00am–8:00pm	11.3%	11.4%	9.6%
Day 7	Friday	7:00am–4:00pm	10.1%	12.7%	12.3%
Day 8	Saturday	8:00am–5:00pm	15.3%	13.3%	12.3%
Day 9	Sunday	8:00am–4:00pm	20.6%	18.6%	12.6%

Age of Early Voters

Older voters are slightly more likely to vote early. The average age of early voters in the 2021 primary was 54, while the average age of Election Day voters was 53.[31] However, first time early voters were slightly younger than Election Day voters with an average age of 51.[32]

The age gap between early voters and Election Day voters was larger in the general election. The average age of early voters in the general election was 58, four years older than Election Day voters at an average age of 54.[33] In the general election, first time early voters were also older than Election Day voters with an average age of 56.[34] The breakdown by age of the percentage of voters who voted early, on Election Day, or by absentee ballot in both elections is shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of voters choosing specific vote methods by age group in the 2021 primary and general elections

Age Group	In-Person Early		In-Person on Election Day		Absentee Ballot	
	Primary	General	Primary	General	Primary	General
18–29	18.2%	10.7%	70.3%	81.3%	10.0%	6.5%
30–39	18.0%	11.3%	72.1%	82.5%	8.8%	5.0%
40–49	17.2%	11.8%	73.8%	83.8%	8.3%	3.7%
50–59	18.8%	15.1%	72.1%	80.3%	8.4%	4.0%

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31   The actual average age of Election Day voters was 52.6 and the average age of 2021 primary voters was 54.0.

32   Actual average age: 51.2

33   The actual age of early voters in the general election was 57.7 and the actual age of Election Day voters in the general election was 53.8.

34   Actual average age: 56.1

Age Group	In-Person Early		In-Person on Election Day		Absentee Ballot	
	Primary	General	Primary	General	Primary	General
60–69	20.8%	18.3%	67.5%	74.7%	11.2%	6.5%
70–79	20.8%	18.8%	62.2%	69.9%	16.6%	11.0%
80+	14.4%	12.7%	57.1%	64.6%	28.3%	22.5%

Proximity to General Election Early Voting Site

Voters who live closer to their assigned early voting sites are more likely to vote early. Early voters in the 2021 general election lived an average of 0.69 miles from their poll sites, while Election Day voters lived an average of 0.86 miles from their poll sites, indicating that voters who live further away from their early voting site are more likely to decide to vote at their Election Day location instead. We found that a one-mile increase in distance from an early voting site decreased a voter's odds of voting early in the 2021 general election by 16.8% (see Appendix C for the full model output)[35].

Figure 4.3: Average distance from assigned general election early voting poll site

Average distance in miles of early voters to their assigned early voting poll site	Average distance in miles of Election Day voters to their assigned early voting poll site
0.69 miles	0.86 miles

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35   p<0.01

In the general election all voters in the Bronx, regardless of when they voted, on average lived closer to their poll sites (0.59 miles) than all voters in Manhattan (0.61 miles), regardless of when they voted. However, voters in Manhattan had the highest rate of early voting.

Figure 4.4: Average distance from assigned general election early voting poll site by borough

Borough	Early Voters to Assigned Early Voting Poll Site	Election Day Voters to Assigned Early Voting Poll Site	All Voters to Assigned Early Voting Poll Site
Manhattan	0.48 miles	0.63 miles	0.61 miles
Bronx	0.49 miles	0.64 miles	0.59 miles
Brooklyn	0.54 miles	0.68 miles	0.67 miles
Queens	1.07 miles	1.21 miles	1.16 miles
Staten Island	0.93 miles	1.07 miles	1.06 miles

Participation Score

Voters who vote more often are more likely to vote early. This likelihood is measured by comparing a voter's participation score, which measures the consistency and frequency of a voter's electoral participation, by looking at the number of elections a voter voted in out of the number of elections a voter could have voted in.

Early voters in the 2021 primary had an average voter participation score of 74.0, while Election Day voters had an average voter participation score of 68.8.[36] The average participation score for all 2021 primary voters was 69.3.

The average participation score of voters in the 2021 general election was 69.0, nearly identical to the average participation score of voters in the primary. This indicates that voters in the 2021 primary and general elections voted in a similar proportion of prior elections. The average participation score for early voters in the general election was 75.6, and the average participation score for Election Day voters in the general election was 68.0. We found that a one-point increase in participation score increased a voter's odds of voting early in the 2021 general election by 1.3%[37].

Newly Registered Voters

Newly registered voters, who we define as voters who registered to vote in NYC for the first time in 2021, are more likely to vote early. Newly registered voters are not only New Yorkers who recently turned 18 years old; this group also includes people who recently moved into New York City or folks who were inspired to register for the first time only recently, regardless of length of residency.

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36 The voter participation score is the ratio of the number of elections a person voted in over the number of elections they were eligible to vote in. The elections used in calculating voter participation scores include all primary and general elections since the 2017 general election. For more information on the voter participation score, please see CFB's 2019–2020 Voter Analysis Report.

37 p<0.01

Overall, 49,956 new voters voted in the 2021 primary, making up 4.9% of all voters. Out of all in-person voters, new voters in the 2021 primary voted early at a higher rate (31.1%) than non-new voters (21.2%). This is a larger difference than we saw in any previous election with early voting.

Just 18,612 new voters voted in the 2021 general election, making up only 1.6% of all voters. The gap between early voting rates among new voters and non-new voters was narrower in the general, where 16.7% of new voters voted early, and 15.9% of non-new voters voted early.

We also looked at the subgroup of new voters who were 18 years old at the time they registered to vote in NYC. We found that this subgroup voted early less (26.7%) than all other new voters (31.9%) who voted in-person in the 2021 primary, as well as less (11.7%) than all other new voters (17.4%) who voted in-person in the 2021 general election.

First Time Voters

Although newly registered voters are more likely to vote early than non-newly registered voters, first time voters are actually less likely to vote early than non-first time voters. We define first time voters as voters who were eligible to vote in at least one previous election but voted for the first time in this election.

In the primary election, there were 13,983 first time voters, making up only 1.4% of all voters. First time voters voted early slightly less (19.9%) than non-first time voters who voted in-person in the 2021 primary (21.3%). For the general election, there were 14,255 first time voters, making up 1.2% of all voters. In the general election, they also voted early less (9.9%) than non-first time voters who voted in-person (16.0%).

Habitual Early Voters

Once a voter develops a habit of voting early, they are likely to continue voting early. We found that voters who voted early in a previous election in NYC were more likely to vote early in the 2021 primary (29.2%) than voters who had never voted early in a previous NYC election (10.2%). This trend was also pronounced in the general election (25.5% vs 4.4%). We also found that having voted early in a previous election in NYC increased a voter's odds of voting early by 746% for the general election.
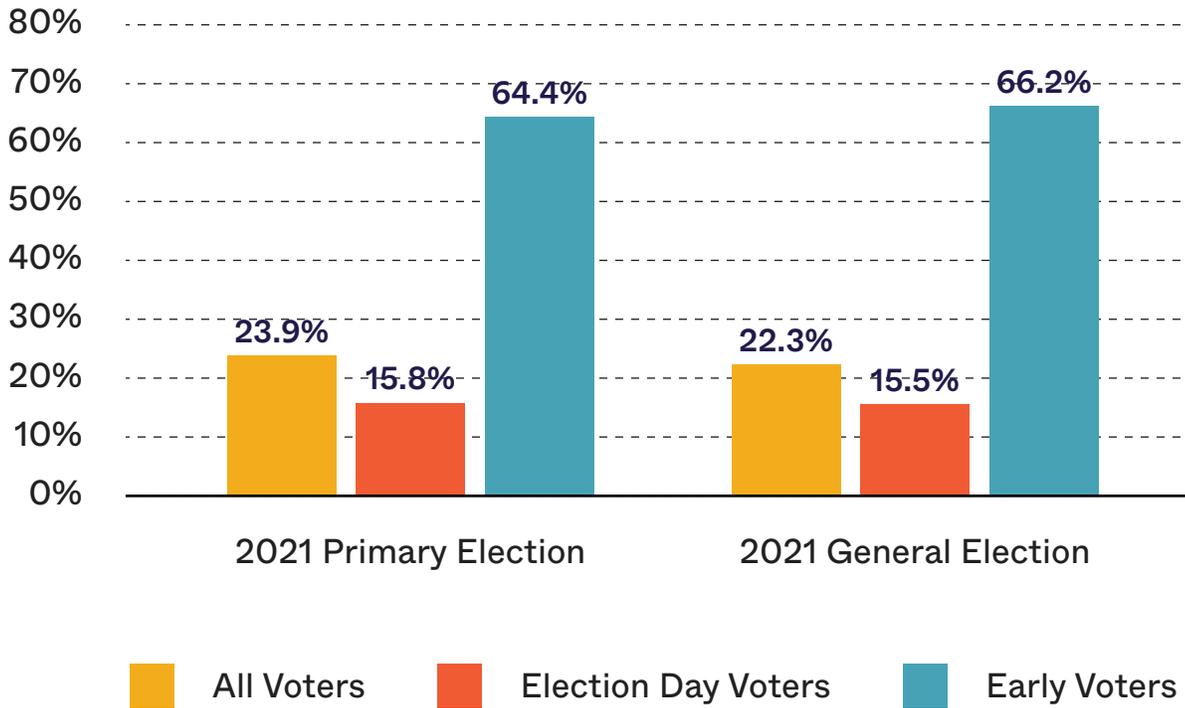
Early Voting Score

To measure a voter's tendency to vote early, we constructed an early voting score. The early voting score expresses the ratio of elections a person voted early in to the total number of elections they voted in. Consider a voter who voted on Election Day in the 2020 primary election, then did not vote in the 2020 general election, and then voted early in both the 2021 primary and general elections. This voter voted early in two out of the three elections they voted in since early voting became an option in NYC. They would therefore receive an early voting score of 66.7.

Figure 4.5: Mathematical representation of early voting score

$$\text{early voting score} = \frac{\text{number of times voted early}}{\text{number of elections}}$$

The average early voting score for voters who voted in the 2021 primary was 23.9. Early voters had an average early voting score of 64.4, while Election Day voters had an average early voting score of 15.8. The average early voting score for voters who voted in the 2021 general was 22.3. Early voters had an average early voting score of 66.2, while Election Day voters had an average early voting score of 15.5. The early voting score for both primary and general election voters further bolsters our findings related to habitual early voters—early voters are more likely to continue early voting once they try it once.

Figure 4.6: Early voting scores for the 2021 primary and 2021 general elections

The CFB will continue tracking trends in early voting adoption, which can have implications for what ends up in the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section of the Voter Analysis Report. The Early Voting Recommendations section on page 126 discusses how to improve early voting site assignments, based on the proximity to early voting site analysis discussed earlier in this section.

Commonly Used Terms in the Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Analysis

Fatal Error – ballots with an error that void a vote in that office.

Undervote – skipped ranks, not counting races in which the voter did not rank anyone when the voter was eligible to vote on that race.

Overvote – errors when a voter ranks two candidates in one rank. Only overvotes in the first rank is considered a fatal error.

Bullet voters – voters who ranked one candidate multiple times.

- **Single choice bullet voters** – voting for only one candidate across all choices, or voting for one candidate across multiple ranks and leaving the other ranks blank.

- **Multiple choice bullet voters – voting for one candidate at least twice and another candidate at least once.**

Skipped race – when a voter did not vote in a race on their ballot at all and left all ranks blank.

Exhausted ballots – when a voter did not rank either of the top two finalists in the last round.

Commonly Used Terms in the Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Analysis (continued)

Ranking sequence – the order in which a voter ranked each candidate for the same office on a ballot.

Ranking score – a calculation created by the CFB that divides the number of unique candidates a voter ranked over the number of all possible ranks the voter could have ranked for that office.

Participation score – a calculation created by the CFB that divides the number of elections across a number of years that a voter did actually vote in over the number of elections they were eligible to vote in. See NYC Campaign Finance Board, NYC Votes Voter Analysis Report 2019–2020 for information on the construction of the participation score.

Consistent single rankers – voters who consistently ranked only one unique candidate in each office they were eligible to vote on.

Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Analysis

Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Analysis

2021 marked the first time NYC voters used ranked choice voting for the offices of Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, and City Council Member during primaries and special elections. Voters could rank up to five candidates for each office, instead of choosing just one.
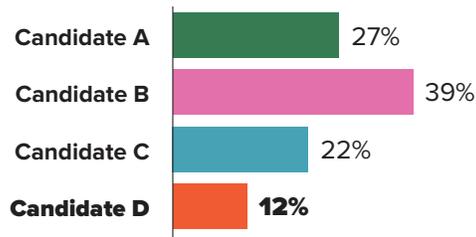
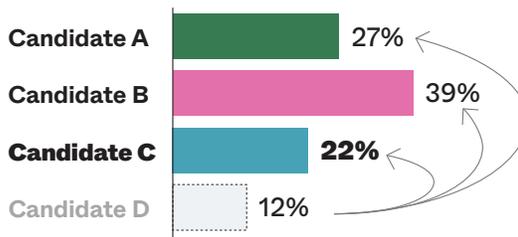**Figure 5.1: Sample 2021 primary Democratic Bronx Borough President race**

Ranked choice voting ballots are tabulated differently than single-choice ballots. All 1st choice votes are counted. If a candidate receives more than 50% of votes, they win outright. However, if no candidate earns more than 50% of 1st choice votes, then counting will continue in rounds. Each round, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. If a voter's highest-ranked candidate is eliminated, their vote goes to the next highest ranked candidate on their ballot. This process continues until there are only two candidates left and the candidate with the most votes wins.

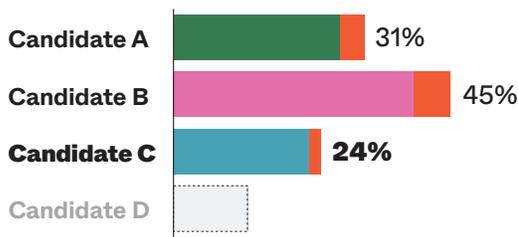# Figure 5.2: Visualization of ranked choice voting counting process

	1	2	3	4	5
Candidate A	○	○	○	●	○
Candidate B	○	○	●	○	○
Candidate C	○	●	○	○	○
Candidate D	●	○	○	○	○

Candidate A — 27%
Candidate B — 39%
Candidate C — 22%
Candidate D — 12%

	1	2	3	4	5
Candidate A	○	○	○	●	○
Candidate B	○	○	●	○	○
Candidate C	○	●	○	○	○
Candidate D	○	○	○	○	○

Candidate A — 27%
Candidate B — 39%
Candidate C — 22%
Candidate D — 12%

	1	2	3	4	5
Candidate A	○	○	○	●	○
Candidate B	○	○	●	○	○
Candidate C	○	●	○	○	○
Candidate D	○	○	○	○	○

Candidate A — 31%
Candidate B — 45%
Candidate C — 24%
Candidate D

	1	2	3	4	5
Candidate A	○	○	○	●	○
Candidate B	○	○	●	○	○
Candidate C	○	○	○	○	○
Candidate D	○	○	○	○	○

Candidate A — 31%
Candidate B — 45%
Candidate C — 24%
Candidate D

	1	2	3	4	5
Candidate A	○	○	○	●	○
Candidate B	○	○	●	○	○
Candidate C	○	○	○	○	○
Candidate D	○	○	○	○	○

Candidate A — 42%
Candidate B — 58%
Candidate C
Candidate D

For the special elections[38] that took place in February and March of 2021, the City BOE hand counted and manually tabulated ranked choice voting rounds because the State BOE had not yet certified electronic tabulation software.[39] The State BOE delayed certification[40] of the RCV Universal Tabulator software created by the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center until May 25, 2021, only two and a half weeks before early voting started.[41] The City BOE was able to use the software to tabulate results for all five city offices in the 2021 primary election, avoiding a time-consuming hand-counting process.

From ES&S's ElectionWare election management software, the City BOE exported and published to their website a cast vote record (CVR), an anonymized table of candidate rankings by individual ballot. The CVR does not contain any identifying information about a voter but does report the election district and assembly district of each ballot cast. The CVR records each voters' candidate choice using the BOE's unique candidate ID (candidate ID key is posted publicly along with the CVR), or marks the rank "undervote" or "overvote" in those respective cases.

In New York City, the CVR marks the first time that we've been able to look at votes across different races on a single ballot. For example, this file shows how many Democrats voted for both Maya Wiley in the Mayor's race and also Corey Johnson in the Comptroller's race, whereas no similar ballot-level reporting exists for single-choice races, currently.

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38 The Council District 24 (Queens) special election which took place on February 2, 2022 had a winner exceed 50% of total votes in the first round—James F. Gennaro—and no ranked choice tabulation took place. The February 23 special election in Council District 31 (Queens) and March 23 special elections in Council Districts 11 and 15 (both Bronx) all went through several ranked choice voting rounds. Official results can be found on the City BOE Election Results Summary 2021 page.

39 Chung, Christine. "Weeks From Pivotal Primary, Still No Software to Count Ranked Choice Votes." *The City*. 12 May, 2021.

40 Bergin, Brigid. "NYC Board Of Elections Plans To Hand Count Ranked-Choice Voting Results After Impasse With State." *Gothamist*. 27 Jan, 2021.

41 Ngo, Emily. "State Approves Vote-Counting Software, Allowing City to Avoid Hand Tally in Primary Elections." *Spectrum News NY1*. 25 May, 2021.

Therefore, the CVR presents a unique and incredibly valuable opportunity to dive into the idiosyncrasies and variations of voter choices. Helpfully, it also allows us to calculate the frequency of ballot marking mistakes or outright fatal errors and improve our voter education efforts for the 2023 and 2025 ranked choice elections.

The CFB focused on voting behavior by analyzing ranking trends of individual ballots and in aggregate by political districts. On an individual ballot level, we wanted to better understand whether voters were making consistent decisions about how many candidates to rank. Did voters who selected only one choice in the mayor's race consistently only rank one candidate for all other races? How do write-ins factor into a voter's ballot?

This analysis is only concerned with which candidate a voter ranked when it says something interesting about a voter's decision-making process. What was the most popular sequence of ranks on all Republican mayoral primary ballots? Were voters for certain candidates more likely to single-choice rank or bullet vote?

To compare ranking behavior between different districts and races, we created a ranking score for each race on every voter's ballot and averaged those scores at the office and district level. By creating this original statistic, we were able to answer the question: Which Democratic mayoral candidate's first-choice supporters ranked more often than others?

Finally, from a City Council District level, we looked at how competitiveness impacts voter behavior. Do voters rank more often if there are more candidates running in a race?

Processing the Cast Vote Record File

The CVR consisted of 25 files separated by borough and ballot type, such as regular, affidavit, absentee, and emergency ballots. We outlined the steps taken below to make these files useable for our purposes and to provide transparency around how these files were reconfigured. We did not use this combined file to re-create ranked choice voting tabulation rounds and nor do we ever plan to do so.

To examine voting behavior between political districts, the CFB combined each of these files into one single file uniting ranking columns for the same offices. For example, each borough had a Democratic race for Borough President and each borough had multiple CVR files, split by ballot type, containing columns for each Democratic Borough President choice depending on how many candidates were running (Queens is the only Democratic Borough President race with less than five columns; there were three named candidates on the ballot). Each Democratic Borough President Choice column was named with the Borough and ballot race ID number. In the combined CVR file, all voters regardless of ballot type were combined

pooled into the one file and the Democratic Borough President choice columns were combined into five columns for all boroughs (Figure 5.4). As in the original CVR files, each row of the combined CVR file represents a single voter's ballot.

Figure 5.3: Demonstration of cast vote record file headings

Cast Vote Record	2	4	6	8
Precinct	AD: 66 ED:028	AD: 66 ED:028	AD: 66 ED:028	AD: 66 ED:028
Ballot Style	DEM ABS Ballot Style 5	DEM ABS Ballot Style 5	DEM ABS Ballot Style 5	DEM ABS Ballot Style 5
DEM Borough President Choice 1 of 5 New York (024307)	217608	217608	217608	217608
DEM Borough President Choice 2 of 5 New York (224307)	217871	217871	217871	217696
DEM Borough President Choice 3 of 5 New York (324307)	221463	217564	221463	undervote
DEM Borough President Choice 4 of 5 New York (424307)	217696	undervote	217696	undervote
DEM Borough President Choice 5 of 5 New York (524307)	217564	undervote	217564	undervote

Note: Data has been transposed here for readability.

Figure 5.4: Demonstration of CFB's transformation of cast vote record file

unique_id	2021P1V1_ABS_2	2021P1V1_ABS_4	2021P5V1_ELE_50777	2021P4V1_ELE3_288506
cast vote record	2	4	50777	288506
precinct	AD: 66 ED: 028	AD: 66 ED: 028	AD: 61 ED: 072	AD: 36 ED:002
ballot style	DEM ABS Ballot Style 5	DEM ABS Ballot Style 5	REP ELE Ballot Style 28	Ballot style unknown
meta_information	2021P1V1_ABS.xlsx	2021P1V1_ABS.xlsx	2021P5V1_ELE.xlsx	2021P4V1_ELE3.xlsx
borough code	1	1	5	4
political party	DEM	DEM	REP	DEM
ad	66	66	61	36
ed	028	028	072	002
CongressDistrict	12	12	11	12
SenateDistrict	27	27	24	12
CouncilDistrict	2	2	49	22
ballot method	ABS	ABS	ELE	UNK
ballot type	ABS	ABS	ELE	ELE
dem_borough_president_choice_1_of_5	217608	217608	NA	220106
dem_borough_president_choice_2_of_5	217871	217871	NA	99
dem_borough_president_choice_3_of_5	221463	217564	NA	99

dem_borough_president_ choice_4_of_5	217696	99	NA	99
dem_borough_president_ choice_5_of_5	217564	99	NA	NA

Note: Data has been transposed here for readability.

To combine all files into one, the CFB did a significant amount of recoding and reorganizing of the original files. First, we created a unique identifying number for each ballot. We then intuited the political party of each ballot based on either the Ballot Style column—which in some cases listed DEM, REP, or CON—or by comparing the district and which races recorded votes on the ballot.

Based on the ballot's election district, assembly district, and political party, the CFB recoded cells to distinguish between undervotes. In ranked choice voting, undervotes are also called skipped rankings. Ballots that were eligible to vote in a race but left a rank blank, or skipped that rank, were legitimate undervotes. However, the original CVR file did not distinguish between legitimate undervotes and races that did not appear on the ballot because the voter did not live in that district or was registered to a different political party. For example, on a Republican ballot, Democratic races appeared as undervotes in the original files. The CFB re-coded these cells to "NA" in our combined file to reflect that the voter was not eligible to vote in these races.

Some ballots reflected an undervote for every office and every rank, with some of those ballots denoting a "[2]" after their ballot type. They also did not have any votes cast in any of the citywide races using ranked choice voting. The CFB categorized these as non-ranked choice ballots for either judicial or party delegate races and suppressed these ballots from the overall analysis.

The CFB makes several recommendations in the Policy & Legislative Recommendations section for improving the structure of the CVR file to allow for easier analysis by researchers and for those interested in educating voters about ranked choice voting.

In other parts of this report, as in past reports, the CFB does not separate out or distinguish voter behavior by political party. However, in analyzing the primary election CVR file it was clearly necessary to separate analysis by Democratic, Republican, and Conservative party primary ballots because of the differences in ranking possibilities afforded to voters of each political party and to better pinpoint trends in voter behavior. In certain analyses about the fundamental behavior of ranked choice voters, the CFB only analyzed Democratic races, as

the Democratic primaries had the most candidates to rank in the most offices and therefore gave us more insight into fundamental ranking behavior by NYC voters. All analyses below clearly state which population of voters are included in each analysis.

New York City's ranked choice voting law permits ranking up to five candidates on a primary ballot and in races with fewer than five candidates, a voter is permitted to rank the number of candidates in the race plus one. If only one candidate files nominating petitions for a primary election, that candidate does not appear on the ballot because the race is uncontested. For every race on the ballot, a voter also can write-in a vote. Races with two named candidates actually have three voting opportunities including write-in.

All city-office elections on the primary ballot were ranked choice, but we expected a difference in how voters approached ranking in races where only two named candidates were listed versus races with more than two named candidates. Out of a total of 63 races on the ballot, 11 (17.5%) had only two candidates. Figure 5.5 breaks out the number of races on the ballot for each office and political party.

Figure 5.5: Races on the ballot by political party

Party	Mayor	Public Advocate	Comptroller	Borough President	City Council	Total
Democratic	1	1	1	5	46	54
Republican	1	—	—	1	6	8
Conservative	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	2	1	1	6	53	63

Most Republican races had only two named candidates on the ballot; in fact, only two Republican races had more than two candidates—Republican Staten Island Borough President and the Republican Council District 50. We did not want to draw unearned conclusions about a voter's ranking preferences in what were essentially single-choice races that would naturally be determined by one candidate receiving greater than 50% of the vote. Therefore, the CFB chose to describe the statistics of these races separately from races with three or more candidates, or remove those two-person races entirely from the analysis, when it made sense to do so. The population of each analysis is clearly stated in the footnotes.

Analysis of Voter Ranking Behavior

Voter behavior and turnout is influenced by many factors in any election. Outside of systemic barriers to voting, factors that encourage participation include open races with many candidates running and media coverage that creates excitement around an election. Other factors are personal to the voter, such as whether a voter's friends and family are voting or if the voter has been contacted by campaigns and other voter outreach groups in the form of door knocking, texting, and phone calling. Factors that discourage participation in an election include closed races with incumbents or few candidates and general disinterest in the race locally or nationally. Lack of voter education about elections dates, offices on the ballot, and where to vote also can discourage voter participation.

RCV brings in other voter behavior elements. Whether a voter ranks more than one candidate or how many ranks they fill out can be impacted by factors such as the number of candidates in a race, education about and confidence in ranked choice voting, or candidates' expressed views or encouragement of ranked choice voting.

Ranking top-line

Immediately following the release of the CVR, media analysis focused predominately on ranking patterns and voter behavior in citywide races, such as the Democratic mayoral and Comptroller races.[42] This analysis did not include detailed analysis of six Borough President races and 36 City Council races that were on the ballot for New Yorkers, and potentially drew incomplete conclusions because they did not take into account a voter's whole ballot by leaving out Borough President and City Council races. In most cases, analysis did not include Republican ballots at all.

Overall, 88.3% of 2021 primary voters ranked more than one unique candidate[43] in at least one race. When broken out by political party: 89.3% of Democrats ranked multiple unique candidates in at least one race, and 56.6% of Republicans ranked multiple unique candidates in at least one race.[44]

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42   Anuta, Joe. "Lower-Income Communities Showed Less Engagement With Ranked-Choice Voting in NYC Primary." *Politico*. 8 Sep, 2021.

43   In CFB's analysis, we did not count multiple rankings for one candidate, or bullet voting, as unique ranked counts.

44   This population does not count ballots with fatal errors. Conservative party voters in CD19 only had 2 candidates plus a write-in to rank, so they were not included in this analysis. We did include Democrat and Republican races which only had two candidates.

Out of the eight total Republican races on the primary ballot, six had only two named candidates on the ballot. However, in two Republican races with more than two named candidates, 60.7% of Staten Island Republicans ranked more than one unique Borough President candidate, and 57.6% of Republicans in Council District 50 (Staten Island) ranked more than one unique council candidate.

In the 13 candidate Democratic mayoral primary, 46.2% of Democrats utilized all five of their ranks and 13% ranked only one unique candidate, while 48.3% of Republicans only ranked one unique candidate in their two-candidate mayoral race. Republicans were able to rank three candidates including a write-in, and while it appeared voters largely treated this race like a single-choice election, 6.1% chose to use a write-in and also rank both of the unique candidates, making the most of their three-rank ballot.

Figure 5.6 shows the number of voters who utilized each number of unique ranks on their ballot. The plurality of Democrats utilized all five ranks, while the plurality of Republicans ranked one or two of their three choices (including a write-in). Of course, in a RCV race with only two candidates, we would expect more voters to rank only one or both candidates, ignoring the write-in ranking option.

Figure 5.6: Number of unique mayoral rankings by political party
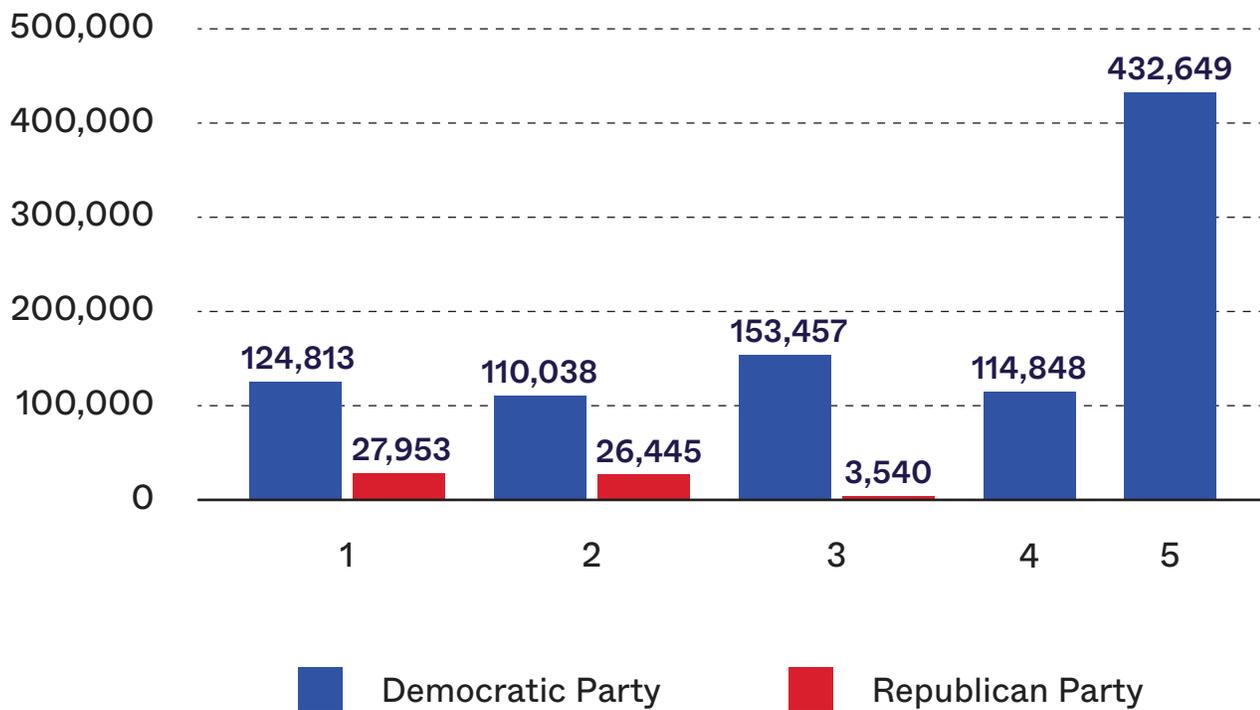
Voters who ranked a single choice in the mayoral race did not always continue this behavior in other races on their ballot—19.3% of voters who ranked only one mayoral candidate ranked multiple candidates in their respective council races. Our analysis also found that the number of council candidates in a race had an impact on whether the voter ranks multiple candidates in that race. As the number of council candidates in a race increases by one, the odds of ranking only one council candidate decreases by 12.2%.

When looking at the proportion of voters who utilized all possible unique ranks in their council race, all the top races were Democratic races, and the top three districts all had 12 or more candidates running. As shown in Figure 5.7, the top three districts with the most voters using all possible ranks for their council race were Council Districts 26 (Queens), 27 (Queens), and 9 (Manhattan). These three races featured a higher than average number of candidates on the ballot, with the average council district having six candidates to rank. (The same council races also have the highest average ranking score as discussed on page 108.)

Figure 5.7: Top 3 council races with ballots utilizing five rankings

	Council District		Percent of Ballots	Number of Candidates
26	Queens	Democrat	48.2%	15
27	Queens	Democrat	47.1%	12
9	Manhattan	Democrat	42.2%	13

The Borough President race with the most voters ranking unique candidates in all possible rankings was the Democratic Borough President race in the Bronx. The Democratic Borough President primary in Queens had the most voters who only ranked one candidate; this race also had the fewest number of Borough President candidates running (three candidates).

Figure 5.8 shows the percentage of voters by the number of candidates they ranked in each race. For example, in the Democratic Bronx Borough President race, the bottom segment represents the 33.1% of voters in the race who ranked only one candidate, the second segment represents the 17.0% of voters who ranked two candidates, the third segment represent the 9.9% of voters who ranked three candidates, the fourth segment represents the 5.8% of voters who ranked four candidates, and the top segment represents the remaining 34.2% of voters who ranked five candidates.

Figure 5.8: Borough President ranking frequency (normalized to percentages)
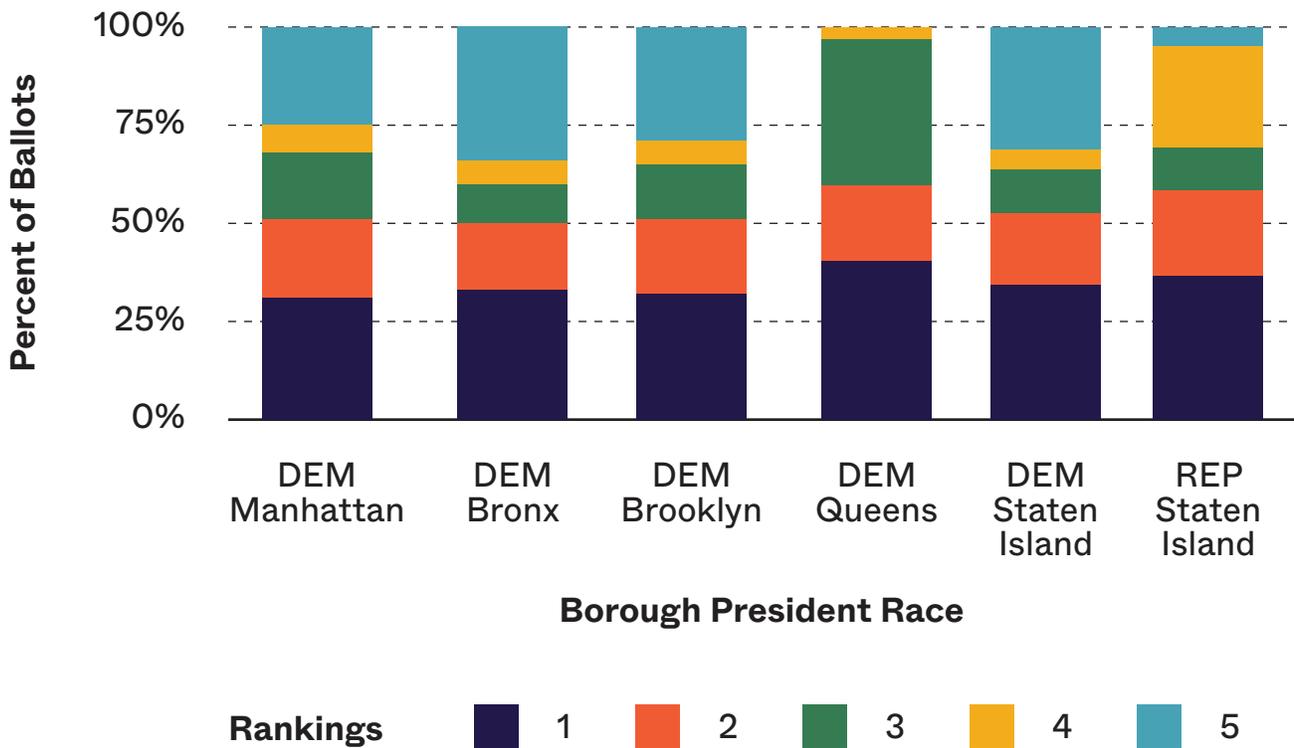
Ranking sequences

The CFB counted the frequency of each unique ballot sequence to see which series of rankings was most common in the Democratic mayoral race. The variation in ranking sequences shows how ranked choice voting actually provided an opportunity for voters to vote their true preferences.

Out of 759,375 possible unique combinations of five rankings in the Democratic mayoral primary,[45] voters utilized 74,996, or only 9.9%, of possible unique combinations. Of those utilized combinations, 38,003 (50.7%) were voted by only a single voter. Though nowhere close to representing every permutation of ranking sequences possible, the sheer diversity and variety of rankings in the Mayoral race indicate that voters took to heart one important benefit of ranked choice voting—the ability to put aside strategic voting and vote for favorite candidates, without worrying about whether they're likely to win.

The most common Democrat mayoral ranking sequence was Eric Adams in first rank with the next four ranks blank—6.3% of valid Democrat mayoral ballots voted this sequence shown in Figure 5.9. Additionally, 0.4% of Democrats ranked Eric Adams in all five ranks, also known as bullet voting, which is functionally equivalent to only voting for him in first place. (The CFB dives deeper into the behavior of single choice rankers and bullet voters further in this chapter.)

Figure 5.9: Most common ballot sequence in the Democratic mayoral primary

1	2	3	4	5
Eric Adams	*Blank*	*Blank*	*Blank*	*Blank*

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45   Assuming 13 named candidates, one write-in, and the ability to leave a ranking blank (also known as an undervote) there are 759,375 possible unique combinations in the Democratic Mayor's race. There were five ranking choices in this race.

In the Democrat mayoral race, the most common ranking sequence that utilized all five ranks was "Maya D. Wiley, Kathryn A. Garcia, Scott M. Stringer, Dianne Morales, Shaun Donovan"—0.093% of all valid Democrat ballots with a mayoral vote voted this sequence. Figure 5.10 shows the top five most common five-rank ballot sequences in the Democratic mayoral primary.

Figure 5.10: Top five most common five-rank ballot sequences in the Democratic mayoral primary

1	2	3	4	5	Percentage of voters with this ranking sequence
Maya D. Wiley	Kathryn A. Garcia	Scott M. Stringer	Dianne Morales	Shaun Donovan	0.093%
Maya D. Wiley	Kathryn A. Garcia	Dianne Morales	Scott M. Stringer	Shaun Donovan	0.088%
Kathryn A. Garcia	Maya D. Wiley	Scott M. Stringer	Shaun Donovan	Andrew Yang	0.087%
Maya D. Wiley	Kathryn A. Garcia	Scott M. Stringer	Shaun Donovan	Dianne Morales	0.077%
Maya D. Wiley	Kathryn A. Garcia	Scott M. Stringer	Dianne Morales	Andrew Yang	0.070%

Less variation of ranking sequences occurred in the Republican mayoral primary because only two named candidates appeared on the ballot. Out of 64 possible unique combinations of rankings, Republican mayoral voters utilized nearly all of them—57 or 89.1% of unique combinations were utilized.

The most common ballot sequence was Curtis A. Sliwa in first rank with the next two ranks left blank—31.5% of valid Republican mayoral ballots voted this sequence shown in Figure 5.11. Republican voters were more likely to take advantage of the write-in option on their mayoral ballots, which is discussed in the write-ins subsection of the report.

Figure 5.11: Most common ballot sequence in the Republican mayoral primary

1	2	3
Curtis A. Sliwa	*Blank*	*Blank*

Single Choice Voters

Single choice voters are voters who ranked only one candidate in a race. Their cast vote record may depict voting for their one and only choice in first rank, and leaving the last remaining choices blank, or they could engage in "bullet voting", which is depicted by either ranking the same candidate in all available ranks for that race, or ranking the same candidate in multiple ranks and leaving the rest of the race's choices blank.

Of the 13% of Democratic voters who ranked only one unique candidate for mayor, 51% chose Eric Adams as their first and only rank. Figure 5.12 shows the proportion of the nearly 125,000 Democratic ballots that chose each mayoral candidate as their single-choice rank. Paperboy Love Prince was the least frequent choice of single choice voters on the Democratic mayoral ballot, meaning that Prince's supporters were most likely to rank at least one other candidate.

Figure 5.12: Frequency of single choice Democratic mayoral ranks by candidate

Candidate Name	Percentage of Single choice Mayoral Voters Who Chose Candidate
Eric L. Adams	51.0%
Andrew Yang	16.1%
Maya D. Wiley	10.0%
Kathryn A. Garcia	8.0%
Scott M. Stringer	4.9%
Dianne Morales	2.5%
Shaun Donovan	1.9%
Raymond J. McGuire	1.7%
Aaron S. Foldenauer	1.5%
Art Chang	0.7%
Write-in	0.6%
Joycelyn Taylor	0.4%
Isaac Wright Jr.	0.3%
Paperboy Love Prince	0.3%

For the 13% of Democratic voters who ranked only one mayoral candidate and also had a council race on the ballot, we analyzed how many of those voters went on to rank multiple candidates in their council race. At the low end, 10.9% of single choice mayoral voters who ranked Joycelyn Taylor ranked multiple candidates in their council races, while at the high end, 26.2% of Maya Wiley's single choice supporters ranked multiple candidates in their council races. Figure 5.13 shows the breakdown of which single choice mayoral voters ranked in their Borough President or City Council races.

Figure 5.13: Percentage of single choice mayoral rankers who ranked in Borough President and City Council races

Candidate Name	Borough President	City Council
Maya D. Wiley	18.7%	26.2%
Andrew Yang	11.1%	23.3%
Kathryn A. Garcia	15.5%	19.9%
Raymond J. McGuire	11.9%	17.9%
Art Chang	8.5%	17.4%
Eric L. Adams	13.4%	17.3%
Dianne Morales	10.7%	15.2%
Scott M. Stringer	10.5%	15.0%
Paperboy Love Prince	11.0%	14.4%
Write-in	9.2%	13.8%
Aaron S. Foldenauer	7.0%	13.8%
Isaac Wright Jr.	7.6%	13.1%
Shaun Donovan	9.4%	12.0%
Joycelyn Taylor	7.2%	10.9%

Bullet voters

Bullet voters are those who ranked one candidate multiple times in the same race. In our analysis, there are two ways to bullet vote—single choice bullet voting, which is voting for only one candidate across all choices or voting for one candidate across multiple ranks and leaving the other ranks blank, and multiple choice bullet voting, which is voting for one candidate at least twice and another candidate at least once. For example, a Democratic primary voter who ranked Brad Lander for all five ranks in the Comptroller race is a single choice bullet voter. Figures 5.14 and 5.15 show example of both types of bullet voting.

Figure 5.14: Example of a single choice bullet voter in the Democratic Comptroller race

dem_ comptroller_ choice_1_ of_5_024314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_2_ of_5_224314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_3_ of_5_324314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_4_ of_5_424314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_5_ of_5_524314
Write-in	Write-in	Write-in	Write-in	Write-in
217822	217822	217822	217822	217822
217822	217822	217822	217822	217822
217868	217868	217868	217868	217868
219046	219046	219046	219046	219046
217822	217822	217822	217822	217822
217868	217868	99	99	99

Figure 5.15: Example of multiple choice bullet voter in the Democratic Comptroller race

dem_ comptroller_ choice_1_ of_5_024314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_2_ of_5_224314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_3_ of_5_324314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_4_ of_5_424314	dem_ comptroller_ choice_5_ of_5_524314
220981	217822	221542	217692	221542
220981	217868	220981	220981	220981
217681	219437	217681	99	99
217607	219046	217692	217681	217692

CFB staff found that 5.6% of Republicans bullet voted (single choice or multiple choice) in at least one race, while 3.7% of Democrats bullet voted (single choice or multiple choice) in at least one race. In the mayoral race, 4.4% of valid Republican ballots were single choice bullet voters, while only 0.71% of valid Democratic mayoral ballots were single choice bullet voters. The race with the highest amount of single choice bullet voters was the Conservative council race in Council District 19 with 5.7% of ballots being single choice bullet voters. 6.1% of all mayoral single choice voters were single choice bullet voters (See Figure 5.16).

The number of candidates on the ballot does seem to influence single choice bullet voting; in our analysis, as the number of council candidates goes up, the odds of single choice bullet voting goes down by 11.6%.

Though not in any way a ballot error, single choice bullet voting may indicate that a voter misunderstands the counting process of ranked choice voting. A voter's ranked choice vote only moves from a voter's first choice to second choice if their first-choice candidate is eliminated. Therefore, a single choice bullet vote is essentially equivalent to a single choice vote. It is possible that these voters thought that bullet voting meant a particularly strong expression of support for their preferred candidate. However, without surveying this group of voters, it is impossible to intuit their intentions and understanding of the RCV process.

Figure 5.16: Percentage of single choice voters by party and office

Party/Office	% Single Choice Voters Out of All Valid Ballots	% Single Choice Bullet Voters Out of All Single Choice Voters
Mayor		
All	15.4%	6.1%
Democratic	13.3%	5.4%
Republican	48.3%	9.2%
Public Advocate		
Democratic	56.1%	1.7%
Comptroller		
Democratic	32.3%	2.0%
Borough President		
Democratic	35.7%	1.9%
Staten Island Borough President		
Republican	39.3%	7.2%
City Council		
All	34.5%	2.3%
Democratic	34.2%	2.2%
Republican	48.7%	5.4%
Conservative (n=121)	60.3%	9.6%
All (>2 candidates)	47.5%	2.2%
Democratic (>2 candidates)	32.5%	2.2%
Republican (>-2 candidates)	42.4%	4.6%

For multiple choice bullet voters in the mayoral race, 4.4% of Republicans ranked one candidate at least twice and at least one more candidate, including write-ins, while Democratic ballots had 1.1% of multiple choice bullet voting in their mayoral race. Again, we find that as the number of council candidates goes up, the odds of being a multiple choice bullet voter goes down by 3.6%. 6.1% of mayoral single choice voters were single choice bullet voters.

Like single choice bullet voting, multiple choice bullet voting is not a ballot error and does not invalidate a voter's choices. Multiple choice bullet voting might also indicate a misunderstanding of the ranked choice voting counting process or a mis-marked ballot. Again, without surveying this group of voters, we cannot opine on their intentions.

Research by Fairvote into bullet voting, using results from 196 past RCV elections held in the United States, found that voters who support front-runner candidates are more likely to bullet vote. They found that in 73% of elections, voters who ranked the winning candidate had a higher bullet voting rate than supporters of losing candidates.[46] The authors further introduce the idea that bullet voting is actually rational for supporters of front-runners, since they perceive their vote is less likely to move to their second choice.

Consistent single rankers

Our analysis across races allowed us to dive deeper into the behavior of what we are calling consistent single rankers—voters who consistently ranked only one unique candidate in every office on their ballot. Overall, 5.5% of voters in the 2021 primary were consistent single rankers. That number varied slightly between the two main political parties—5.2% of Democrats were consistent single rankers compared to 10.1% of Republicans.

We found that ranking only one choice in the mayoral race does not necessarily mean you were more likely to be a consistent single choice ranker—19.3% of single choice voters in the mayoral races ranked multiple candidates in council races. 19.0% of Democratic and 22.3% Republican single choice voters in the mayoral race ranked multiple candidates in their council race.

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46   Otis, Deb and Chris Zawora. "Rate of "Bullet Voting" Depends on Candidate Strength, Party Cues, and Other Factors." Fairvote. 16 Aug, 2021.

We tested whether the number of candidates in a race had a significant effect on ranking more than one candidate, and found that there was a significantly higher proportion of Democratic voters in council races with less than three candidates that ranked a single choice than the Democratic voters in council races with three or more candidates to rank. In addition, as the number of council candidates in a race increases by one, the odds of ranking only one council candidate decreases by 12.2%.[47]

The council districts with the highest number of consistent single rankers were Council District 51 (Staten Island) with 22.3%, District 50 (Staten Island) with 18.5%, and District 32 (Queens) with 15.2%. The council districts with the lowest number of consistent single rankers were Council District 39 (Brooklyn) with 2.6%, District 33 (Brooklyn) with 2.7%, and District 6 (Manhattan) with 2.9%. The map in Figure 5.17 show the percentage of consistent single rankers by council district.

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47   This was tested with a logistic regresion. p<0.01.

Figure 5.17: Percent consistent single rankers by council district in the 2021 primary election

2.6%–5%

5.1%–7.1%

7.2%–10.2%

10.3%–15.2%

15.3%–22.3%

NYC Parks and Greenspace
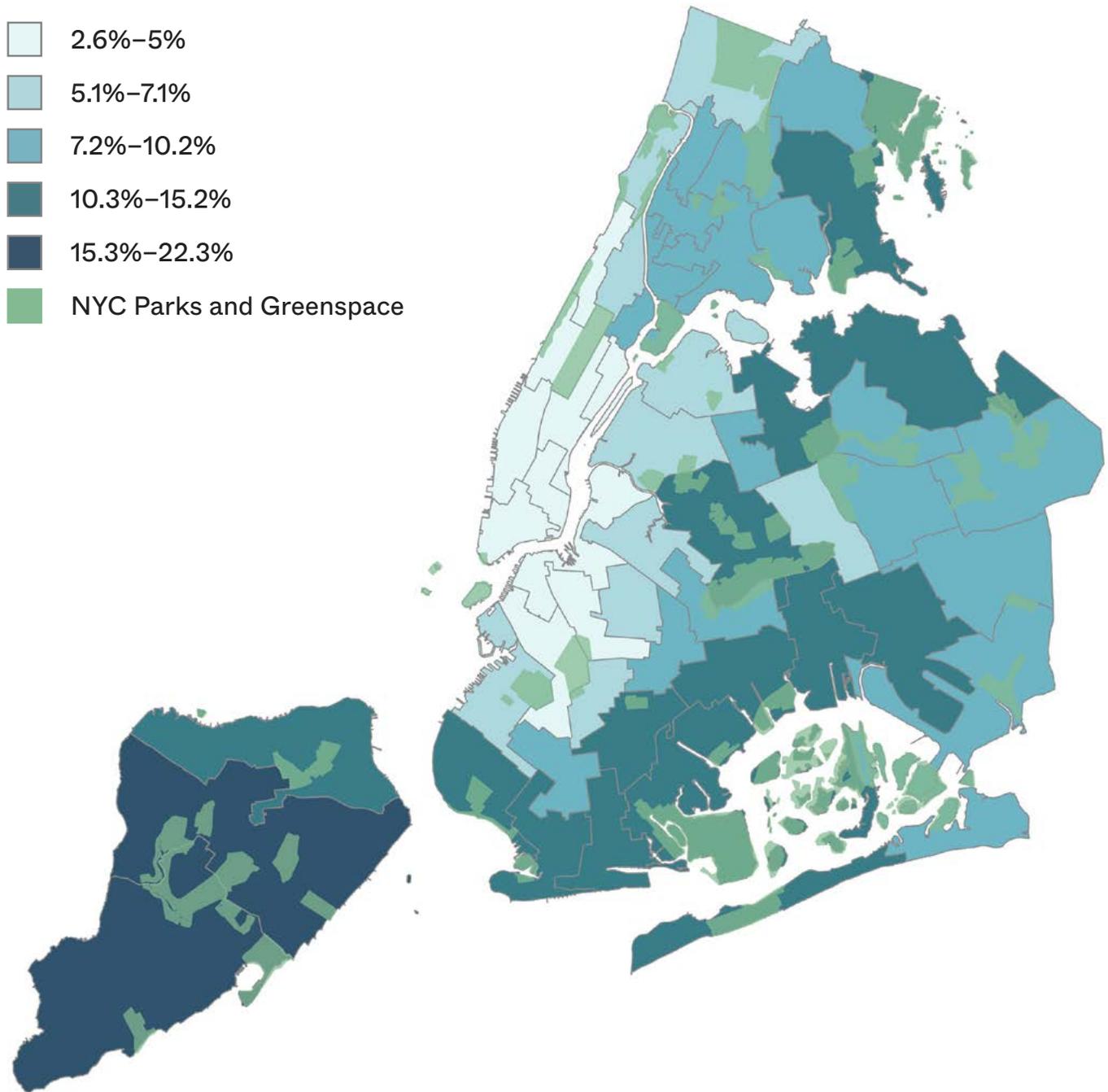
Write-ins

State Election law permits a single write-in vote for each race on the ballot. As shown in Figure 5.18, races using ranked choice voting display the names of candidates who petitioned to appear on the primary ballot and then allow voters to pen the name of their write-in vote, if they so choose, in the last row.

Figure 5.18: Example of a ranked choice ballot with write-in

	1	2	3	4	5
CANDIDATE A	○	○	○	○	○
CANDIDATE B	○	●	○	○	○
CANDIDATE C	○	○	○	○	○
CANDIDATE D	○	○	●	○	○
CANDIDATE E	○	○	○	○	○
CANDIDATE F	○	○	○	○	○
CANDIDATE G	○	○	○	○	○
CANDIDATE H	○	○	○	○	○
WRITE-IN CANDIDATE *Candidate X*	●	○	○	○	○

Overall, 5% of voters across the city utilized a write-in candidate in any rank in at least one race—with 4.6% of Democrats utilizing a write-in in any race compared to 10.9% of Republicans. We are not able to compare these percentages to past elections, because there is no file that contains the contiguous votes of individual ballots, so this analysis is unique to the CVR.

In the analysis, we found that the number of candidates influences whether a voter will rank a write-in candidate. In council races, as the number of candidates goes up, the number of write-ins goes down.[48] This is true across parties, and in a separate analysis of Democratic council races with more than two candidates.

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48   We used a Point-Biserial Correlation test for correlation between the dichotimous write-in dependent variable and the continuous number of candidates as the independent variable. $p < 0.01$, $r_{pb=}$ -0.08532238

In the mayoral race, 4.3% of Republicans ranked a write-in candidate first, while 0.2% of Democrats did. 0.8% of Republicans wrote in a candidate for first choice in their council race, while 0.4% of Democrats ranked a write-in as first choice in their council races. In an overlap with single choice voters, 0.5% of Democrats and 2.4% of Republicans ranked a write-in as their first and only choice in at least one race.

Figure 5.19 shows separate plots for voters who did and did not write in a candidate to rank in their council race. This box plot is meant to display the relationship between the distribution of voters deciding whether or not to write-in a candidate on their ballot and how many candidates were running in their race. The boxes represent where 25% to 75% of the voters are distributed within the range of council candidates they had to choose from, and the horizontal line within the box represents the median number of council candidates for each respective group of voters. The "whiskers" on the box plot represent the remaining quartiles of the distribution of voters, and the dots above each box represent outliers in the data.

This box plot in figure 5.19 shows us that the number of Democratic council candidates voters had to choose from is lower for Democratic voters who ranked a write-in candidate.

Figure 5.19: Distribution in number of named Democratic council candidates for ballots without and with write-in votes
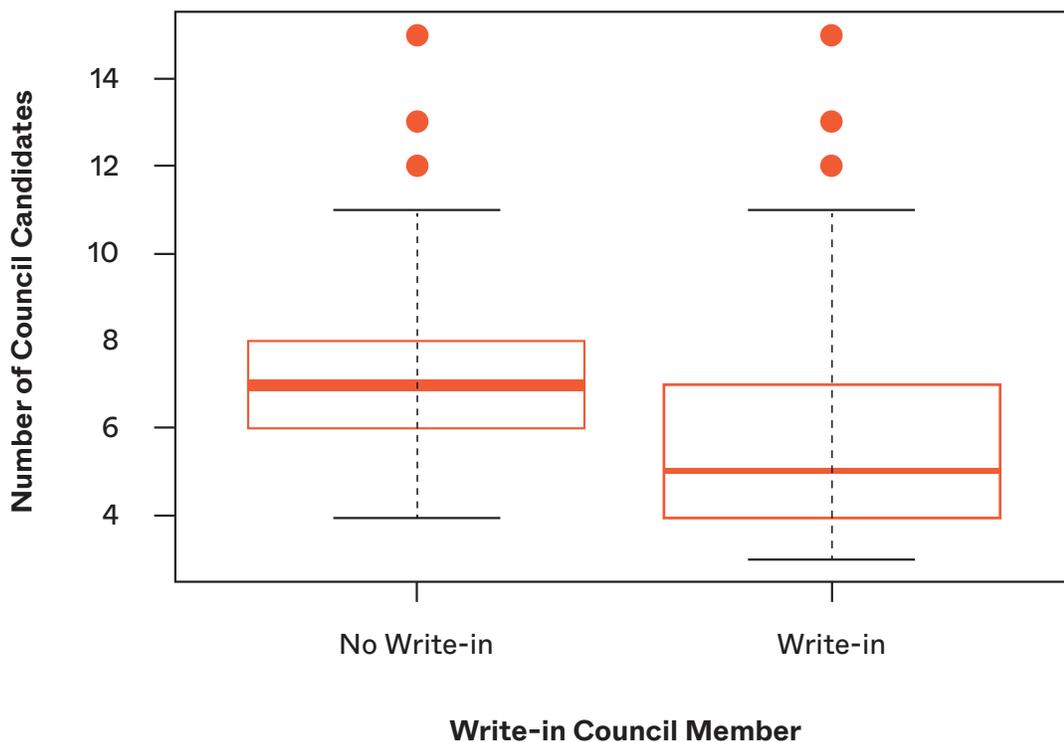
Skipped Races

In an election with so many candidates on the ballot and so many open races, we were also curious about what race voters were most likely to skip, or to not vote in. Of all ballots in the 2021 primary, 20.3% of voters skipped at least one race. Democrats, who had many more races on their ballot were more likely to skip a race than Republicans—21.4% of Democrats skipped at least one race and 2.4% of Republicans skipped at least one race.

Of the Democratic voters who skipped at least one race, 71% skipped the Public Advocate race, the only closed race with an incumbent on every ballot; in total, 14% of all Democratic voters skipped that race.

Figure 5.20: Distribution of skipped races for Democrats

Office	Democratic	# Skipped	Ballots[49]	% Skipped
Mayor	4,810	940,615	0.5%
Public Advocate	131,325	940,550	14.0%
Comptroller	81,158	938,771	8.6%
Borough President	96,985	941,293	10.3%
Council	86,861	875,343	9.9%

In an analysis of the relationship between number of candidates in a council race and the amount of voters who skipped the race, CFB staff found that as the number of council candidates increases by one, the odds of a voter skipping a race goes down by 0.59%.[50] This could indicate that voters are less likely to skip a race when there's more candidates to choose from and therefore a greater likelihood that at least one candidate will win their vote.

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49   Does not include ballots with fatal errors in the race

50   We used a binary logistic regression. The odds were significant at the <0.001 level.

Errors

Fatal errors are those in which a voter's intention in the race is impossible to ascertain based on how they've marked a ballot, leading to a vote being invalidated. The most common ballot error is an overvote, or when a voter marks more than one candidate in a single selection. This error can occur in a single choice race if a voter marks two candidates—for example, if a voter marked a ballot for both Donald Trump and Joseph Biden in the 2020 Presidential general. In ranked choice voting, an overvote occurs when a voter marks two candidates for the same rank, however only overvotes in the first rank leads to a race being completely invalidated on a voter's ballot.

Figure 5.21: Example of overvoted ballot
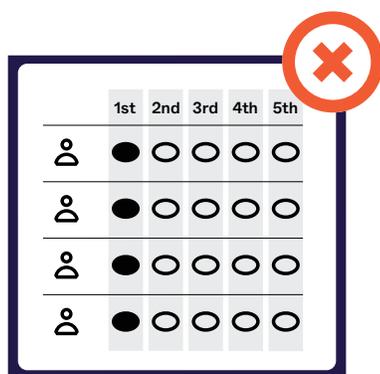
In the 2021 primary election, 1.2% of ballots had at least one fatal overvote error. In San Francisco's first RCV election in 2004, electing seven members of their Board of Supervisors, the rate of overvoting ranged from 0.3% to 1.1%.[51] Over the course of all RCV elections held in San Francisco between 2004 and 2016, the rate of first-choice overvoting was 0.8%.[52]

Several council districts had first-choice overvoting rates which were higher than the citywide rate. The top three council districts with the most fatal overvote errors in any race were all located in the Bronx. Council District 14 had a fatal error rate of 3.8%, District 17 had a rate of 3.6%, and District 16 had a rate of 3.2%. The map in Figure 5.22 shows how errors rates were distributed across the city.

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51   Fairvote. "Evaluation of San Francisco's First Ranked Choice Election." Jan 2005.

52   Hernandez, Pedro, Jennifer Pae, Madeline Brown, and Theodore Landsman. "Voter Experience with Ranked Choice Voting in San Francisco: Voter Turnout and Use of Rankings, 2004–2016." Fairvote California. May 2018.

Figure 5.22: Map of % fatal overvote by council district in the 2021 primary election

Legend:
- 0.5%–0.8%
- 0.9%–1.2%
- 1.3%–1.8%
- 1.9%–2.7%
- 2.8%–3.8%
- NYC Parks and Greenspace
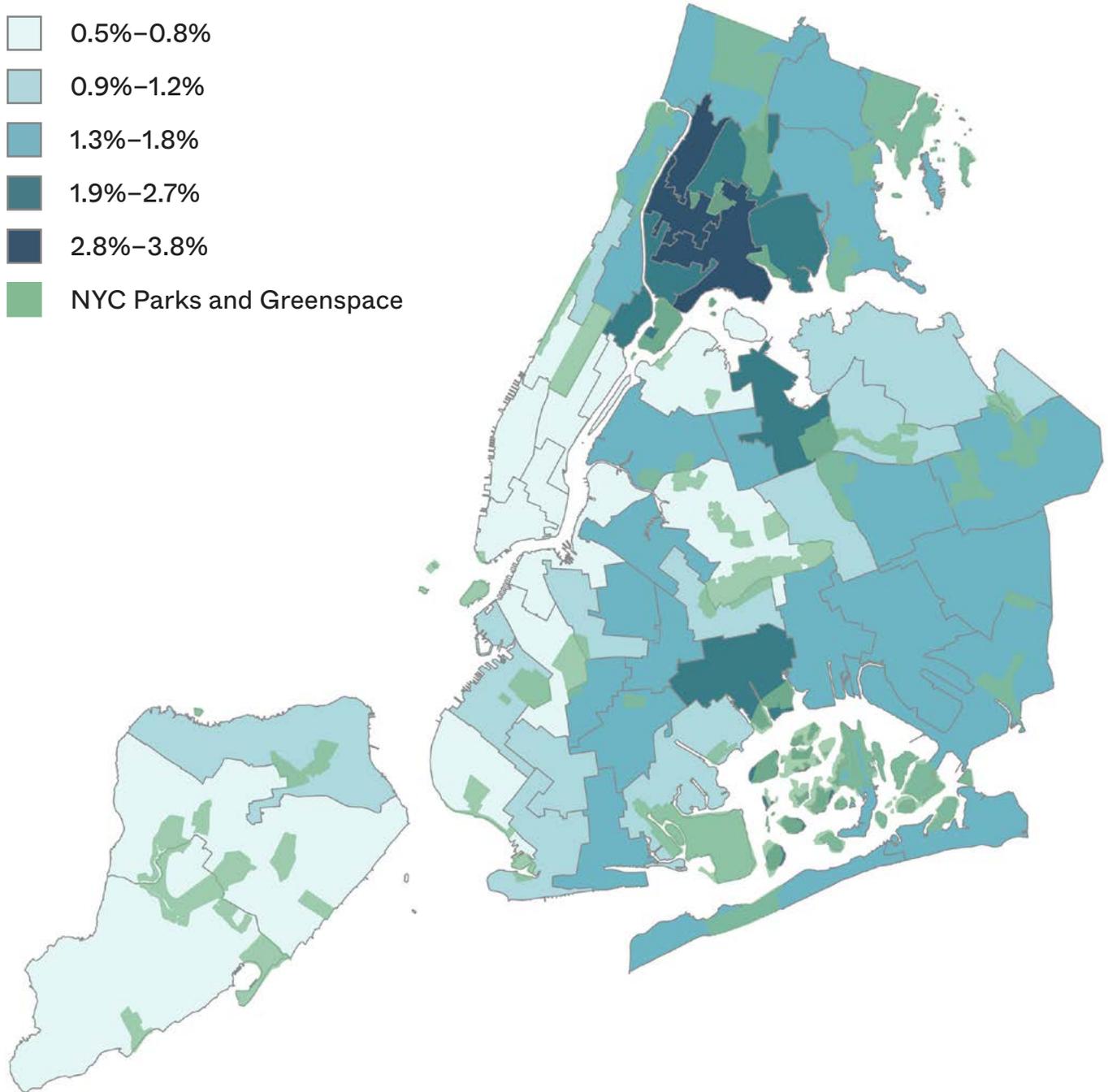
Other ballots had what we are calling non-fatal errors, ones that did not invalidate their vote in a race, but nonetheless indicated a ballot marking mistake or potentially a fundamental misunderstanding of how to mark a ballot correctly. The most common non-fatal error on a ballot are undervotes, often called skipped ranks, and occur when a voter leaves a rank blank.[53] Of all ballots in the 2021 primary election, 1.9% of voters had an undervote in the first rank, or left the first rank blank in any race on their ballot. The Borough President races had the most amount of undervotes in the first rank with 0.9% of voters skipping the first rank on their ballot.

Another non-fatal error in ranked choice voting involves a voter overvoting in ranks other than first rank. This does not invalidate their ballot in the race, but it is a voter error. Of all ballots, 1.4% had an overvote in a rank other than first rank in any race. 0.59% of mayoral ballots had an overvote in a rank other than first place, the highest rate of overvoting in this manner. See Appendix D for the table of non-fatal errors by office.

While undervotes and overvotes in a rank other than first rank as described above do not invalidate a ballot, they do indicate a ballot mismarking. Like with overvotes in first rank, CFB voter education material shown in Figure 5.23, produced in consultation with the Center for Civic Design, focused on visualizing the proper way to mark a ballot and additionally showed how not to mark a ballot.

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53   Undervotes are counted like so: if a voter skips the first rank, the candidates they voted for in other ranks move up—for example, if a voter skips the first rank, ranks Candidate A in the second rank, skips third and fourth ranks, and votes for Candidate B in the fifth rank, the ballot is counted as if Candidate A is ranked first and Candidate B is ranked second.

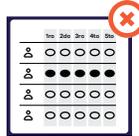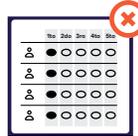**Figure 5.23: Sample NYC Votes ranked choice voting postcard (Spanish)**

The correctly marked ballot is denoted by a green check-mark. The small ballot on the left shows a bullet voted ballot which, while not a fatal error, may indicate the voter misunderstood the counting process of ranked choice voting. The small ballot on the right shows an incorrectly marked overvoted ballot. While error rates were relatively low and measured up to similar rates in other jurisdictions, explaining how to correctly mark a ballot will continue to be a focus of the CFB's voter education efforts in 2023 and 2025, particularly in places where error rates were higher than the city rate.

Exhausted ballots

An exhausted ballot is one in which all the voter's ranked candidates have been eliminated throughout the RCV tabulation process. Or, said another way, it is a ballot in which the voter has not ranked either of the two candidates who make the final round of an RCV tabulation.

Much of the focus related to ballot exhaustion, and the idea that ranked choice voting increases the rate of ballot exhaustion, does not contextualize it from a voter behavior perspective.[54] What voter behavior leads to a ballot being exhausted?

Ranking fewer than the greatest number of available rankings increases the likelihood of a ballot being exhausted. For example, ranking only two candidates on a five-ranking ballot is more likely to result in an exhausted ballot than ranking four candidates.

Ranking less popular candidates increases the likelihood of a ballot being exhausted, as well. For example, in the Democratic Brooklyn Borough President's race the two candidates in the final round were runner-up Jo Anne Simon and winner Antonio Reynoso. A voter who ranked Robert E. Cornegy, Mathieu Eugene, Khari Edwards, Kim Council, and Pearlene S. Fields would be considered an exhausted ballot. A total of 12 candidates were on the ballot in that race, so any combination of rankings that did not include the winner or runner-up would also be considered exhausted.

Ultimately, it is a voter's choice to rank whichever and however many candidates, up to five, that they want to. If a voter only wants to rank a single candidate or two candidates, even if they can rank up to five, that is their choice. In a single choice election, we do not say that voters who vote for a losing candidate have "thrown away" or exhausted their ballot, though it is functionally similar.

We know that voters are more likely to rank when there are more candidates on the ballot, however, more candidates on the ballot also correlates to higher rates of exhausted ballots. In fact, as the number of Council candidates on the ballot increases by one, the number of exhausted ballots goes up by 22.4%.[55]

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54   Cohn, Nate. "How Ranked-Choice Voting Could Affect New York's Mayoral Race." *The New York Times*. 28 May, 2021.

55   $p < 0.01$

Looking at individual races, 14.7% of Democratic ballots for mayor were exhausted, or did not rank either of the top two finalists in the last round.[56] 3.6% of Democratic ballots for Public Advocate were exhausted, 3.2% of Democratic ballots for Comptroller were exhausted, 19.2% of ballots for Borough President were exhausted, and 17.0% of council races with three or more candidates were exhausted. See Appendix E for a full table of exhausted ballots by each race in the primary.

As candidates grow more confident running in ranked choice elections, voters will hear about more alliances or coalitions between like-minded candidates, which will supply natural alternatives for their 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th choices. While error rates were relatively low, explaining how to maximize the potential for a ballot to stay active, will continue to be a focus of the CFB's voter education efforts in 2023 and 2025.

Ranking score

In order to compare different races to one another, the CFB created a ranking score, which is a score out of 100 that is determined by the number of unique ranks a voter made in a race out of the number of possible rankings on the ballot.

Figure 5.24: Mathematical representation of ranking score

$$\text{ranking score} = \frac{\text{unique ranks}}{\text{number of possible rankings}} \times 100$$

For example, in Democratic Council District 16 (Bronx), there were four named candidates on the ballot, and five total ranking opportunities, including the write-in. In that race, if the voter had ranked three candidates, they would have a ranking score of 60.0, which indicates the voter used slightly more than half of their available rankings in that race. We can then calculate the average ranking score for all ballots in a council district and compare it to other district scores, using a normalized scale.

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56   Does not include fatal errors.

The ranking score is meant to serve as a standardized way of comparing different districts or offices to one another, without penalizing voters living in districts with fewer candidates on the ballot, who therefore do not have as many opportunities to rank candidates. Those districts are left out of descriptive statistical analyses that capture the number of ballots ranking three, four, or five candidates. Other analyses use mean rankings as a metric to compare voter behavior, but that statistic again does not take into consideration races with fewer candidates on the ballot.

Figures 5.25 and 5.26. shows the council races with the top three highest average rankings scores and the bottom three lowest ranking scores, all six were Democratic party races. The top average ranking score was in Council District 26 (Queens), which had 15 candidates on the ballot, and the lowest was in Council District 41, which had only two candidates on the ballot.

Figure 5.25: Top three council district average ranking scores

Council District			Average Ranking Score	Number of Candidates
26	Queens	Democrat	71.4	15
27	Queens	Democrat	68.9	12
9	Manhattan	Democrat	66.5	13

Figure 5.26: Bottom three council district average ranking scores

Council District			Average Ranking Score	Number of Candidates
24	Queens	Democrat	43.2	4
34	Brooklyn, Queens	Democrat	40.8	4
41	Brooklyn	Democrat	38.1	2

Overall, the citywide average ranking score was 52.0, indicating that the average New Yorker utilized a little over half of their available rankings. Democrats' citywide average ranking score was 52.3, while Republicans' average was 45.9 and Conservatives' average was 48.5.[57] The map in Figure 5.27 shows the average overall ranking score for the 2021 primary by council district.

Figure 5.27: Average overall ranking score by council district in the 2021 primary election
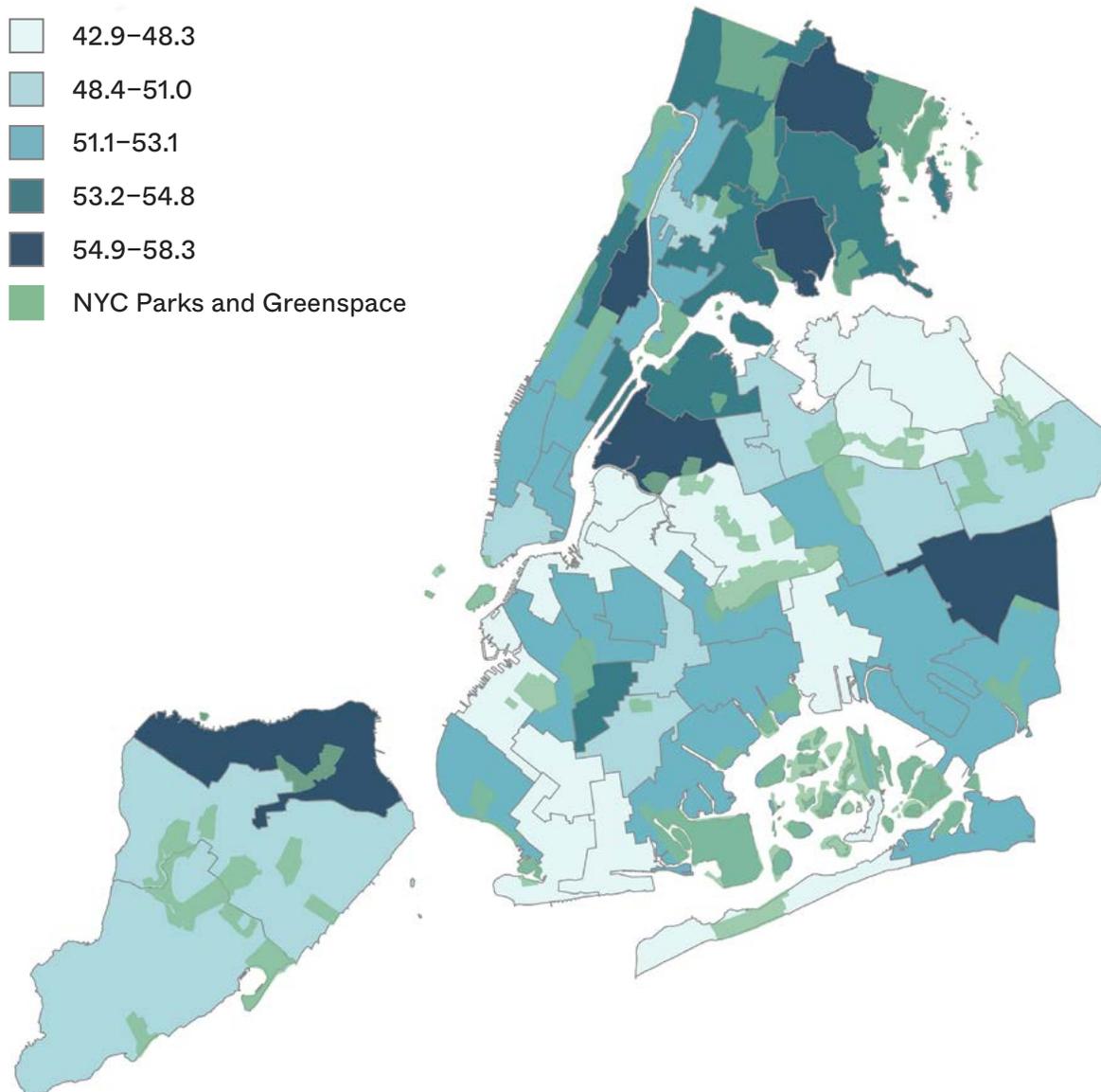
57   These scores include all two-candidate races and only counts unique candidate rankings (i.e. bullet voting counts as a single rank).

Overall, 0.82% of all voters had a perfect overall ranking score, meaning they made choices for every possible ranking across all city offices they were eligible to vote in. 0.64% of Democrats had a perfect overall ranking score, while 3.7% of Republicans had a perfect overall ranking score.

The construction of the ranking score allows us to compare ranking between citywide offices in addition to between districts, even when the number of ranks or candidates on the ballot are different. For example, Democrats had five ranks available for Mayor and four available for Public Advocate, but using the ranking score we're able to determine that voters ranked less of the available rankings in the Public Advocate race than in the Mayor race. The CFB anticipates that this will also be a useful to compare future RCV elections to the 2021 election.

Across all political parties, the mean ranking score was 71.7 for Mayor, 38.3 for Public Advocate, 56.0 for Comptroller, 46.9 for Borough President, and 49.3 for Council Member. Average ranking score for council races that had more than 2 candidates rose slightly to 50.2. Figure 5.28 shows the average ranking score for each office broken down by political party.

Figure 5.28: Average ranking score by office on the ballot

	Democrat	Republican	Conservative	All Parties
Mayor	72.9	52.2	—	71.7
Public Advocate	38.3	—	—	—
Comptroller	56.0	—	—	—
Borough President	46.9	45.3	—	46.9
Council (2 candidates + write-in)	49.4	47.0	48.5	49.3
Council (>2 candidates)	50.2	48.2	—	50.2
Overall Ballot	52.3	45.9	48.5	52.0

The ranking score analysis also allowed us to look at how a Democratic voter's first-choice mayoral vote impacted their average ranking scores across their ballot. Again, the ranking score allows us to compare how many rankings an average voter used within the mayoral race and over all races in which they were eligible to rank.

As shown in Figure 5.29, Shaun Donovan's first-choice supporters had the highest mean overall ranking score of 57.2, meaning they went on to rank the most candidates on their entire ballot across offices, while voters who ranked a write-in first once again had the lowest mean overall ranking score of 37.0. Paperboy Love Prince's first-choice supporters had the highest mean mayoral ranking score of 81.5, meaning voters who ranked Paperboy Love Prince first for mayor went on to rank the most other mayoral candidates on their ballot, and on average ranked four of five available mayoral rankings. Eric Adams' first-choice voters had a mean mayoral ranking score of 67.1 and those that ranked a write-in candidate first had the lowest mean mayoral ranking score of 48.6.

Figure 5.29: Table of average ranking scores by voters' Democratic mayoral first choice

Candidate Name	Number of voters with candidate in first rank	Mayor	Public Advocate	Comptroller	Borough President	Council Member	Overall
Shaun Donovan	22,700	77.6	48.6	61.5	55.9	57.7	57.2
Joycelyn Taylor	2,596	74.2	52.2	62.7	59.1	58.9	56.4
Art Chang	6,955	77.0	47.9	60.0	55.9	60.0	55.8
Dianne Morales	26,162	75.9	47.9	58.4	56.8	58.4	55.6
Isaac Wright Jr.	2,201	72.0	50.9	61.6	57.5	57.3	55.6

Candidate Name	Number of voters with candidate in first rank	Mayor	Public Advocate	Comptroller	Borough President	Council Member	Overall
Maya D. Wiley	200,582	79.0	41.6	54.0	53.2	56.8	55.2
Paperboy Love Prince	3,928	81.5	42.8	53.6	53.0	55.0	55.0
Kathryn A. Garcia	183,446	79.0	42.5	56.4	51.5	55.9	54.3
Scott M. Stringer	50,996	73.4	42.7	55.7	50.7	53.7	53.0
Raymond J. McGuire	25,063	75.5	46.2	57.3	51.6	53.0	52.8
Aaron S. Foldenauer	7,597	69.2	54.4	63.5	57.8	58.3	51.6
Eric L. Adams	288,114	67.1	46.0	56.4	51.9	53.0	50.6
Andrew Yang	113,920	67.4	48.4	56.3	51.8	54.1	49.4
Write-in	1,545	48.6	41.7	45.3	42.0	44.8	37.0

Indicators that influence ranking score

In a linear regression model using the council ranking score for Democratic council races[58] as the dependent variable, we tested the impact on the ranking score with estimated demographic data for council districts,[59] as well as aggregated voter data at the district level. Our independent variables were percentage of registered Democrats aged 65 and older, average Democratic participation score,[60] the number of candidates running in a Democratic council race, percentage of the population whose race is white, and percentage of the population that has a less than high school education.

We found that only the number of candidates running in a race is significant. This means that the other predictors, when all other variables are constant, did not have a significant impact on ranking score. For every one additional council candidate running in a race, the council ranking score rose by 2.2 points (see Appendix C for the model output).[61] Analysis by Fairvote derived similar results regarding ranking usage and number of Council candidates on the ballot.[62]

We look forward to additional analysis looking at how demographic variables impact rankings choices, particularly once there are data from multiple ranked choice voting elections. See Figure 5.30. for a matrix depicting the correlation of each variable with the others. We note that the only variable with a strong correlation (shown here as a large and dark blue dot) to the mean Democratic council ranking score is the number of Democratic council candidates. Figure 5.31. shows the regression line depicting the relationship between the mean council ranking score of a council district and the number of candidates running in the district's council primary—as the number of council candidates in a race increases, the average ranking score for that race increases as well.

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58   A model that included all political parties did not have any significant variables that would have impacted ranking score. 91% of Democratic council races had more than two candidates.

59   U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Data was estimated at the council district level by the Esri ArcGIS Living Atlas Layer.

60   See 2019–2020 Voter Analysis Report for information on the construction of the participation score.

61    $p<0.001$; $R^2 = 0.7638$

62   Fairvote "RCV in New York City—Ballot Use."

Figure 5.30: Correlation matrix of council ranking score regression variables
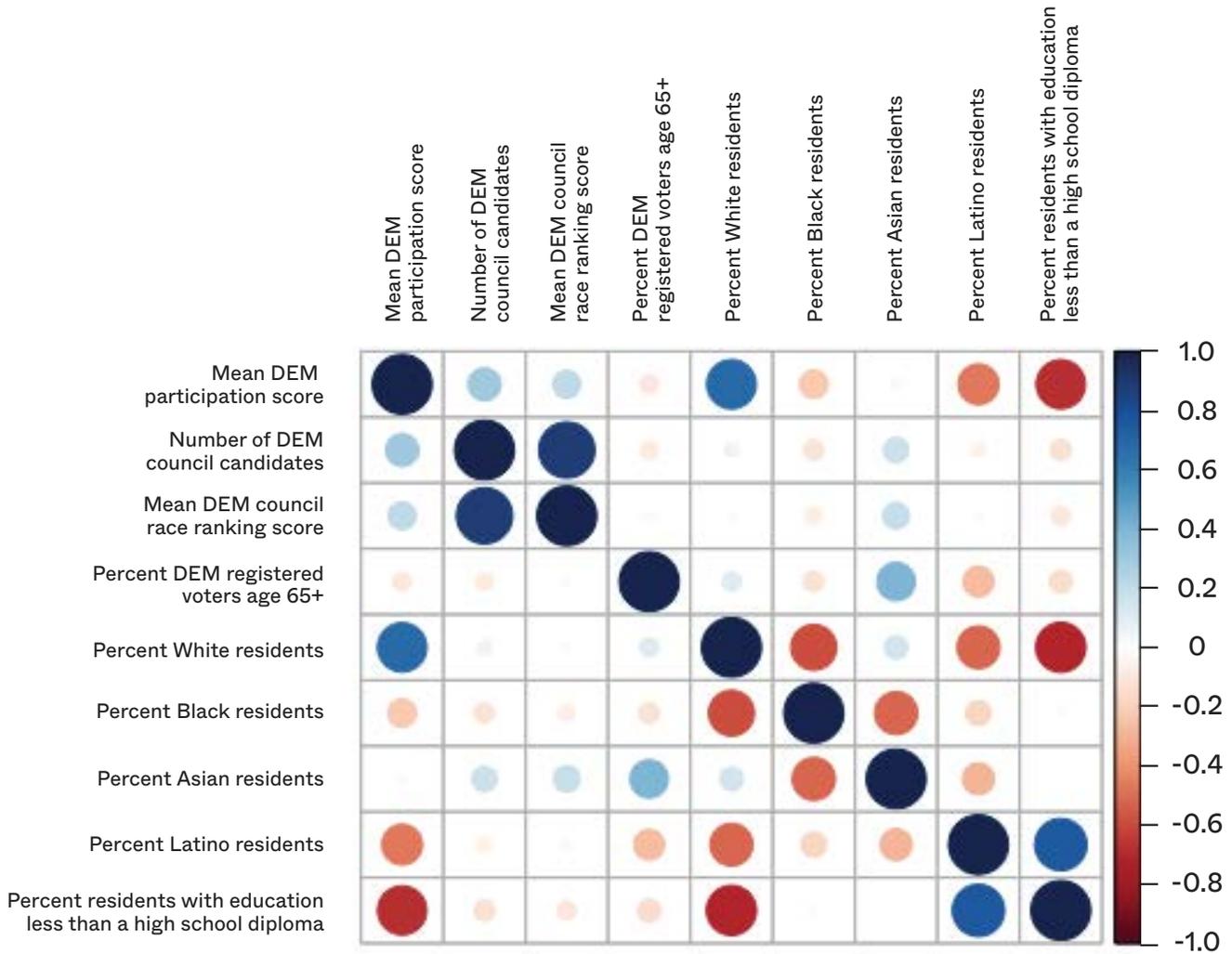
Figure 5.31. Relationship between average ranking score of Democratic voters and number of candidates running
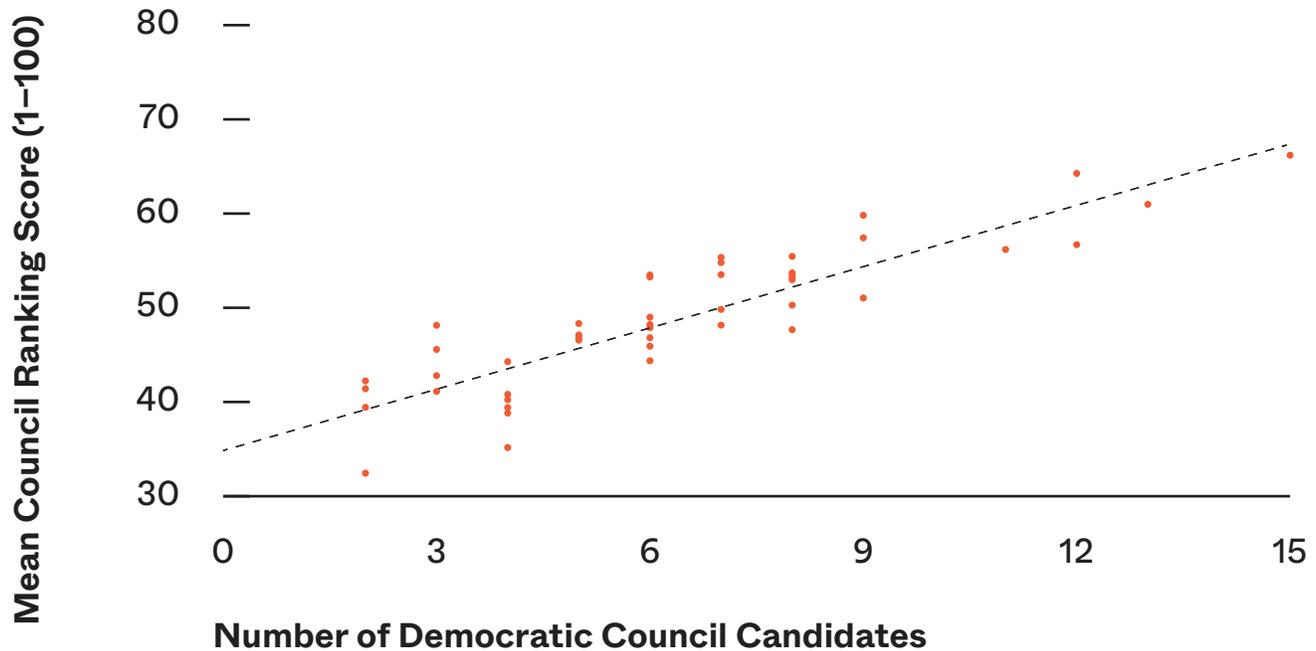
Areas for further research

While we've learned a lot about how New Yorkers approached their first chance at ranked choice voting, it is important to reiterate that this is only one election—and one which also took place 15 months into a pandemic. With RCV primary elections in 2023 and 2025, we will have more data, and a clearer picture about how well New Yorkers understand ranked choice voting and whether they like using it.

To supplement this quantitative data from the CVR, it would be valuable to conduct deeper interviews with City voters about their specific ranking behavior. Exit surveys conducted by Rank the Vote/Common Cause through Edison research gathered valuable insight about voter opinions regarding ranked choice voting.[63] More qualitative data, such as focus groups, would be useful in improving the CFB's RCV voter education and outreach, trainings and materials. We could also learn more about individual voter motivations and intentions,

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63   Rank the Vote NYC "Rank the Vote NYC Releases Edison Research Exist Poll on the Election." 28 June, 2021.

answering questions such as: why would a voter vote for only one candidate in the Mayor's race but rank council candidates? Why did a vote rank a write-in as their first choice? Why did a voter skip voting in a particular race? What motivates someone to be a consistent single ranker?

Lastly, there is also opportunity to survey candidates about their unique experiences. Several organizations have written about how ranked choice voting resulted in the most diverse City Council in the history of New York City.[64] Exploring the candidate experience in the first ranked choice voting election, which was held simultaneously with a massive expansion of the public matching funds program, could also allow us to better understand how those two programs interacted and possibly benefited candidates.

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64   Dell, Nora and Deb Otis. "Ranked Choice Voting in New York City: An In-Depth Analysis." Fairvote. Dec 2021.; Citizens' Union Policy Report. "Ranked Choice Voting in the 2021 Primary Election: Preliminary Analysis of Turnout, Candidate Diversity, and Voters' Impact on Results." July 2021.; Common Cause of New York. "Major Takeaways from New York City's First Ranked Choice Election." 14 July, 2021.

Policy & Legislative Recommendations

Policy & Legislative Recommendations

Over the last three years in New York, significant voting reforms have moved from ideas to reality thanks to voting rights groups advocating for changes that would most benefit voters. Additionally, the State Legislature has welcomed newly elected officials who have made the importance of modernizing State Election law a primary focus and the legislature has responded in real time to the threats to voting posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This combined momentum has resulted in a flurry of more accessible voting options, such as early voting in 2019[65] and expanded absentee voting during the 2020–22 elections.[66] It has also led to big structural overhauls of the elections administration processes associated with in-person and absentee voting, such as using electronic instead of paper pollbooks and allowing voters to cure, or fix, problems related to their absentee ballots. In 2023, we also look forward to huge improvements to the voter registration process with the launching of an online voter registration portal owned by the State Board of Elections and the implementation of automatic voter registration, a process that will register anyone who interacts with a State agency.[67]

Back in 2019, ahead of the 2019–2020 State legislative session, the CFB published a standalone report "A Voting Reform Agenda for New York," which identified our top voting-related legislative priorities.[68] In each annual Voter Analysis Report after that point, we included recommendations to improve elections even beyond those envisioned in our initial voting reform agenda.[69] Of the 31 total recommendations in those three reports, 13 have already been implemented and 3 more are set to be implemented in 2023, as shown in Figure 6.1.

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65   Fink, Zach. "It's Official: Early Voting is Coming to New York." *Spectrum News NY1*. 24 Jan, 2019

66   Ferré-Sadurní, Luis. "New York Will Allow Voters to Cast Mail-In Ballots." *The New York Times*. 29 Sep, 2020.

67   Myrie, Zellnor. "NYS Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie, New York State Senate Advance New Voting Reforms." 22 July, 2020.

68   NYC Campaign Finance Board. "A Voting Reform Agenda for New York." 9 Jan, 2019.

69   2019–20 Voter Analysis Report. "Policy and Legislative Recommendations."; 2020–21 Voter Analysis Report. "Policy and Legislative Recommendations."

Figure 6.1: CFB Policy & Legislative Recommendations 2019–2021

Recommendation	Implemented
Expanding Accessibility	
Restore voting rights to parolees*†‡	✔
Restore voting rights for all justice-involved individuals#	
Pass the New York State Voting Rights Act†‡	
Distribute poll site interpreters to reflect location of LEP communities†	
Provide voter education materials in designated citywide languages#	✔
Create an Advisory Committee and Voter Assistance Hotline for LEP voters‡	
Expand accessible absentee voting to include electronic submission or return‡	
Create an Advisory Committee for voters with disabilities‡	✔
Processes and Procedures	
Consolidate primary election dates*	✔
Pass the Voter Friendly Ballot Act*	✔
Use electronic poll books*	✔
Split shifts for poll workers*	
Publish guidelines for Election Night unofficial results reporting†	
Continue using DS200 voting machines for RCV elections†	✔

Recommendation	Implemented
Conduct a voter education plan to educate New Yorkers about ranked choice voting in 2021†	✔
Voter Registration	
Allow pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds*	✔
Create a statewide automatic voter registration system*†	✔
Create a statewide online voter registration system*†	✔
Electronic signatures*	
Allow for same-day registration*†‡	
Change the party enrollment deadline to the year of the election*	✔
Streamline all voter registration deadlines to one consistent date#	
Voting Methods	
Allow early voting*	✔
Replace assigned early voting poll sites with vote centers†‡	
Standardize and lengthen early voting hours‡	✔
Open additional assigned early voting poll sites†‡	✔
Compel sites that receive public money to serve as polling locations‡	
Allow no-excuse absentee voting*†‡	
Expand the locations of absentee ballot drop boxes‡	

Recommendation	Implemented
Paid postage for absentee ballots[‡]	✔
Update absentee ballot tracking system on daily basis and provide transparency regarding absentee ballot data[‡]	

* NYC Campaign Finance Board. "A Voting Reform Agenda for New York." 9 Jan, 2019.
† Voter Analysis Report 2019–20.
‡ Voter Analysis Report 2020–21.

✔ recommendation implemented	✔ implementation in progress

The successes of the past three years should be celebrated; however, there is still much more to do to make voting more accessible and in turn improve turnout. In 2021, the stage was set to permanently make changes to absentee voting and voter registration that had previously been restricted by New York State Constitutional articles. After moving through a complicated Constitutional amendment process over the last two years, as outlined in a case study later in this section, ballot questions on same day voter registration and no-excuse absentee were put on the November 2021 ballot. Ultimately, voters chose not to pass them, creating a major setback towards establishing these two voting reforms for which the CFB and others have long advocated.

These amendments are still crucial steps we need to take to make voting more accessible, and the process for putting them on the ballot again should be started as soon as practicable. Beyond these two Constitutional changes, there are also smaller, meaningful changes that can be made to the voter registration and absentee voting processes to improve the experience for voters immediately without requiring a Constitutional amendment. We also have the opportunity to significantly expand language access through passing the New York State Voting Rights Act.

Lastly, from an administrative perspective, there are two improvements that can be made to make the City BOE's ranked choice voting results reporting more transparent and effective for the public and researchers.

The following chapter outlines changes that can be made to improve voter registration, absentee voting, early voting, language access, and ranked choice voting results reporting.

Language Access and the New York Voting Rights Act

Since our overview of the language access landscape in the 2019–2020 Voter Analysis Report, many services have changed already or will change soon for voters.[70]

On December 8, 2021, the Census Bureau published an updated list of demographic groups to be covered by jurisdictions under Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act.[71] Section 203 of the Federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) requires counties, including all five boroughs, to provide translation and interpretation services to populations of Asian, Native American, and Alaskan Native language speakers as well as Spanish speakers.[72] This law aims to combat the historical exclusion of these communities from the political process.

Instead of reporting which languages need to be supported, the Census lists the language minority groups and jurisdictions are tasked with selecting which language is spoken most widely by voters. This method of reporting is indifferent to the complexities of ethnic group identities and does not necessarily describe communities as they would describe themselves. Based on demographic Census data, the Department of Justice requires the City BOE to offer Hispanic, Chinese, Indian (including Sikh), Bangladeshi, and Korean communities with translated voting materials in different boroughs.[73] As such, the City BOE provides interpretation and translation services in Spanish in all boroughs; Chinese in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens; and Bengali and Korean in Queens.

Currently, the City BOE offers interpretation services in Hindi in Queens and in Punjabi, if a Hindi interpreter speaks both languages. They have not yet determined which 'Indian (including Sikh)' language to provide under the new requirements for 2021, however it will likely be one or both of these languages. While the new requirements create permanent support for South Asian immigrants in the City, the specific legal parameters of the Federal VRA mean the City BOE will likely never be required to cover some of the most spoken languages in New York City, including Russian and Haitian Creole. To offer additional language support, the City BOE needs legislative mandates that necessitate sufficient financial support from the State and the City.

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70   2020–21 Voter Analysis Report. "Expanding Language Access."

71   United States Census Bureau. "Section 203 Language Determinations." 8 Dec 2021.

72   United States Department of Justice. "Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act."
11 Mar 2020. Language populations are covered under Section 203 if there are more than 10,000 speakers of a language or if the community makes up over 5% of that county's population.

73   United States Census Bureau. "Section 203 Language Determinations." 8 Dec. 2021.

In 2018, New York City voters approved a ballot initiative creating the Civic Engagement Commission (CEC). Since its inception the CEC has been tasked with meeting the needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP)[74] New Yorkers through interpreter services.[75] Currently, they send interpreters to poll sites every election who speak the City's most commonly spoken languages not covered by the VRA: Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Urdu, and Yiddish.[76] During the June 2021 primaries, the CEC sent interpreters to 75 different poll sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. During the November 2021 general election, they sent interpreters to 99 different poll sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. In total the CEC served 675 voters during the primary election and 1,171 voters during the November general election.[77]

In the 2020 Voter Analysis Report, the CFB committed to meeting the City's language access threshold set by Local Law 30 of 2019.[78] In 2022, the City Council passed a law mandating that the agency greatly increase the language and disability access available in the voter guide. This local law means that, starting in 2023, voters will receive more voting information in the language of their choice. The entire voter guide, including candidate profiles, will be available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and the South Asian language(s) determined by the City BOE.[79] The NYC Votes website will continue to host voter registration forms in 18 languages and all website content will be translated into 12 languages.[80]

Since the passage of LL30, City government has expanded language access services to meet the needs of New York City residents. However, the City BOE continues to provide support in only the Voting Rights Act languages, which may prove confusing to voters who will not receive services in their language of choice through the entire voting process.

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74   Limited English Proficiency is defined by the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) as speaking English less than 'very well'.

75   NYC Civic Engagement Commission. "About Civic Engagement Commission."

76   NYC Civic Engagement Commission. "Poll Site Language Assistance List."

77   NYC Civic Engagement Commission. "Poll Site Language Assistance Program." *2021 Annual Report*.

78   2020–21 Voter Analysis Report. "Expanding Language Access."

79   New York City Council Local Law 48-2022.

80   NYC Votes. "Register to Vote—Translated Voter Registration Forms."

Figure 6.2: Limited English proficiency languages with election services by agency

Service	Agency	Languages
Voter Registration Forms	Board of Elections, City Agencies (LL 29)	Bengali, Chinese, Korean, Spanish (+ to be determined South Asian language)
Voter Registration Forms	Campaign Finance Board	Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Greek, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, Yiddish (+ to be determined South Asian language)
Voting and Candidate Information	Civic Engagement Commission	Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yiddish
Voting and Candidate Information	Campaign Finance Board	Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu (+ to be determined South Asian language)
Poll Site Interpreters	Board of Elections	Bengali, Chinese, Korean, Spanish (+ to be determined South Asian language)
Poll Site Interpreters	Civic Engagement Commission	Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, Yiddish
Poll Site Signage	Board of Elections	Bengali, Chinese, Korean, Spanish (+ to be determined South Asian language)
Ballots	Board of Elections	Bengali, Chinese, Korean, Spanish (+ to be determined South Asian language)
Election Results	Board of Elections	English-only

Recommendation 1: Pass the Voting Rights Act of New York

The New York State legislature should pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York to ensure consistent translation and interpretation services to all LEP voters.

State legislation exists that would more closely align the language access offered by the City BOE with those offered by the CFB and CEC.

In 2019, Senator Zellnor Myrie introduced the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York, which contains a section that seeks to improve assistance for language-minority groups.[81] If over 2% of voting-age citizens, or over 4,000 voting-age citizens, in an election district speak English "less than very well"[82] and speak the same language, the BOE is required to provide translation and interpretation services in that language. The bill specifies that notices, registration forms, instructions, assistance, and ballots must be available in that language as well as any materials relating to the electoral process. For languages that are oral, unwritten, or historically unwritten, the bill allows the BOE to provide only verbal information and assistance.[83] Appendix B outlines some of the changes voters could see if the VRA was passed.

Despite highlighting a small proportion of all languages spoken by New Yorkers, the chart shows how much more translation and interpretation services the City BOE could provide. The 2020–2021 Voter Analysis Report goes more into depth on these changes and how to ensure that new services are culturally competent and do not sacrifice quality for quantity.[84]

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81 New York State Senate. S7528 (2019–20): "Relates to the John R. Lewis Voting Right Act of New York."

82 According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) determinations.

83 This bill is different from the federal John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. In 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, parts of which were struck down by the Supreme Court in 2013. When the same bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate, it was renamed the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. If passed, the bill would try to fight voter suppression laws around the country. For language access, this means the Federal Government would review state laws that aimed to reduce multilingual voting materials. It does not change anything about Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, the section outlining the requirements jurisdictions must follow when providing translation and interpretation services.

84 2020–21 Voter Analysis Report. "Expanding Language Access."

Early Voting

Since its introduction in 2019, each election year more voters are choosing to early vote at the most convenient time and date of their choosing. Early voting gives more flexibility in how people vote, reduces wait times on Election Day, and eases the burden on poll workers.[85] While early voting has improved the voting experience for many, changes should be made to encourage even more voters to utilize this still new method of voting.

The City BOE has expanded the number of early voting sites every year, ensuring that more voters are assigned to polling sites closer to where they live. The number of sites is also set to increase in the 2022 election cycle, due to the passage of the Make Voting Easy Act which requires the State BOE to designate at least one early voting site for every 40,000 registered voters in counties with over 500,000 registered voters.[86]

As shown in Figure 6.3, every borough in NYC except for Staten Island meets this threshold. Counties like Richmond (Staten Island) with less than 500,000 registered voters are required to designate one early voting site for every 30,000 residents, but they are not required to have more than 10 sites. Figure 6.3 also shows the number of required sites under the Make Voting Easy Act, along with comparison data from past election cycles.

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85   Kasdan, Diana. "Early Voting: What Works." *Brennan Center for Justice*, 31 Oct, 2013.

86   The five counties in NYC are also the five boroughs, although the names for the borough and county are different for three of the five; the Borough Staten Island is Richmond County, the Borough Brooklyn is Kings County, and the Borough Manhattan is New York County.

Figure 6.3: Impact of Make Voting Easy Act on number of early voting sites in New York City

County	Number of Registered Voters	# of Sites under Make Voting Easy Act	# of Sites in 2021 General	# of Sites in 2020 General	# of Sites in 2019 General
Manhattan	1,262,237	31	20	16	9
Bronx	873,909	21	22	17	11
Kings	1,742,176	43	32	27	18
Queens	1,369,875	34	22	18	14
Richmond	350,686	10	10	10	9
Total	**5,598,883**	**139**	**106**	**88**	**61**

Recommendation 2: Improve the Voting Site Assignment Methodology

NYC should more equitably assign early voting sites across and within boroughs.

The Make Voting Easy Act will make early voting a more accessible option for voters across the city. However, while the requirements set by the Act take borough population size into account, they do not address other factors critical to ensuring that voting sites are equitably assigned across and within boroughs. For example, because voters in boroughs with relatively larger land areas must travel relatively longer distances to vote, the City BOE should take into account land area when assigning poll sites. Currently, the distance voters must travel in order to vote early varies dramatically by borough.

Figure 6.4: Average distance in miles of eligible voters to their assigned early voting sites in the 2021 general election

Borough	Average Distance to Poll Site
Manhattan	0.61 miles
Bronx	0.59 miles
Brooklyn	0.67 miles
Queens	1.16 miles
Staten Island	1.06 miles

Voters in Queens also must travel nearly twice as far to reach their poll site as voters in Brooklyn. Although Brooklyn has a higher population size than Queens, Queens has a larger land area—108.5 square miles in Queens compared to only 70.8 square miles in Brooklyn.[87] Additionally, residents in Queens have less access to public transit than voters in Brooklyn.[88] Yet, in the 2021 general election. Brooklyn had 10 more sites than Queens. Under the requirements set forth by the Make Voting Easy Act, Brooklyn will still have nine more sites than Queens.

As shown in our early voting analysis, when assigned sites are further from voters' homes, voters are less likely to vote early. (See the Early Voting Analysis section for more information about early voting trends.) The low number of early voting sites in Queens may be a factor for why Queens had the lowest rate of early voting of all Boroughs in the City. The City BOE should take land area and access to public transportation into account when making determinations about designating additional voting sites beyond the requirements set by the Make Voting Easy Act. Specifically, we recommend that the City BOE designate a greater number of early voting sites in Queens.

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87   United States Census Bureau. "QuickFacts: Bronx County, New York; Richmond County, New York; New York County, New York; Kings County, New York; Queens County, New York."

88   City of New York. "Access to Opportunity—Transportation." *Where We Live NYC*.

In addition to ensuring that the number of voting sites in each Borough is equitable, the City BOE should also ensure that sites are equitably located within Boroughs. New York State Election law identifies several guidelines the BOE can consider when designating early voting sites including population density, commuter traffic patterns, public transportation routes, travel time from voters' residences to poll sites, and any other factors the City BOE deems appropriate.[89] Further insight from the City BOE about what criteria are used to locate early voting sites would also allow for greater community input in identifying promising sites.

Recommendation 3: Transform Early Voting Sites into Vote Centers

NYC should adopt a borough-based vote center model.

In every county statewide, excluding the five boroughs, voters can vote early at any polling location in their county. This is known as a vote center model. The City BOE has not yet adopted this model of early voting; instead, registered voters in New York City are assigned to a single early voting site. In our analysis, we've determined that voters who live more than about a half-mile from their assigned early voting poll site are less likely to take advantage of early voting. Vote centers could make it easier for New Yorkers to vote early at any site that is convenient for them.

Vote centers would give City voters the option to vote early near their work, church, or children's school, not just near their home. Research on Texas's early voting center model has shown that early voting centers may even increase overall turnout in lower turnout elections.[90]

State Election Law mandates that early voters be permitted to vote at any polling location in their county, but there are exceptions outlined in the law if it is deemed "impractical" to establish a vote center model.[91] In a September 2021 State Senate Hearing, Michael Ryan, Executive Director of the City BOE, stated that technical limitations compel the city to limit

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89   New York State Election Law § 8-600. The section also stipulates that provisions of the law regarding the designation of polling places for Election Day voting also apply to the designation of polling places for early voting, except for provisions that are inconsistent with these guidelines.

90   Cortina, Jeronimo and Brandon Rottinghaus. "Vote Centers and Turnout by Election Type in Texas." *Research & Politics*, 21 July, 2019.

91   New York State Election Law § 8-600.

the number of people voting at each site.[92] One technical limitation is that sites cannot have more than eight check-in devices without the devices' signals interfering with each other. Another limitation is that the memory storage capacity of ballot-marking devices (BMDs) limits the number of languages that can be included in audio files at each site and thereby limits the number of ballot styles that can be programmed to be marked.[93] Both technological limitations have led the City BOE to continue assigning voters to a single early voting site.

A solution to half of this problem is to purchase new BMDs. BMDs are voting machines that provide privacy and accessibility to voters who are blind, vision-impaired, or have difficulty marking a ballot with a pen. It also provides audio language assistance for voters who are more comfortable hearing their ballot read in English or one of the four supported languages. The AutoMark, the BMD used in City elections, has often been criticized by members of the disability rights community for not working properly[94] and will soon need to be replaced anyway when its software is no longer supported by its manufacturer.[95]

92   Ryan, Michael (Executive Director of the New York City Board of Elections). "New York State Senate Public Hearing: To Review Elections Administration and Voting Rights in New York State." 21 Sept, 2021.

93   Ryan, Michael (Executive Director of the New York City Board of Elections). "New York State Senate Public Hearing: To Review Elections Administration and Voting Rights in New York State." 21 Sept, 2021.

94   At the December 2021 Voter Assistance Advisory Committee (VAAC) hearing, Kathy Collins, co-coordinator of the Voter Engagement Working Group, testified that "BMDs are starting to break down and are at a critical stage" and "[I]f new ballot marketing devices are not certified within the next year or so...voters with disabilities will be disenfranchised." Tashia Lerebours, Voting Access Organizer and Trainer for the Center for the Independence of the Disabled, NY, also testified at the VAAC hearing that "a common complaint [she has] heard...is that the ballot marking device did not work properly."

95   Downstate New York ADAPT. "Re: "Promoting Access To Voting"—NIST-2021-0003." 16 July, 2021.

The City BOE has also claimed that a vote center model is not feasible because it would require sites to offer every type of ballot variation in the county, as each election district has a different ballot style.[96] In a September 2021 State Senate Hearing, Douglas Kellner, co-chair of the State BOE suggested the City BOE could change this practice and instead have election districts share the same ballot design.[97]

In the 2019–2020 Voter Analysis Report, we recommended that the City BOE create early voting centers to replace assigned poll sites.[98] We again recommend that the BOE adopt a vote center model as soon as possible. This will require purchasing new BMDs, which is a long overdue investment and may also require investing in additional new technology, such as new check-in devices or wireless internet technology. However, such investments are a worthwhile endeavor, as vote centers will make early voting a more convenient and equitable option for voters.

Recommendation 4: Promptly Publicize Early Voting Data

NYC should publish early voting and poll site data in real time.

In our 2020–2021 Voter Analysis Report, we made recommendations regarding elections data transparency in absentee ballot, invalidated ballot, and poll site check-in data.[99] While the BOE has made strides in some regards to open data, including releasing a full Cast Vote Record (CVR) for the ranked choice voting primary races in 2021, there are still improvements to be made in publicizing other data related to elections operations. Further recommendations for the format of the published CVR can be found in this report's Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Analysis section.

During the early voting period in June 2021, records of which registered voters in the City had already voted early were released via NGP VAN, a subscription-based voter database used by many Democratic campaigns. This data had never been released at the individual voter level before, despite requests to the BOE from campaigns and other voter outreach groups. Once it became widely known that this information, updated daily, was available,

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96   McKinley, Jesse and Jeffery C. Mays. "'The State Kind of Dumped This On Us:' Early Voting Stirs Anxiety in N.Y." *The New York Times*, 24 Oct, 2019.

97   Keller, Douglas A. (Co-Chair of the New York State Board of Elections). "Report to the Senate Committee on Elections." 21 Sept, 2021.

98   2019–20 Voter Analysis Report. "Policy Changes to Improve Voting."

99   2019–20 Voter Analysis Report. "Policy and Legislative Recommendations."

the City BOE announced it could be requested using their data request email address, and those who request it will be sent a spreadsheet containing those voters who voted during the early voting period, including the date they voted. The CFB applauds the BOE for making this information available but recommends that the BOE posts publicly on their website daily records with voter registration number and date or timestamp for each day of early voting. Such data could make it easier for campaigns and voter outreach groups to effectively target their voter outreach efforts during the voting period.

Case Study: Voting-Related Ballot Proposals in the 2021 General Election

On November 2nd, 2021, New Yorkers voted on two voting-related ballot proposals as part of the final steps in a multi-year process to amend the State constitution. (See Appendix A.)

Proposal 3 would have eliminated the ten-day voter registration requirement and given the State legislature the power to pass new laws that allow New Yorkers more time to register to vote before an election, including on the day of the election.[100]

Proposal 4 would have eliminated the section of the State Constitution that requires voters to be absent from their home county, ill, or physically disabled to vote with an absentee ballot. It would have also allowed the State to enact no-excuse absentee voting, which would permit *any* registered voter to request and vote on an absentee ballot.[101]

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100 New York State Board of Elections. "2021 Statewide Ballot Proposals."

101 New York State Board of Elections. "2021 Statewide Ballot Proposals."

Figure 6.5: Ballot text for voting-related ballot proposals in the 2021 general election[102]

Title	Ballot text
Ballot Proposal 3: Eliminating Ten-Day-Advance Voter Registration Requirement	The proposed amendment would delete the current requirement in Article 2, § 5 that a citizen be registered to vote at least ten days before an election and would allow the Legislature to enact laws permitting a citizen to register to vote less than ten days before the election. Shall the proposed amendment be approved?
Ballot Proposal 4: Authorizing No-Excuse Absentee Ballot Voting	The proposed amendment would delete from the current provision on absentee ballots the requirement that an absentee voter must be unable to appear at the polls by reason of absence from the county or illness or physical disability. Shall the proposed amendment be approved?

For the last three years, voting advocates, including major coalitions like Fair Elections for New York and Let NY Vote, have advocated in favor of these ballot proposals and centered them in their legislative priorities.[103] Both proposals were viewed as relatively non-controversial, however a well-organized and well-funded opposition soon emerged in the lead up to the 2021 General Election. To the surprise of many New Yorkers, both ballot proposals were ultimately defeated. This case study addresses the myriad reasons why both ballot proposals failed, and the possible next steps needed to move these issues forward.

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102 New York State Board of Elections. "2021 Statewide Ballot Proposals."

103 Let NY Vote. "About."

How New Yorkers Voted on Ballot Proposals 3 & 4

Though a majority of City voters voted "Yes" on both proposals, higher turnout and more "No" votes in the rest of New York State's counties meant that both voting-related ballot proposals were defeated.

Overall, 56.3% of New York State voters voted "No" on Proposal 3 and 43.7% voted "Yes." In only seven of New York's 68 counties did a majority of voters vote in favor of the proposal. Four of those counties were in NYC; Staten Island was the only borough with a majority of "no" votes, with 69.8% voting "no." Figure 6.6 breaks down the "Yes" and "No" votes by borough and by City versus State for Ballot Proposal 3.

Figure 6.6: Votes for ballot proposition 3: Eliminating ten-day-advance voter registration requirement[104]

	Total number of votes	"Yes" votes		"No" votes	
Manhattan	223,201	170,648	76.5%	52,553	23.5%
Bronx	96,839	60,911	62.9%	35,928	37.1%
Brooklyn	252,204	163,882	65.0%	88,322	35.0%
Queens	238,425	130,968	54.9%	107,457	45.1%
Staten Island	96,078	29,009	30.2%	67,069	69.8%
City Total	906,747	555,418	61.3%	351,329	38.7%
Statewide Total	**3,058,138**	**1,336,327**	**43.7%**	**1,721,811**	**56.3%**

104 New York State Board of Elections. "2021 General Election—Ballot Proposition 3 - November 2, 2021."

For Proposal 4, 55.0% of New York State voters voted "No" and 45.0% voted "Yes." Yet again, a majority of voters in only seven of New York's 68 counties voted in favor of the proposal, four of which were again Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Staten Island was the only borough with a majority of "No" votes with 68.8% of ballots cast for "No." Figure 6.7 breaks down the "Yes" and "No" votes by borough and by City versus State for Ballot Proposal 4.

Figure 6.7: Votes for ballot proposition 4: Authorizing no-excuse absentee ballot voting citywide[105]

	Total number of votes	"Yes" votes		"No" votes	
Manhattan	222,780	172,292	77.3%	50,488	22.7%
Bronx	96,283	54,449	56.6%	41,834	43.4%
Brooklyn	250,729	158,421	63.2%	92,308	36.8%
Queens	237,218	126,706	53.4%	110,512	46.6%
Staten Island	95,753	29,848	31.2%	65,905	68.8%
City Total	902,763	541,716	60.0%	361,047	40.0%
Statewide Total	**3,048,477**	**1,370,897**	**45.0%**	**1,677,580**	**55.0%**

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105 New York State Board of Elections. "2021 General Election—Ballot Proposition 4 - November 2, 2021."

The question of why these ballot proposals did not pass is complicated by historically low voter turnout in the City. Voter turnout for the 2021 General Election was 23.3%. For those who cast their ballots, they would have had to flip over their ballot to see the four ballot proposals.[106] As a result, nearly a quarter of total voters did not vote on any ballot proposals. (Ballot drop-off is discussed in the On the Ballot in 2021—2021 General Election section on ballot proposals page 57).

Independent Expenditure Campaigns For or Against Ballot Proposals

An independent expenditure is an expense by an individual, corporation, labor organization, or political committee regarding a candidate or proposal that is not coordinated with that candidate or proposal.[107] In the weeks leading up to the election, an independent expenditure campaign coalesced around defeating both proposals, as well as another proposal that amended the redistricting process. The campaign featured television and social media advertising, media appearances, press conferences, and lawn signs all encouraging New Yorkers to vote 'No' on Ballot Propositions 1,3, and 4.[108]

The most visible and organized campaign, the "Just Say No Campaign," run by the New York State Republican Party, launched a movement which quickly dominated discourse on the ballot propositions.[109] [110] While the campaign's money was primarily spent outside of the five boroughs, the narrative also seeped into media and social media discourse in New York City. The Conservative Party of New York State also spent over $3 million on advertisements

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106   Rubinstein, Dana. "Why New Yorkers Rejected Ballot Proposals on Voting and Redistricting." *The New York Times*, 3 Nov, 2021.

107   U.S. Federal Election Commission. "Understanding Independent Expenditures."

108   Bergin, Brigid. "How Warring Democrats Lost A Battle Over Voting Rights 'Even In Deep Blue New York'." *Gothamist*, 5 Nov, 2021.

109   Bergin, Brigid. "How Warring Democrats Lost A Battle Over Voting Rights 'Even In Deep Blue New York'." *Gothamist*, 5 Nov, 2021.

110   DeWitt, Karen. "New York GOP Claims Victory as Three Ballot Propositions Fail." *WSHU Public Radio*, 3 Nov, 2021.

calling for "No" votes across the state. But according to Ad Impact, an analytics firm that monitors political spending, less than 20% of those funds were spent on ads in NYC.[111]

Figure 6.8: "Just Say No" ad expenditure

No "Yes" campaigns materialized on the same scale as the "Just Say No" campaign. The New York Democratic Party reportedly spent no funds on supporting the ballot propositions.[112] The State Senate Democratic Campaign Committee did spend $327,000 to support the questions.[113] The League of Women Voters spent $3,338 on a campaign

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111   Bergin, Brigid. "How Warring Democrats Lost A Battle Over Voting Rights 'Even In Deep Blue New York'." *Gothamist*, 5 Nov, 2021.

112   Levine, Sam. "New Yorkers Reject Expanded Voting Access in Stunning Result." *The Guardian*, 9 Nov, 2021.

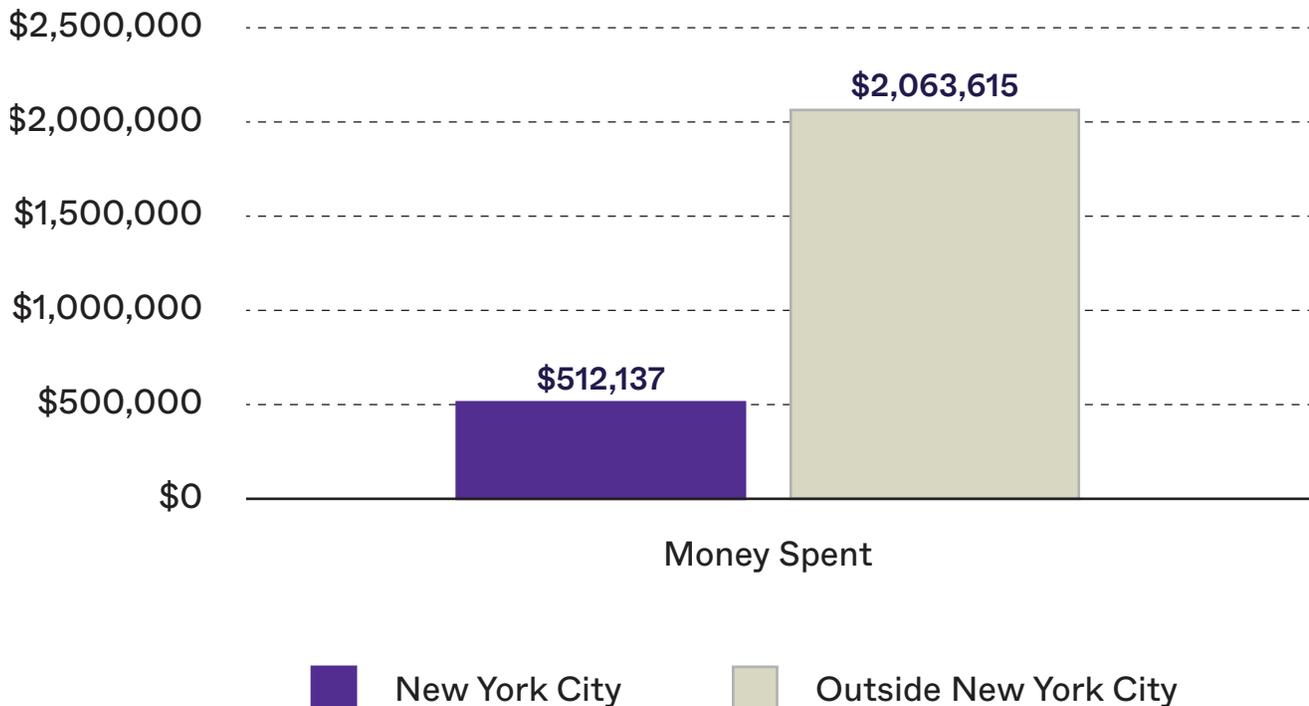113   Bergin, Brigid. "How Warring Democrats Lost A Battle Over Voting Rights 'Even In Deep Blue New York'." *Gothamist*, 5 Nov, 2021.

supporting their positions on the ballot proposals.[114] There was also a campaign in favor of the ballot proposals in Tompkins County, the county with the highest support in the state for this proposal.[115] Over 63% of voters in Tompkins County voted in favor of Ballot Proposal 3 and over 66% voted in favor of Ballot Proposal 4.

Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Related to Ballot Proposals 3 & 4

The "Just Say No Campaign" and other critics of Proposals 3 and 4 raised concerns about elections security.[116] The New York State Conservative Party told voters no-excuse absentee voting would lead to ballot harvesting and delayed election results.[117] The same campaign claimed that advance voter registration deadlines were the only way for local BOEs to verify voter information.[118]

However, the data on fraud in states with and without these measures give no indication that they increase fraud. Since 1991, there have only been 11 cases nationwide where an absentee ballot was filled out on behalf of a dead person, a common fraud claim.[119] Double voting and registering under fraudulent addresses, concerns related to same-day voter registration, also have similarly low numbers of actual cases.[120] In contrast, over 150 million ballots were

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114   League of Women Voters of the City of New York. "Ballot Proposals—November 2021." ; New York State Board of Elections "Public Reporting System."

115   Barrilleaux, Francois. "Why One New York County Saw the Highest Support for 2021's Three Failed Ballot Measures." *Votebeat*, 25 Jan, 2022.

116   Minnite, Lorraine. "Election Day Registration: A Study of Voter Fraud Allegations and Findings on Voter Roll Security." *Demos*, 2007.

117   Levine, Sam. "New Yorkers Reject Expanding Voting Access in Stunning Result." *The Guardian*, 9 Nov, 2021.

118   Levine, Sam. "New Yorkers Reject Expanding Voting Access in Stunning Result." *The Guardian*, 9 Nov, 2021.

119   Qiu, Linda. "Fact-Checking Falsehoods on Mail-In Voting." *The New York Times*, 5 Jan, 2021.

120   Levitt, Justin. "The Truth About Voter Fraud." *Brennan Center for Justice*, 9 Nov, 2007.

cast nationwide in the November 3, 2020 presidential election alone.[121] In a *New York Times* op-ed, Idaho Secretary of State Ben Ysursa and Maine Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap wrote that voter fraud is, "exceedingly rare or nonexistent in states that offer Election Day registration."[122] These voting measures are safe, secure, and effective.

Same-day voter registration would work well with the voter registration process already in place in New York. In states with traditional voter registration, the Board of Elections confirms all registered voters' identities prior to Election Day. This isn't possible in states with same-day voter registration so, in these states, voters who choose to register at a poll site must bring along an ID and proof of residency.[123] Some states have additional security measures, including state-wide electronic systems that ensure voters have not already voted.[124] New York uses electronic poll books to sign-in voters, ensure they are at their correct polling places, scan IDs, and check whether they have already voted early or absentee.[125] This existing system would allow the transition from traditional voter registration to same-day voter registration to be smooth and secure.

Additionally, states have taken multiple measures to ensure that ballots cast by absentee voters are secured and verified. A Brennan Center report lists seven of the most important security measures used.[126] Figure 6.9 below shows each of these methods and elaborates on how New York currently implements all in its elections process.

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121   Desilver, Drew. "Turnout Soared in 2020 as Nearly Two-Thirds of Eligible U.S. Voters Cast Ballots for President." *Pew Research Center*, 28 Jan, 2021.

122   Minnite, Lorraine. "Election Day Registration: A Study of Voter Fraud Allegations and Findings on Voter Roll Security." *Demos*, 2007.

123   National Conference of State Legislatures. "Same Day Voter Registration." 20 Sept, 2021.

124   National Conference of State Legislatures. "Same Day Voter Registration." 20 Sept, 2021.

125   National Conference of State Legislatures. "Electronic Poll Books | e-Poll Books." 25 Oct, 2019.

126   Weiser, Wendy R. "The False Narrative of Vote-by-Mail Fraud." *Brennan Center for Justice*, 10 Apr, 2020.

Figure 6.9: Absentee ballot security measures in New York

Absentee Ballot Security Measures	What does it do?	Does NY have it?	How is it implemented in NY?[127]
Identity verification	Uses personal information and/or a signature match to authenticate the voter and their ballot	Yes	Voters must sign and date a Security Envelope to cast an absentee ballot.
Bar codes	Eliminates duplicates discovered in the return process	Yes*	In NYC: Individual ballots have a separate tracking number to identify a unique set of materials sent to a voter. Out of NYC: Some counties use barcodes to match ballots with voter's IDs.
U.S. Postal Service Tracking	Follows the status of ballots from delivery to return	Yes*	In NYC: USPS tracking is used. Out of NYC: N/A

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127 New York State Board of Elections. "Absentee Voting." Absentee ballot security processes were also confirmed by CFB staff in consultation with staff at the State BOE.

Absentee Ballot Security Measures	What does it do?	Does NY have it?	How is it implemented in NY?[127]
Secure drop off & Drop boxes	Limits potentials of ballot tampering	Yes	Voters can bring their ballots to a ballot box at a poll site or to a Board of Elections office by Election Day.
Harsh penalties	Disincentivizes voter fraud	Yes	Illegal voting is a felony in New York.
Post-election audits	Identifies irregularities by reviewing samples	Yes	3% of election districts scanned by a machine are manually canvassed to compare to machine tabulated count.
Poll sites	Allows mistakes to be corrected in person	Yes	Cure process with ability to certify mistakes on the absentee ballot oath envelope

* Measures are partially implemented or not used in every BOE statewide.

Future of Ballot Proposals

The future of a ballot proposal on same-day voter registration or no-excuse absentee is now again dependent upon the State Legislature, which must repeat the process for amending the Constitution from step one. The first passage of an amendment could come as early as the 2021–2022 legislative session and a second in the 2023–2024 legislative session. The ballot proposal could then return to the ballot in November 2023 for the general election and, if passed by voters, take effect January 1, 2024.

Figure 6.10: Potential Paths of Ballot Proposals

	2021–2022 Session		2023–2024 Session		2025–2026 Session		2027–2028	
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Amendment Passage 1		X #	◊ ≡					
Amendment Passage 2			X	#	◊	≡		
Ballot Proposal General Election			X	#	◊	≡		
Policy Takes Effect				X	#	◊	≡	

Despite facing similar opposition while on the ballot and being referenced together in this section, same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee are two different improvement measures that require different paths back to ballots. New Yorkers know no-excuse absentee; they have been effectively using it for the last two years given the ability to request a vote-by-mail ballot due to COVID-19. The past four major elections have shown that local BOEs can handle a higher volume of absentee ballots and that the allegations of fraud have no basis. Making space for no-excuse absentee voting language in New York Election Law

would make this convenient change permanent. The following Absentee Voting section discusses smaller changes that can be made to the law in the interim in addition to the need to amend the State Constitution.

Same-day voter registration would be almost completely new to New York voters. The following section on Voter Registration elaborates on how the State Legislature can pilot same-day voter registration without a constitutional amendment by creating an overlap between the voter registration deadline and early voting days. This change, which can be made directly to the Election Law, would give voters and BOEs a chance to fine-tune the same-day registration process and advocate for the resources needed to make it a success.

With either constitutional amendment, when the Legislature begins the process could affect the electorate that turns out to vote on the ballot proposals and the timeline for the start of the new policy. Figure 6.10 visualizes the different paths the amendments could take. Even within the structure of the amendment process, there is room to maneuver within and between legislative sessions. While the orange path and the maroon path start at the same time, the maroon path could take advantage of the large presidential election turnout in November 2024. With presidential elections nearly guaranteeing higher turnout than any other election, a ballot measure appearing at that time would give more New Yorkers a chance to decide.

On the other hand, waiting just one year to pass the first introduction of the amendment would push the effective date back four or five years, as seen in the blue and green paths. The start date of the amendment process will determine how long voters may have to wait to see these changes.

Absentee Voting

The terms absentee voting and mail in voting, or vote-by-mail, are used almost synonymously to refer to the practice of sending a ballot to voters who are unable to appear in-person during elections. No matter what phrase is used, all 50 states utilize a version of absentee voting[128] and the practices are largely decided at the state or local level.[129]

There are two forms of absentee voting systems: all-mail and request-required.[130] With all-mail absentee voting, every registered voter is sent a ballot for every election. Eight states have all-mail absentee voting systems: California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Washington.[131] A modified version of all-mail sends all registered voters a request form they can fill out to opt-in to receive a mail in ballot.

Request-required absentee voting means that voters must seek out and ask for an absentee ballot for elections. Within request-required absentee voting there are two formats of request: excuse and no excuse. Excuse requests mandate that voters meet a stated reason as to why they will not be present to vote in person; no-excuse does not. Twenty-six states and D.C. have no-excuse absentee voting.[132]

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128 USAGov. "Absentee and Early Voting." 4 Oct, 2021.

129 At the federal level, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) and the Military and Overseas Empowerment Act (MOVE) laws secure the right to vote by mail for members of the military. The United States Department of Justice. "The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act." 18 Feb, 2020.

130 National Conference of State Legislatures. "Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options—A Note on Terminology." 17 Feb, 2022.

131 National Conference of State Legislatures. "Table 18: States With All-Mail Elections." 3 Feb, 2022.

132 List of 26 states with no-excuse absentee voting: Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. National Conference of State Legislatures. "Table 1: States with No-Excuse Absentee Voting." 3 Jan, 2022.

Figure 6.11: Map of absentee voting systems in the U.S.

Absentee Voting System
■ Automatic

As required by the State Constitution, New York has a request-required absentee ballot system. Voters must meet one of six "reasons" to receive an absentee ballot:

- absence from county or New York City on Election Day;

- temporary illness or physical disability;

- permanent illness or physical disability;

- duties related to primary care of one or more individuals who are ill or physically disabled;

- resident or patient of a Veterans Health Administration Hospital; or detention in jail/prison; or

- awaiting trial, awaiting action by a grand jury, or in prison for a conviction of a crime or offense which was not a felony.[133]

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133 New York State Board of Elections. "Absentee Voting."

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an executive order was passed in 2020 that expanded the definition of temporary illness to include "a risk of contracting or spreading a disease."[134] This effectively allowed all voters to request absentee ballots, so long as the COVID-19 emergency continued, and on January 21, 2022, the provision was extended again until the end of 2022.[135]

During the pandemic, New Yorkers utilized absentee voting at a much higher rate than in years past and continue to do so. In the 2021 and 2020 general elections 7.0% and 21.4% of voters voted absentee, respectively, compared to only 2.6% of voters in the 2019 general election.

In many areas, including voting, the pandemic highlighted the ways systems were not flexible for those they are supposed to benefit. New York's request options are rigid and do not account for all the reasons voters want or need an absentee ballot. The temporary change to no-excuse absentee voting revealed just how many more voters serve to benefit from a permanent shift. Once the current temporary provision expires, these voters will likely be confused why they are not able to continue absentee voting. Voters who turned to absentee voting in the last two years and look forward to using it in the future should not be left in the lurch wondering if another Executive Order will be passed for an upcoming election. The solution is to allow voters to request an absentee ballot without requiring an excuse.

Recommendation 5: Reintroduce Constitutional Amendment for No-Excuse Absentee Voting

The New York State Legislature should restart the process of amending the Constitution to enact no-excuse absentee voting as soon as possible.

In 2021, New York state voters actually had the opportunity to approve a ballot proposal to remove the listed reasons needed to receive an absentee ballot in the Constitution. The ballot question was ultimately voted down—56% of voters voted against the proposal—which maintains New York's current excuse, request-required absentee voting system. Despite this failed vote, New York must try and pass no-excuse absentee voting again. (See Appendix A.)

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134   Board of Elections in the City of New York. "Absentee Voting."

135   New York State Election Law § 15-120.

Removing the need for an excuse would be the most significant improvement in absentee voting in New York as it allows more people to vote in ways that work for them. While the loss of the absentee voting proposal was a missed opportunity, other improvements to the absentee voting system were implemented in 2021.

Incremental Improvements

Allowing all voters to vote by mail was not the only recent improvement related to absentee voting. Over the last two years, ballot applications moved online and processes were created to speed up ballot counting and allow voters to repair mistakes on cast ballots. Unlike no-excuse absentee voting, these incremental improvements have now fortunately been made permanent, though there are also other changes that could be made to make absentee voting better.

Electronic absentee ballot request forms can now be submitted online; this is a permanent change that began as a COVID-19 pandemic provision. Prior to 2020, electronic absentee ballot request forms could only be submitted on paper. Before the June 2020 primaries, an executive order mandated that an online request system be created that allowed voters to submit requests with an electronic signature. In response, the City BOE created an online application portal for voters.[136] After the primary election, legislators saw the need to extend the electronic request system and passed a bill continuing the provision until December 31, 2020. Ahead of the City Council special elections in early 2021, the governor had to issue another executive order to continue allowing online requests through the already-existing absentee portal.

On December 22, 2021, Governor Hochul signed S6482B/A6970 into law making a permanent electronic absentee ballot application available for New York voters.[137] The law requires the State BOE to create a system that allows voters to fully request their ballot online. No longer will voters have to wonder if they'll lose a convenient and accessible way to apply for an absentee ballot before each election.

New York Election Law previously left canvassing, or counting, of absentee, military, special, and affidavit ballots ambiguous and open to the interpretation of individual BOEs or canvassers. For general and special elections, canvassing could take place up to two weeks after the election day. For primary elections, it was up to eight days after the election

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136 New York City Board of Elections. "New York City Absentee Ballot Request."

137 New York State Senate. S6482B (2021–22): "Establishes an Electronic Absentee Ballot Application Transmittal System."

day. With canvassing starting so late, it delayed the release of certified election results. For example, the November 2021 general election was certified four weeks after voters cast their ballots. The pandemic, and the influx of absentee voters that came with it, exacerbated the problem and increased the interval between election day and certification. New York was long overdue for a change in the canvassing process.

Also on December 22, 2021, Governor Hochul signed a bill to reform the which presents a more structured approach to canvassing ballots.[138] Ballots must be reviewed for their validity, but not counted, within four days of receipt by a BOE. For ballots that are deemed curable, BOEs can now reach out to the voters immediately and start the cure process. Beginning on the day before the first day of early voting, canvassers scan all ballots reviewed up to that point. This repeats on the last day of early voting after polls have closed. Canvassers can begin to tabulate the results one hour before polls close on election day, but no unofficial results can be reported until after polls close. Though there is not a timeline specified for when BOEs must certify and communicate election results, this new structure should speed up the counting process, thus also expediting the release of official results. This change will likely also speed up the timeline for when the City BOE can conduct initial ranked choice voting tabulations, because more absentee ballots can be included in the count.

Two additional changes will be implemented later on in 2022. The terms of a lawsuit recently settled by the State BOE requires voters with certain print disabilities, such as blindness, low vision, and mobility impairments, to have access to the same level of service currently afforded to other voters in New York City. Voters with print disabilities will be able to request and independently mark their accessible absentee ballots using their preferred technology. This includes screen readers that provide an audio description of the text on the ballot.[139] Those marked ballots can then be printed by the voter and mailed to their local BOE. The technology allowing assistive device compatibility must be made available by the State BOE by June 1, 2022.[140]

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138   New York State Senate. S1027A (2021–22): "Relates to the Canvassing of Absentee, Military and Special Ballots and Ballots Cast in Affidavit Envelopes; Repealer."

139   Wong, Ashley. "New York Plans to Make it Easier for Blind People to Vote." *The New York Times*, 06 Apr, 2022.

140   Evelly, Jeanmarie. "NY to Make Absentee Ballots More Accessible for Voters with Disabilities." *City Limits*, 12 Apr, 2022.

The other change, beginning in July 2022, requires the State to reimburse local BOEs for the costs of pre-paid postage envelopes. $4 million has been earmarked in the fiscal year 2022–23 State budget for this purpose. This will put an end to inconsistent information around how much postage is required to mail a ballot and instead establish a dedicated funding stream for BOEs to provide pre-paid return envelopes with all absentee ballots.[141] New York State will join 18 other states and the D.C. that provide pre-stamped return postage for all mailed absentee ballots.[142]

Continuing Challenges

There are other changes to New York City's absentee voting method that would increase accessibility and participation in the system. Furthermore, these upgrades would move the State and City BOE towards the highest standard in absentee ballot security and transparency.

Recommendation 6: Allow for Fully Electronic Accessible Absentee Voting

The New York State legislature should pass legislation to allow accessible absentee ballots to be returned electronically.

In New York City, voters with print disabilities, such as blindness, low vision, and mobility impairments, can request an accessible absentee ballot. Once transmitted to the voter, they must print and mail their ballot to the City BOE, because the law requires a signature to appear somewhere on the oath envelope. The City BOE makes this process as straightforward as possible by providing a level of service above legal requirements and mailing out postage-paid return envelopes to requestees. However, this process does still require accessible absentee voters to have printer access and in some cases assistance from another person to sign the oath envelope and mail in their ballot.

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141   Smith, Rachel Holliday. "All About Your NYC Election Ballot: Put a Stamp On It. Or Two?" *The City*, 26 Oct, 2021.

142   National Conference of State Legislatures. "Table 12: States With Postage-Paid Election Mail." 14 Sept, 2020.

A recent court ruling discussed earlier in this section required the State BOE to create an accessible absentee voting system similar to what is provided by the City BOE; however, it does not address the inconsistencies in accessibility throughout the entire voting process. From 2012 to 2020 there was a significant decrease in the percentage of voters with disabilities who faced difficulties with absentee voting: 13% to 5%. While this change suggests absentee voting systems, including New York's, have improved, it is almost double the percentage of voters without disabilities who faced difficulties with absentee voting (2%).[143]

To better serve voters with disabilities, the State Legislature should change absentee ballot laws to allow certain voters to transmit their absentee ballots electronically, rather than through the mail. Secured online portals or password protected PDFs, currently in place in other jurisdictions, are two possible methods to provide absentee ballots that allow voters with print disabilities to vote their ballot securely and independently.

Recommendation 7: Change the Absentee Ballot Request Deadline

The State Legislature should change the Election Law absentee ballot deadline to reflect postmarked rather than received by.

Currently, requests for absentee ballots must be received by the BOE at least 15 days before Election Day.[144] Outside of New York, only three states require absentee ballot requests to be received this far in advance of Election Day—Iowa, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island.[145] In eight states—California, Colorado Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Washington—all registered voters automatically receive an absentee ballot by mail.[146] The absentee ballot application deadline in New York is notably prohibitive.

Due to the requirement that the request be *received by* the BOE by a certain date, the deadline puts the onus on voters who request their ballot by mail to factor in the time it will take the postal service to deliver their application. We recommend the BOE revert back to requiring requests up to 10 days before an election and to require that absentee ballots be postmarked at least 10 days prior to the election rather than received by that date.

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143 Schur, Lisa and Douglas Kruse. "Disability and Voting Accessibility in the 2020 Elections: Final Report on Survey Results Submitted to the Election Assistance Commission" *Rutgers University*, 16 Feb, 2021.

144 U.S. Vote Foundation. "Election Dates and Deadlines."

145 U.S. Vote Foundation. "Election Dates and Deadlines."

146 National Conference of State Legislatures. "Table 18: States With All-Mail Elections."

Recommendation 8: Regularly Update the Absentee Ballot Tracker System

The State BOE should commit to updating their absentee ballot tracker daily.

In September 2020, the City BOE introduced an absentee ballot tracker for the first time. The online tracker allowed voters to confirm that the BOE had received their absentee ballot request, matched the request to their voter registration, and mailed the ballot to the voter's address. This was a huge improvement and voters were largely appreciative of this trend towards transparency.

The absentee ballot tracking system is a crucial step forward to create a better voting experience for New Yorkers. However, the absentee ballot tracker sometimes left voters without up-to-date information about when their mailed or dropped off ballot was received, processed, and validated by the City BOE. Recent changes to the absentee ballot canvassing process also means that ballots received by the BOE can now be updated to reflect whether they qualify to be cured earlier than in past elections.

In 2020 and 2021, many voters whose ballots were not updated to reflect receipt by the City BOE instead chose to vote in person rather than risk that their ballot had been lost, only to have the tracker updated after Election Day to show they voted successfully. Clear updates to the tracker would allow voters peace of mind that their ballot had safely reached BOE offices, particularly now that voters who request absentee ballots must now vote by affidavit rather than regular ballot if they choose to go vote in person.

Starting in 2022, the State BOE is required to create a statewide absentee ballot tracking system. In creating their ballot tracker, the BOE should commit to updating the tracking system on a daily basis, to reflect when returned ballots arrive at the BOE office.

Voter Registration

Compared to most states, New York has fairly restrictive voter registration laws.[147] Though the Election Law currently requires that a person register 25 days prior to an election in which they wish to vote, the State Constitution allows voter registration up to ten days prior to an election.[148] New York State also has a change of party enrollment deadline for already registered voters, separate from a voter registration deadline for new registrants.

These restrictive dates in the law do not allow for same-day voter registration where voters are allowed to register on days between early voting and Election Day. Same-day voter registration benefits not only voters who miss the registration deadline or who move, but also voters who become eligible to vote between the existing voter registration deadline and Election Day. This includes newly eligible voters who turn 18, as well as voters who move to a new district after the registration date but before Election Day.

As of April 2022, 20 states and Washington D.C. offer same-day voter registration up to and including Election Day.[149] In 30 states, including New York, there is a separate voter registration date ahead of every election. New York should take the steps to align itself with states that are working to make sure everyone can participate in upcoming elections. While a constitutional amendment is a long-term and final solution, there are steps the legislature can take in the next year to narrow the gap between registration day and Election Day.

Recommendation 9: Streamline Registration Dates

The State BOE should create one voter registration deadline that encompasses all registration changes.

New York has closed primary elections, meaning that voters must be registered with a political party to vote in that party's primary election. Voters seeking to change their political party enrollment must submit an application to their local BOE. To vote in any year's primary election, their application must be received by the BOE by February 14th. In 2022, this is several months before the June 3rd deadline to register to vote for the primary election.[150]

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147   National Conference of State Legislatures. "Voter Registration Deadlines." 4 Jan, 2022.

148   New York City Board of Elections. "Registration Deadlines."

149   National Conference of State Legislatures. "Same Day Voter Registration." 20 Sept, 2021.

150   New York State Election Law §5-210(3).

The February 14th party change deadline also falls several months before the June 8, 2022 deadline for registered voters to change their address in time to vote in the primary.[151]

As discussed in the in 2020–2021 Voter Analysis Report, there was mass confusion in 2021 surrounding the party change deadline.[152] Although the City BOE was open on Sunday, February 14th for voters to switch their party registration, the state BOE listed on its website that "An application to change one's party enrollment for any primary election in 2021 must be received by the board of elections no later than February 12, 2021."[153] The New York State DMV also stated that, because the party enrollment change deadline fell on a Sunday, February 12th was the last day voters could change their party enrollment status at the DMV.[154] In response to the confusion, Cuomo signed an executive order on February 12, 2021 to extend the deadline for voters to change their party enrollment to Tuesday, February 16th.[155]

In 2022, the February 14th party change deadline fell on a Monday. Despite it falling on a weekday, the DMV issued a press release stating that, although voters could hand-deliver a party enrollment change to their local BOE on February 14th, "Any change of enrollment made through the DMV website must be filed by February 11th."[156] In order to avoid further confusion and inconvenience to voters, the CFB again recommends that all voter registration-related deadlines be streamlined to one consistent date prior to an election.

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151   New York State Election Law §5-210(3).

152   2020–21 Voter Analysis Report. "Streamline Registration Deadlines."

153   Michel, Clifford. "When Is the Deadline for New York Voters to Switch Party Registration Before June's Primary? Cuomo Jumps in Amid Confusion." *The City*, 14 Feb, 2021.

154   Michel, Clifford. "When Is the Deadline for New York Voters to Switch Party Registration Before June's Primary? Cuomo Jumps in Amid Confusion." *The City*, 14 Feb, 2021.

155   Michel, Clifford. "When Is the Deadline for New York Voters to Switch Party Registration Before June's Primary? Cuomo Jumps in Amid Confusion." *The City*, 14 Feb, 2021.

156   New York DMV. "DMV Reminds New Yorkers of Approaching Deadline to Change Party Enrollment for Primary Elections." 10 Feb, 2022.

Recommendation 10: Pass the Constitutional Minimum Registration Bill

The Legislature should pass and the Governor should sign a bill reducing the time for registering to vote to the constitutional minimum of ten days.

On January 10, 2022, a bill passed the New York State Senate that would change the registration deadline from 25 days before an election to the constitutional minimum of ten days before an election.[157] This would be a vast improvement to the existing voter registration deadline and would even allow voters to register at poll sites on the first day of early voting. This is known as a "golden day", where voters would be able to register and vote in person at the same time. It could also be implemented immediately and does not require an onerous Constitution Amendment process.

Recommendation 11: Reintroduce Constitutional Amendment for Same Day Voter Registration

The New York State Legislature should restart the process of passing legislation to enact same-day voter registration as soon as possible.

Despite failing once before, same-day voter registration would greatly benefit New Yorkers. 13.2% of people surveyed across the state in 2016 stated the reason they weren't registered to vote was because they didn't meet the registration deadline.[158] If 13.2% of all eligible New Yorkers missed the registration deadline, that would be over 145,000 potential voters unable to participate in deciding New York's future.

Studies show that same-day voter registration increases registration rates by about 5% overall.[159] A large body of research finds that same-day voter registration also increases

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157 NY State Senate. S2951 (2021-22): "Reduces the Time for Mailing and Receipt of Registration Application to Constitutional Minimum."

158 Zhang, Emily Rong. "New York Registration Deadline Prevents Tens of Thousands From Voting." *American Civil Liberties Union*, 17 Nov, 2018.

159 Highton, Benjamin. "Voter Registration and Turnout in the United States." *Cambridge University Press*, 1 Sept, 2004.

voter turnout between 3% and 9%, with even larger turnout impacts observed with underrepresented groups.[160]

Young voters in particular stand to gain from same-day voter registration because newly-eligible young voters are disproportionately unregistered.[161] (The On The Ballot in 2021 section goes into detail about the age breakdown of newly registered voters.) A recent study finds that same-day voter registration increases youth turnout more than any other individual age group.[162] If New York enacts same-day voter registration, the state will likely gain a younger electorate, and one that more closely reflects its population.

Additional research shows that other traditionally underrepresented groups may also benefit from same-day voter registration. A recent policy brief reports that turnout amongst Black voters typically ranges between two to 17 percentage points higher in states with same-day voter registration than in states without it. Latino/Hispanic turnout ranges between 0.1 to 17.5 percentage points higher in states with same-day voter registration than similar states without it.[163]

Same-day voter registration may also lessen the effects of housing instability, due to eviction or changing addresses, on voting behavior. The Eviction Lab reports that turnout rates are lower in areas where eviction rates are higher.[164] However, this effect is substantially weaker in states with same-day voter registration.[165] A pivot to same-day voter registration stands to benefit a large share of New Yorkers; 68.1% of households in NYC are rented compared to only 35.9% of households nationwide, and 26.2% of renters in the City spend more than 50%

160 Grumbach, Jacob M. and Charlotte Hill. "Rock the Registration: Same Day Registration Increases Turnout of Young Voters." *The University of Chicago Press Journal of Politics*.

161 Grumbach, Jacob M. and Charlotte Hill. "Rock the Registration: Same Day Registration Increases Turnout of Young Voters." *The University of Chicago Press Journal of Politics*.

162 Grumbach, Jacob M. and Charlotte Hill. "Rock the Registration: Same Day Registration Increases Turnout of Young Voters." *The University of Chicago Press Journal of Politics*

163 Williamson, Laura and Jesse Rhodes. "Same Day Registration: How Registration Reform Can Boost Turnout Among Black and Latinx Voters." *Demos*, 23 June, 2021.

164 Slee, Gillian. "Eviction Depressed Voter Turnout in the 2016 Presidential Election." *Eviction Lab*, 8 Nov, 2021

165 Slee, Gillian. "Eviction Depressed Voter Turnout in the 2016 Presidential Election." *Eviction Lab*, 8 Nov, 2021

of their income on rent.[166] In 2019, evictions were filed for 7.9% of renter-occupied units in NYC.[167] By alleviating the logistical difficulties of registering to vote or changing an existing registration, same-day voter registration will make it easier for the many New Yorkers who experience eviction to exercise their right to vote.

Ranked Choice Voting Results Reporting

Ranked choice voting (RCV) was new to NYC in 2021 and most voters tried the voting method for the first time in the June primary elections. As such, the City BOE had to adapt and respond to the challenges of RCV while voters were trying out the system as well. While voters ultimately found RCV easy to use, there is space for procedural improvements that would make results reporting and analysis of the cast vote record (CVR) more straightforward.

Recommendation 12: Publicize a Schedule for RCV Results Reporting

The City BOE should publicize a clear and consistent reporting schedule for unofficial and official RCV results, ahead of the 2023 primary election.

When RCV was introduced in NYC, critics were worried about how it would impact an already slow results reporting system. As mentioned in the absentee voting section, results reporting in the City used to take weeks as the City BOE waited to count absentee ballots. (See the Policy & Legislative Recommendations—Absentee Voting for more information about the evolution of absentee voting in New York.) People were concerned: if the City BOE was forced to wait on absentee ballots to report even the first round of RCV results, it could mean an even longer wait to learn who wins. The solution from the City BOE during the June primary election was to initially release the first round of RCV votes from only the ballots cast in-person. After all the absentee ballots were canvassed and counted, they released the full round-by-round results to the public.

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166 NYU Furman Center. "State of Renters and Their Homes." *State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2020.*

167 NYU Furman Center. "State of Renters and Their Homes." *State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2020.*

A new law creating a structured timeline for counting absentee ballots should improve the delays voters have experienced in the past. With this law, BOEs are allowed to start counting absentee ballots on Election Day alongside ballots cast in-person. This change should come with a change in RCV round results reporting. The City BOE should create a public timeline on when unofficial and official RCV results will be communicated. This will ensure that voters and the media know when to expect results and provide a greater understanding of which ballots are included in those results.

Recommendation 13: Improve the Cast Vote Record (CVR) Data

The City BOE should restructure the CVR files into an organized and accessible format.

After spending months with the CVR files, the CFB has several recommendations for improving the structure of the files to aid future researchers. Though our preference would be to have one single file for the whole City, generated directly from the RCV tabulation software, we understand there might be limitations of the RCV Universal Tabulator software already procured by the City BOE and supplied by the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center.

There are also smaller ways to improve the existing CVR files produced by the RCV Universal Tabulator, and our recommendations are as follows:

Create unique identifiers for each vote cast across boroughs and ballot type—The CVR files should include a new column with a unique identifying number for each ballot, to ensure that analyses do not feature duplicate records and also to provide a common reference point for individual ballots.

Standardizing columns across files—Of the 25 CVR files, 44% were missing a ballot type column, which includes the party of the voter and vote method. To ascertain political party, the CFB used the races marked on the ballot, however analysis would be more accurate if this were information provided in the original files. The CVR files should be standardized with common column headings.

Indicating true undervotes vs ineligible races—The original CVR file did not distinguish between legitimate undervotes and races that did not appear on the ballot because the voter did not live in that district or was registered to a different political party. To distinguish between undervotes, the CFB manually used the ballot's election district, assembly district, and political party to weed out ineligible races. To aid in this manual process, the CVR should reflect if a race was not voted on because a voter was ineligible to vote in it.

Suppress ballots that did not have ranked choice voting races—Some ballots did not have any votes cast in any of the citywide races using ranked choice voting, reflecting an undervote for every office and every rank, and/or denoting a "[2]" after their ballot type. The CFB categorized these as non-ranked choice ballots for either judicial or party delegate races and suppressed these ballots from the overall analysis. For the purposes of analyzing ranked choice voting races, these second pages of ballots should not be included in the CVR.

Marking invalid ballots for each race—Publishing the dataset with ballots for a race marked as invalid in cases of voter error would go a long way in helping researchers and election data enthusiasts determine how to count valid ballots and errors. Because these invalid ballots are discounted in final vote counts, we know the BOE has this information.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Constitutional Amendment Process in New York State

Amending the New York Constitution can happen either through a legislative process or through a Constitutional Convention. The state has held eight Constitutional Conventions, most recently in 1967.[168] Recently, the more popular option for amending the constitution is the multi-year legislative process that requires participation from both elected officials and voters. As both same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee would require this procedure again, here is a chart exploring the full amendment process ahead for those two sections.

The amendment process begins when a State Senator or Assemblyperson introduces a constitutional amendment in the legislature. If the amendment passes both houses, it does not go to the Governor. It waits until a new two-year legislative session and must get passed in both houses again. After the second passage, the amendment becomes a yes-or-no question on the ballot in the next general election. If a majority of voters across the state vote "Yes" on the proposal, the amendment goes into effect.

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168   New York State Archives. "Constitutions and Constitutional Conventions."

Figure A.1: Flowchart of constitutional amendment process
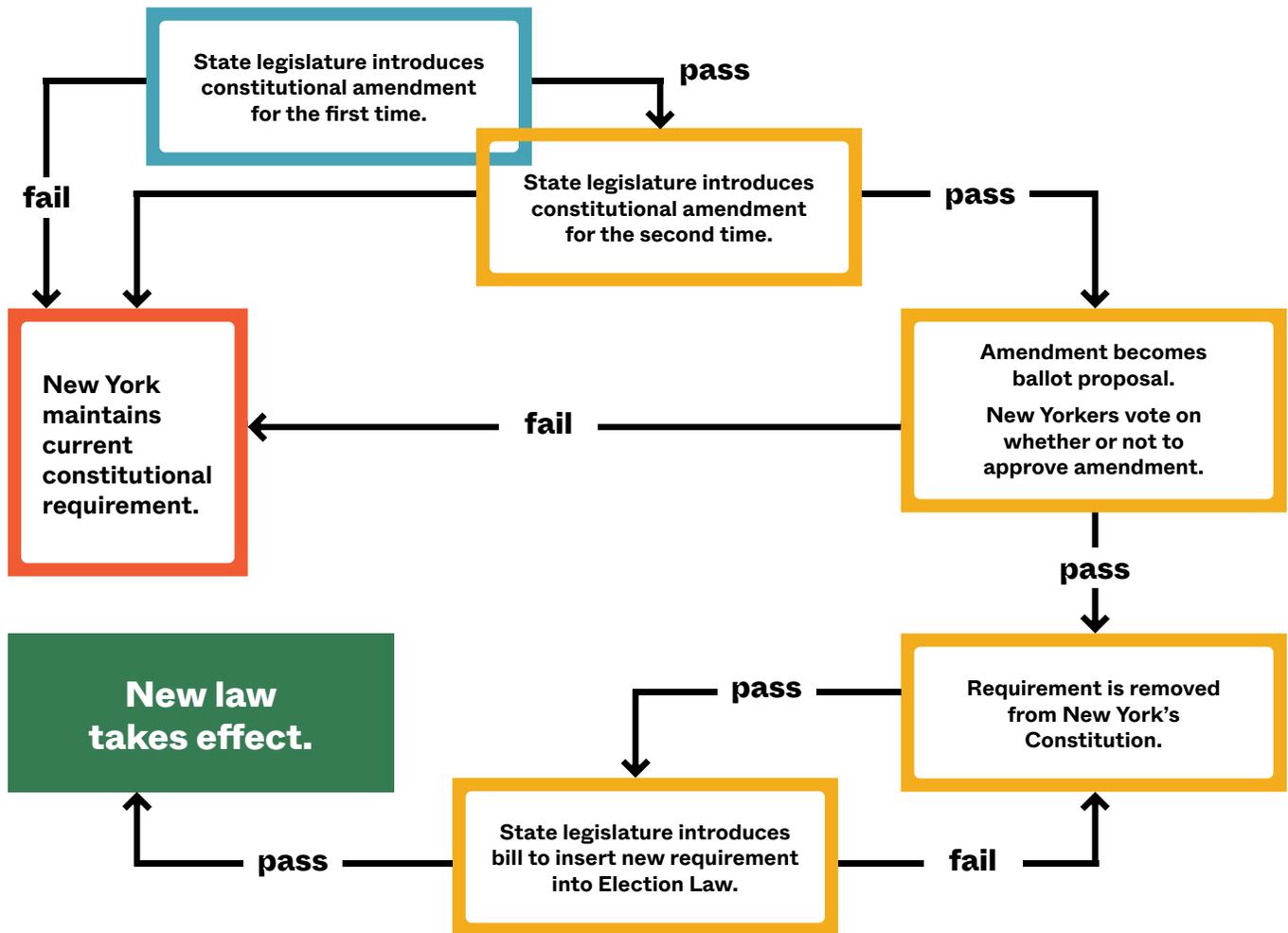
In the example of Ballot Proposals 3 and 4 of the 2021 General Election, same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee, the amendments would remove restrictive language from the Constitution. This paves the way for a Senator or Assemblyperson to introduce a regular bill into the legislature to amend the Election Law with more expansive voting laws.[169]

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169 New York Civil Liberties Union. "Guide to Amending the New York State Constitution." Feb, 2019.

Appendix B: Language Access Coverage for Voting/Elections Information

Figure A.2: Language support by borough and relevant law

Language	# of LEP speakers	Voting Rights Act (BOE)	VRA & Local Law 48 (CFB)	2021 General Interpreter Support (NYCCEC)*
Spanish	882,034	Citywide	Citywide	Not available
Chinese	334,845	Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens		Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island
Bengali	52,840	Queens		Bronx, Brooklyn
Hindi	7,394	Queens		Not available
Korean	39,450	Queens		Staten Island
Punjabi	9,550	Queens		Not available
Arabic	20,224	Not available		Brooklyn
French	12,365	Not available		Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens
Haitian Creole	40,150	Not available		Brooklyn, Queens
Italian	20,435	Not available		Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens
Polish	19,825	Not available		Brooklyn, Queens
Russian	104,775	Not available		Brooklyn, Queens
Urdu	15,677	Not available		Brooklyn, Queens
Yiddish	29,260	Not available		Brooklyn

Figure A.3: Boroughs where election district/assembly districts have language support expanding under the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York

Language	# of LEP speakers	Voting Rights Act (Current, BOE)	John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York*
Spanish	882,034	Citywide	Citywide
Chinese	334,845	Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens	Citywide
Bengali	52,840	Queens only	Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens
Hindi	7,394	Queens only	Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island
Korean	39,450	Queens only	Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, Staten Island
Punjabi	9,550	Queens only	Brooklyn, Queens
Arabic	20,224	Not available	Citywide
French	12,365	Not available	Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Queens
Haitian Creole	40,150	Not available	Citywide
Italian	20,435	Not available	Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, Staten Island
Polish	19,825	Not available	Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island
Russian	104,775	Not available	Citywide
Urdu	15,677	Not available	Citywide
Yiddish	29,260	Not available	Brooklyn

* Language access services would be provided to certain election districts based on eligibility requirements.

Appendix C: Regression Outputs

Early voting logistic regression output:

Deviance Residuals				
Minimum	**First Quarter**	**Median**	**Third Quarter**	**Maximum**
-2.4348	-1.2622	0.7579	0.9277	8.4904

Coefficients				
	Estimate	**Std. Error**	**z value**	**p-value**
(Intercept)	3.249241	0.040218	-80.79	< 2e-16 ***
Distance to EV site	-0.1836340	0.0090227	-20.35	< 2e-16 ***
Participation score	0.0126902	0.0002797	45.37	< 2e-16 ***
Voted early in a previous election	2.1362209	0.0237307	90.02	< 2e-16 ***
New voter	0.7546075	0.10968	6.88	5.99e-12 ***
Age	0.0166686	0.0003669	45.43	< 2e-16 ***

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Ranking Score linear regression output:

Deviance Residuals				
Minimum	First Quarter	Median	Third Quarter	Maximum
-8.0483	-2.3785	0.2999	2.1950	6.8424

Coefficients				
	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	p-value
(Intercept)	36.92543	6.88319	5.365	3.68e-06 ***
Percent registered DEM voters age 65+	7.15785	11.93064	0.600	0.552
Average DEM participation score	-0.02638	0.15164	-0.174	0.863
Number of DEM Council candidates	2.15987	0.18920	11.416	3.71e-14 ***
Percentage White residents	-4.40004	3.77876	-1.164	0.251
Percentage residents with less than a high school diploma	7.62261	9.61606	0.793	0.433

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 3.561 on 40 degrees of freedom
(5 observations deleted due to missingness)

Multiple R-squared: 0.79	Adjusted R-squared: 0.7638
F-statistic: 30.1 on 5 and 40 DF	p-value: 1.465e-12

Appendix D: Percentage of Non-Fatal Errors by Office

Office	% Undervotes in first rank	% Overvotes in a rank other than first
Mayor (all parties and races)	0.20%	0.59%
Public Advocate	0.67%	0.23%
Comptroller	0.73%	0.52%
Borough President (all parties and races)	0.91%	0.46%
Council (all parties and races)	0.49%	0.47%

Appendix E: Exhausted Ballots by Each Race in the 2021 Primary

Office	Percentage of Exhausted Ballots	Number of Candidates on the Ballot
Democrat		
Mayor	14.74%	13
Public Advocate	3.58%	3
Comptroller	3.20%	10
Manhattan Borough President	21.04%	7
Bronx Borough President	8.70%	5
Brooklyn Borough President	31.82%	12
Queens Borough President	6.18%	3
Staten Island Borough President	11.92%	5
Council District 01	18.23%	9
Council District 02	0.53%	2
Council District 03	16.45%	6
Council District 05	15.15%	7
Council District 06	10.60%	6
Council District 07	27.99%	12

Office	Percentage of Exhausted Ballots	Number of Candidates on the Ballot
Democrat		
Council District 08	5.55%	4
Council District 09	58.37%	13
Council District 10	28.48%	8
Council District 11	8.76%	7
Council District 12	6.53%	3
Council District 13	6.73%	5
Council District 14	15.98%	6
Council District 15	18.33%	8
Council District 16	10.66%	4
Council District 17	0.39%	2
Council District 18	17.66%	8
Council District 19	10.17%	6
Council District 20	28.30%	8
Council District 21	12.92%	5
Council District 22	10.50%	6
Council District 23	20.22%	7

Office	Percentage of Exhausted Ballots	Number of Candidates on the Ballot
Democrat		
Council District 24	4.96%	4
Council District 25	19.85%	8
Council District 26	32.56%	15
Council District 27	20.36%	12
Council District 28	7.34%	3
Council District 29	29.43%	9
Council District 30	0.28%	2
Council District 31	5.35%	3
Council District 32	12.86%	6
Council District 33	11.43%	8
Council District 34	5.23%	4
Council District 35	11.92%	7
Council District 36	15.63%	5
Council District 37	13.69%	6
Council District 38	12.81%	6
Council District 39	22.27%	7

Office	Percentage of Exhausted Ballots	Number of Candidates on the Ballot
Democrat		
Council District 40	24.12%	11
Council District 41	0.37%	2
Council District 42	4.85%	4
Council District 45	1.83%	3
Council District 46	23.95%	8
Council District 47	10.03%	4
Council District 48	13.45%	5
Council District 49	22.92%	9
Republican		
Mayor	2.26%	2
Borough President	6.13%	4
Council District 15	6.45%	2
Council District 19	0.68%	2
Council District 23	2.66%	2
Council District 24	3.40%	2
Council District 32	0.63%	2
Council District 50	17.76%	5