

**unaffiliated voters**

**voter  
turnout**

**2024  
voter  
analysis  
report**

**young  
voters**

**policy and legislative  
recommendations**

**NYC  
VOTES**



# New York City Campaign Finance Board

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# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

2024 marked a presidential election year that dominated the cultural conversation locally and nationally, making it easy to forget there were other elections and other races on the ballot. Nonetheless, voters in New York City had the opportunity to cast their ballots in several elections: the presidential primary election on April 2, the state and congressional primary election on June 25, the general election on November 4, and two district-specific special elections on February 13.

The 2024 Voter Analysis Report provides an overview of important social, cultural, and political events that occurred in New York and nationally throughout the year to contextualize the research and analysis to come, then highlights the work of the Campaign Finance Board's (CFB) own voter engagement and education initiative, NYC Votes. The report then explores analyses of voter registration and turnout trends. This year's report includes research and data analysis on two under-researched populations, unaffiliated voters and voters under 30, to understand these populations and the unique barriers they face. The report concludes with a series of policy and legislative recommendations that seek to increase voter engagement and participation in New York City.

## Voter registration

Consistent with trends from previous years, New York City continued to have a high voter registration rate in 2024. As of November, there were nearly 4.7 million active registered voters in New York City, representing 85.5% of the eligible voting population. More than half of newly registered voters (54.5%) were under 30. Newly registered voters (those who registered for the first time in 2024) turned out at higher rates than their previously registered peers, especially in the general election. While New York State allows 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote, only 5.2% of young people in New York City were pre-registered to vote in 2024.

## On the ballot

In the 2024 elections, New York City voters cast ballots for candidates for federal offices (including President, U.S. Senate, and U.S. House of Representatives), state offices (including State Assembly, State Senate, and judicial positions), and state and local ballot proposals.

New York City voters turned out at lower rates than in previous presidential election years—6.6% in the April presidential primary, 10.1% in the June state and congressional primary, and 60.2% in the November general election.

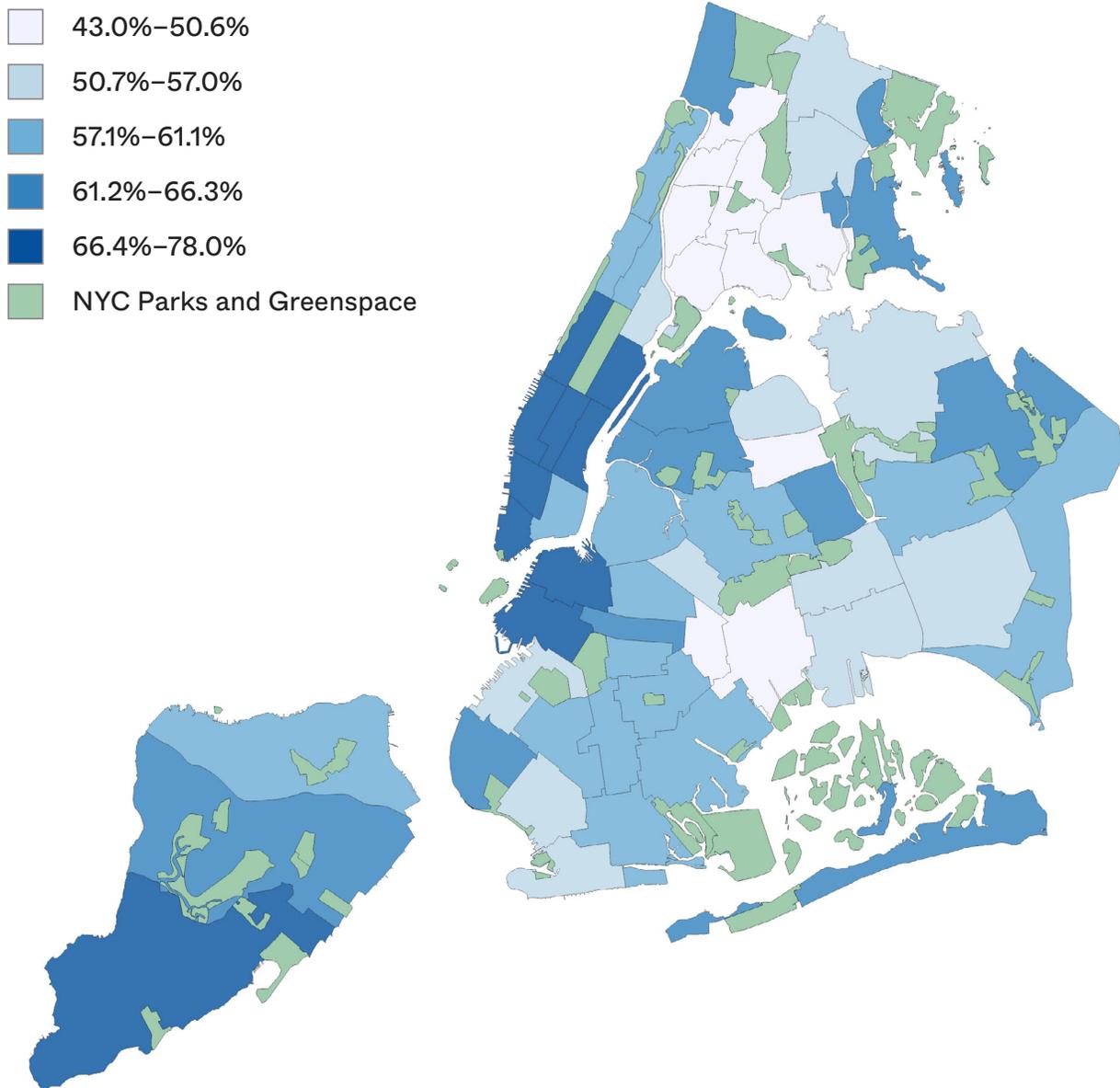
**Figure 0.1: Voter turnout by election**

Election	Turnout
April presidential primary	6.6%
June state and congressional primary	10.1%
November general	60.2%

Actual voters skewed older than the average registered voter in both primary elections. In the general election, the average age of actual voters mirrored that of registered voters. This is because on average, voters in the general election were younger than voters in the primary elections.

Voting patterns varied by geography. Manhattan had the highest voter turnout in all three major elections. The Bronx had the lowest voter turnout in the April primary and the November general, while Queens experienced the lowest turnout in the June primary. This report includes analyses of voter turnout in the CFB’s priority community districts, areas that are underrepresented in the electoral process based on voter education, turnout, and engagement. The map below depicts voter turnout in the general election by community district.

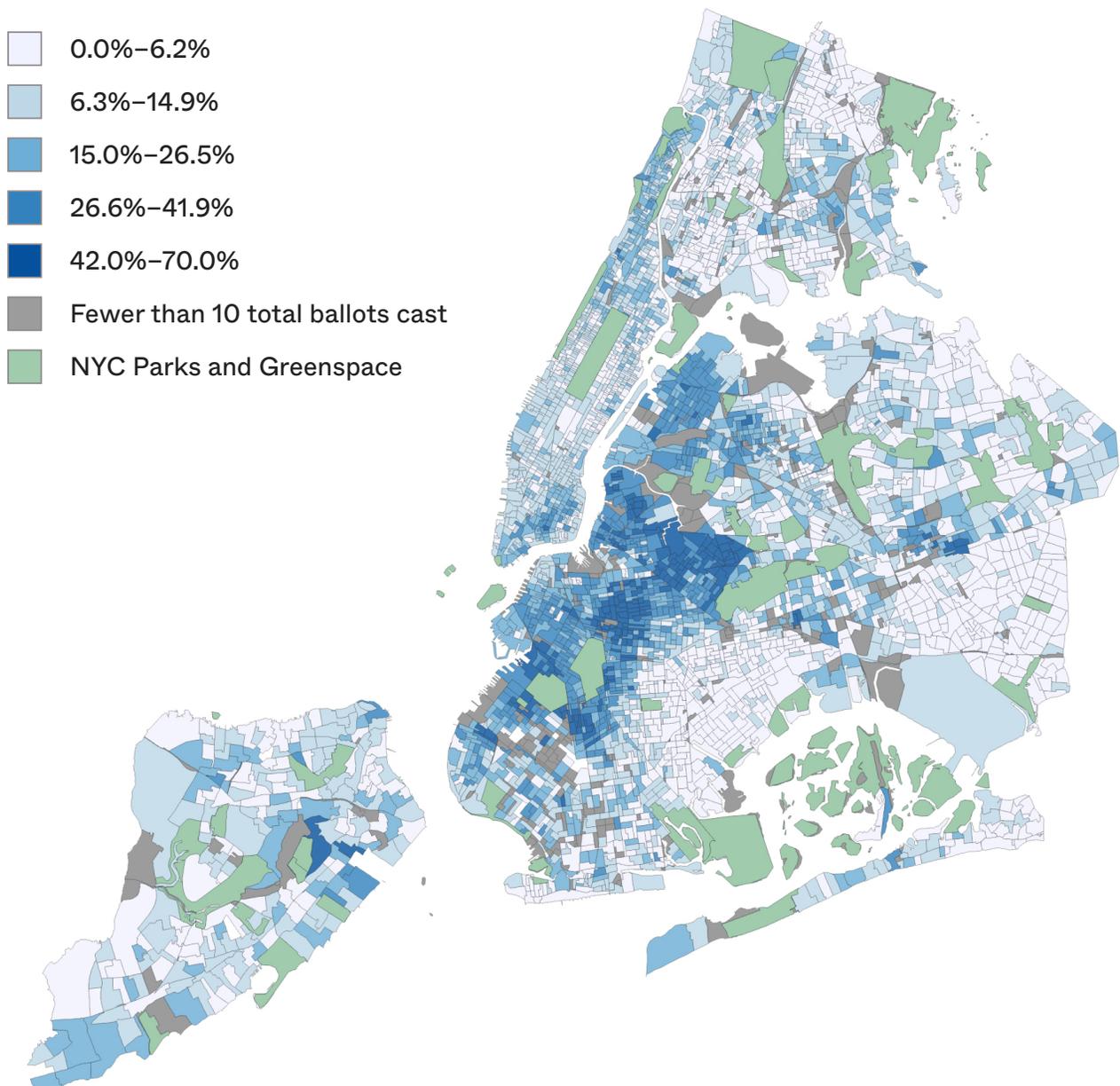
**Figure 0.2: Voter turnout by community district, general election**



In 2024, New York City voters could cast their ballots using a new vote method, early vote by mail. This method is similar to absentee voting, except voters do not need to provide a valid reason for requesting one. Across all three elections, most voters cast their ballots in person on Election Day. However, larger shares of voters took advantage of in-person early voting (38.4%) and early vote by mail (6.2%) in the general election, compared to the primary elections.

This report includes analyses of voters who cast blank ballots in the Democratic presidential primary election, given the local and national movements to protest then-President Biden’s handling of the war in Gaza. Whereas unrecorded votes represented 1.1% and 4.2% of ballots in the 2016 and 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, respectively, they made up 14.8% of ballots in 2024. Unlike in previous presidential election years, there were discernable geographic patterns in the usage of blank ballots in 2024, depicted below.

**Figure 0.3: Percent of unrecorded ballots by election district, Democratic presidential primary**



Finally, New Yorkers voted on six ballot proposals in the general election, one statewide proposal and five citywide proposals. Five of the six proposals passed.

## **Analysis of unaffiliated voters**

“Unaffiliated voters” are individuals who choose not to register with a specific political party. In 2024, there were more than 1.0 million registered unaffiliated voters in New York City, approximately one in five registered voters (21.1%). New York State requires voters to be registered to a political party to vote in a primary election, meaning unaffiliated voters cannot participate in this part of the democratic process. Registered unaffiliated voters are disproportionately younger than their affiliated peers (nearly half of all unaffiliated voters are under 40). Unaffiliated voters consistently turn out at lower rates than their party-affiliated peers. This section also provides a landscape of unaffiliated voters across the country.

## **Research on young voters**

Young voters under the age of 30 consistently turn out to vote at low rates in New York City. In 2024, only 3.7% cast ballots in April, 5.0% in June, and 57.1% in November. This mirrors national trends; nationally, 42% of young voters cast their ballots in November. This section places turnout among young voters in New York City in the broader context of civic and political engagement among young people. It then explores policies that influence young voters and barriers they face in voter education, outreach, and participation. Policies and barriers include registration unaffiliated to a political party, which prevents them from voting in primaries; lack of access to civic education; and minimal usage of voter pre-registration for young individuals. This section concludes with a spotlight on research conducted by the CFB’s 2024 cohort of Youth Ambassadors, which aims to understand voter access and civic engagement among their peers and in their communities.

## **Policy and legislative recommendations**

Finally, this report concludes with a series of recommendations that aim to address gaps in our electoral processes and ultimately to increase voter engagement and participation.

- **Recommendation 1: Join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a multi-state voter list maintenance organization, to improve the accuracy and safety of New York’s voter list.**

Accurate voter rolls are essential for maintaining election integrity and public trust. In New York, managing voter rolls is a complicated decentralized process conducted across the state’s 62 counties, and is prone to error and inefficiency. We recommend that New York

take legislative action to join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which has already proven its effectiveness in improving voter roll accuracy and civic participation in other states across the country.

- **Recommendation 2: Prioritize voters when choosing election dates to reduce voter fatigue and increase participation.**

New York State holds frequent elections, asking voters to turn out multiple times a year, almost annually. This recommendation is rooted in research on voter fatigue, the concept that holding more elections leads to lower voter turnout. This recommendation identifies three ways in which the election calendar exacerbates voter fatigue and offers suggestions to prioritize voters when scheduling elections.

1. One way New Yorkers experience voter fatigue is through regularly scheduled elections in most calendar years. Research shows that aligning “odd-year” municipal elections with “even-year” state and federal elections—which already experience higher turnout—could reduce voter fatigue and thus increase turnout, making the city’s electorate more representative.
2. Another way New Yorkers experience voter fatigue is through multiple primary elections scheduled in the same year. In even years, New York used to hold a state primary in June and a congressional primary in September, before they were combined to reduce voter fatigue. Nevertheless, every four years, New Yorkers vote in a presidential primary and a separate state and congressional primary. While there are valid reasons to hold these primaries on separate dates, such as differences in the timing of legislative sessions and campaigning on a national scale, New York State should aim to consolidate regularly scheduled primary elections in the same year as much as possible.
3. A third way New Yorkers experience voter fatigue is through often last-minute special elections that occur throughout the year to fill vacancies. Special elections often occur in close proximity to regularly scheduled elections. In 2024, New York held two special elections on February 13, even though the presidential primary was scheduled on April 2. Special elections consistently draw low voter turnout, often hovering in the low single digits. Wherever possible, New York should align special elections with scheduled election dates to decrease voter fatigue and increase participation.

# 2024 Elections Turnout Summary

		April primary	June primary	November general
Overall turnout	Eligible voters	3,488,165	2,222,678	4,658,641
	Voters	228,551	224,921	2,802,745
	Citywide turnout	6.6%	10.1%	60.2%
Turnout by borough	Manhattan	9.5%	13.0%	68.4%
	Bronx	4.8%	10.4%	52.0%
	Brooklyn	6.1%	9.5%	58.9%
	Queens	5.9%	8.9%	58.6%
	Staten Island	6.0%	N/A	65.1%
Turnout by age	18-29	3.7%	5.0%	57.1%
	30-39	4.4%	7.3%	57.2%
	40-49	4.1%	7.6%	59.3%
	50-59	5.4%	9.4%	64.4%
	60-69	9.1%	14.2%	67.0%
	70-79	12.9%	18.7%	65.8%
	80+	9.6%	12.3%	45.8%
Vote method	Absentee vote by mail	11.5%	7.0%	3.8%
	Early vote by mail	4.9%	5.4%	6.2%
	Election Day	57.6%	66.0%	47.7%
	In-person early	24.2%	20.3%	38.4%

# 2024 Year in Review

# 2024 Year in Review

2024 brought new opportunities for New Yorkers to exercise their voice, along with new challenges for voters to confront. The presidential race became a tale of two election stories—many New Yorkers disillusioned and disinterested in the lack of options in the April presidential primary chose not to vote, but a Democratic party shakeup over the summer injected new energy and excitement into the November general election. Nevertheless, voter turnout remained lower than in past presidential elections.

## February special elections and early vote by mail

The 2024 election season got off to an early start in New York City with two special elections on February 13. One special election was held in New York’s Congressional District 3 to replace Republican George Santos, following a House Ethics Committee investigation, a 23-count federal indictment on charges including wire fraud and identity theft, and a bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives to expel Representative Santos.<sup>1</sup> While most of the district resides in Nassau County, a small portion of the district lies in northeast Queens. Former Democratic congressman Tom Suozzi defeated Republican Mazi Melesa Pilip in this highly competitive and expensive race, for which ad spending totaled \$22 million.<sup>2</sup> Though still low, voter turnout for this race was much higher than usual for special elections—27.9% of eligible NYC voters cast their ballots in Queens.

While the special election to replace Representative Santos received national attention, there was another election with local implications. State Assembly District 77 in the Bronx held a special election to replace Assembly Member Latoya Joyner, after she announced she was leaving the State Legislature for a job in the private sector just one day into the legislative session.<sup>3</sup> Joyner stepped down on January 8 and Governor Hochul declared a special election to be held on February 13, the earliest date permissible by law.<sup>4</sup> Cobbled together quickly with little advanced notice and minimal publicity, only 3.4% of eligible voters cast their

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1 Gold, Michael and Grace Ashford. “[Santos Faces New Charges Accusing Him of Lies and Credit Card Fraud.](#)” *The New York Times*, 10 Oct 2023.; and Gold, Michael and Grace Ashford. “[George Santos is Kicked Out of Congress in a Historic Vote.](#)” *The New York Times*, 01 Dec 2023.

2 Fernandez, Madison. “[The Numbers Behind the Big New York Special Election.](#)” *Politico*, 13 Feb 2024.

3 Lewis, Rebecca C. “[Assembly Member Latoya Joyner Announces Resignation Days into Session.](#)” *City & State*, 04 Jan 2024.

4 Lewis, Rebecca C. “[Hochul Quietly Set Feb. 13 Date for Bronx Special Election to Replace Latoya Joyner.](#)” *City & State*, 18 Jan 2024.

ballots. Democrat Landon Dais defeated Republican Norman McGill handily, receiving nearly three quarters of the vote share.<sup>5</sup>

The February special election date coincided with a Nor'easter that blanketed the city in more than three inches of snow, making it the highest daily snowfall the city has seen in more than two years and causing the first remote learning day of the year for NYC public school students.<sup>6</sup> Although the snowstorm almost certainly discouraged some voters from braving the elements on Election Day, the unfortunate timing underscores the importance of alternatives to in-person Election Day voting. Nevertheless, low voter turnout in special elections points to a larger issue with the scheduling of these one-off elections. The "[Policy and Legislative Recommendations](#)" section of this report explores research on voter fatigue (voters being asked to vote too frequently, often resulting in the decision not to vote) and includes a recommendation to prioritize the needs of voters when scheduling elections, including scheduling special elections on already-scheduled election dates, whenever possible.

The February special elections marked the first time voters could request no-excuse early vote by mail ballots. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented number of voters requested mail ballots, when state lawmakers temporarily allowed all voters to safely cast their ballots from home without needing to cite a reason.<sup>7</sup> The success of this temporary suspension and overwhelming use of mail-in voting inspired state lawmakers to push for permanent change. Governor Hochul signed the bill into law in September 2023 to go into effect for 2024. Although this law remains in effect, there have been numerous lawsuits claiming unconstitutionality, including one brought immediately after the law was signed in September 2023 and another struck down as recently as December 2024.<sup>8</sup> Throughout 2024, New Yorkers cast non-absentee mail ballots at small but increasing rates throughout the year, at rates of 4.9% in April, 5.4% in June, and 6.3% in November. See the "[On the Ballot](#)" section of this report for more detailed analysis on vote method.

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5 Sterne, Peter. "[2024 Bronx Assembly District Special Election Results.](#)" *City & State*, 13 Feb 2024.

6 Cappucci, Matthew. "[New York City Just Posted Its Snowiest Day in More Than Two Years.](#)" *The Washington Post*, 13 Feb 2024.; and New York City Public Schools. "[The Morning Bell: Weather Advisory: NYC Public Schools Switch to Remote Learning on 2/13.](#)" 12 Feb 2024.

7 2020–21 Voter Analysis Report. "[Introduction.](#)"

8 Bergin, Brigid. "[New York Set to Expand Early Voting by Mail— But Legal Challenges Are Likely.](#)" *Gothamist*, 19 Sep 2023.; and Bergin, Brigid. "[You Can Vote Early by Mail in New York, State's Top Court Rules.](#)" *Gothamist*, 20 Aug 2024.

## April presidential primary election

2024's regular election season kicked off in earnest in New York with the presidential primary on April 2. However, by then, 33 states had already held elections, effectively determining the nominees. Both Democratic President Joe Biden and Republican former President Donald Trump secured enough delegates to represent their parties in the general election by March 12.<sup>9</sup> This meant there was little reason for New Yorkers to vote in the presidential primary, not to mention the fact that many voters felt dissatisfied with the options on their ballots.<sup>10</sup> As a result, most New Yorkers chose to stay home—only 6.6% of registered voters cast their ballots. The “[Policy and Legislative Recommendations](#)” section of this report includes a case study exploring who makes decisions about scheduling presidential primary elections and the impact of timing on voter engagement and turnout.

While most voters sat this election out, some New Yorkers showed up to the polls to cast a blank ballot; doing so was part of a movement to signal disapproval of President Biden's handling of the war in Gaza and put pressure on the Biden administration to call for a lasting ceasefire. This movement began in Michigan, where more than 100,000 voters, or 13.2%, voted “uncommitted” in the February 27 Democratic primary.<sup>11</sup> Although New York does not have “uncommitted” or write-in options on presidential primary ballots, progressive organizers in New York started the “Leave it Blank NY” campaign to most closely mimic the protest efforts of other states.<sup>12</sup> The campaign encouraged New Yorkers to show up and submit blank ballots, which are still counted and recorded. Whereas only 1.1% and 4.2% of NYC voters cast blank ballots in the 2016 and 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, respectively, 14.8% of voters cast blank ballots in 2024. In sections to follow, this report includes additional analyses on how New Yorkers responded to the “Leave it Blank” campaign and how local voter behavior varied by geography.

## June state and congressional primary election

Less than three months after the special elections, voters returned to the polls on June 25 to vote in the congressional and state primary election. This was the first election that applied new congressional district lines, following a contentious and drawn-out redistricting process

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9 Fowler, Stephen. “[Trump and Biden Clinch 2024 Presidential Nominations.](#)” *NPR*, 12 March 2024.

10 Baker, Camille. “[How Voters Describe the 2024 Election in One Word.](#)” *The New York Times*, 11 Apr 2024.

11 Moore, Elena. “[The Push to Vote ‘Uncommitted’ to Biden in Michigan Exceeds Goal.](#)” *NPR*, 28 Feb 2024.

12 Leave It Blank NY. [www.leaveitblankny.com](http://www.leaveitblankny.com).

in which district lines were redrawn to account for population changes from the 2020 decennial census.<sup>13</sup>

The ballot included a mix of federal and state races, including U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, State Assembly and Senate, and a slate of judicial races and party positions depending on voter district and party. Continuing a long-standing pattern of low voter turnout for congressional and state primaries, only 10.1% of registered New York City voters cast their ballots in June. This was the second election in three months for most voters and the third election of the year for those in special election districts. In the “[Policy and Legislative Recommendations](#)” section, we explore research on voter fatigue and recommend that whenever possible, New York should consolidate regularly scheduled primary elections.

The competitiveness of races ran the gamut—some were highly contested with three or more candidates while others were entirely uncontested and left off the ballot. The most competitive and contentious race was for Congressional District 16, covering parts of Westchester County and a small portion of the Bronx. George Latimer defeated incumbent Jamaal Bowman in a race that garnered national attention and became the most expensive House primary in history.<sup>14</sup> The war in Gaza became a central issue in this race and drove fundraising; while Bowman advocated for a permanent ceasefire, Latimer’s pro-Israel stance drew \$15 million in spending from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).<sup>15</sup>

New York State also launched its Public Campaign Finance Program (PCFB) in the 2024 election cycle, allowing candidates running for State Senate and Assembly positions to receive public matching funds for the first time. Much like the CFB’s citywide matching funds program, candidates for state office were eligible to receive a match on small contributions from New York State residents. Unlike the CFB’s matching funds program, however, the PCFB’s program did not place a cap on candidate spending. In the 2024 election cycle, 70.5% of candidates signed up for the program and the PCFB distributed more than \$35 million in matching funds.<sup>16</sup>

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13 Mahoney, Bill. “[New Congressional Maps Approved in New York.](#)” *Politico*, 28 Feb 2024.

14 Fandos, Nicholas. “[Bowman Falls to Latimer in a Loss for Progressive Democrats.](#)” *The New York Times*, 25 Jun 2024.

15 Ibid.

16 Pino, Marina, Grady Yuthok Short, Celina Avalos Jaramillo, and Ian Vandewalker. “[New York State’s Public Campaign Financing Program Empowers Constituent Small Donors.](#)” *Brennan Center for Justice*. 06 Feb 2025.; and The New York State Public Campaign Finance Board. “[2024 NYS Public Campaign Finance Program End of Cycle Report.](#)” Jan 2025.

## November general election

### Campaigning, fundraising, and money in politics

After a lackluster presidential primary election, voters prepared for a general election that seemed to be a repeat of 2020. Few could have predicted all the shake-ups to come over the summer months that dramatically reshaped the race. The first major surprise came on May 30, when former President Trump was convicted on all 34 counts of falsifying business records in a hush-money case, making him the first former American president to be convicted of felony crimes.<sup>17</sup> Yet, despite his felony conviction, former President Trump was considered the winner of the first presidential debate on June 27. President Biden's poor performance reignited concerns about his health and ability to hold office and sparked calls for him to drop out of the race.<sup>18</sup> Pressure mounted as fundraising slowed and Democrats became concerned that this would have negative consequences on down-ballot races across the country.<sup>19</sup> On July 21, under growing pressure from fellow Democrats, Biden withdrew his nomination and quickly endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris to represent the party.<sup>20</sup>

Seemingly overnight, this last-minute change injected a new wave of energy and excitement among Democrats, especially young supporters. In a clever attempt to appeal to young voters, after receiving pop-star-of-the-moment Charli XCX's seeming endorsement, the Harris campaign adopted the lime green branding of "brat summer" and plugged into meme culture.<sup>21</sup> In a mutual meme-fest, young people took a quote from a speech Harris gave referencing falling out of a coconut tree and turned it into a viral sensation, which developed a life of its own.<sup>22</sup> However, as the election progressed it became clear that social media enthusiasm didn't necessarily translate into votes at the ballot box, highlighting the gulf between online support and voter turnout

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17 *The New York Times*. "[Trump Guilty on All Counts in Hush-Money Case.](#)" 30 May 2024.

18 Goldmacher, Shane. "[In a Staring Contest with Democratic Voters, Joe Biden Hasn't Blink.](#)" *The New York Times*, 01 Jul 2024.; Cabral, Sam and Brandon Drenon. "[Who Are the Democrats Calling Time on Joe Biden?](#)" *BBC News*, 19 Jul 2024.

19 Clooney, George. "[George Clooney: I Love Joe Biden. But We Need a New Nominee.](#)" *The New York Times*, 10 Jul 2024.

20 Baker, Peter. "[Biden Drops Out of Race, Scrambling the Campaign for the White House.](#)" *The New York Times*, 21 Jul 2024.

21 Demopoulos, Alaina. "['Kamala IS Brat': Harris Campaign Goes Lime-Green to Embrace the Meme of the Summer.](#)" *The Guardian*, 23 Jul 2024.

22 Murray, Conor. "[Kamala Harris' 'Coconut Tree' Quote, Explained: What She Meant and Why It's Going Viral As She Launches Campaign.](#)" *Forbes*, 22 Jul 2024.

As is usually the case for presidential elections, candidate fundraising and independent expenditures played a critical role in the outcome. In a feat that demonstrated a reinvigorated Democratic party, Harris greatly outpaced Trump in fundraising—she raised \$81 million in the first 24 hours of announcing her bid for presidency and hit \$1 billion by early October, a record-setting speed that surpassed Trump’s entire 2024 fundraising in less than three months.<sup>23</sup> Harris’s donors skewed younger than Biden’s previous donors.<sup>24</sup> Both Harris and Trump benefited from big money donations to PACs that spent on their behalf, the extent of which was made possible by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United* case, in which the Court decided that limits on independent spending from corporations and other outside groups was a violation of the First Amendment.<sup>25</sup>

In an election in which the world’s richest man, Elon Musk, spent more than \$250 million to help elect Trump, many characterized it as “the billionaire’s election.”<sup>26</sup> Just one week after his election victory, Trump announced the creation of an unprecedented federal initiative to improve government efficiency, to be co-led by Musk. During the 2025 presidential inauguration, Musk took center stage during Trump’s swearing in, joined by the second and third wealthiest men in the world: fellow tech billionaires Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos.<sup>27</sup> This is in contrast to Trump’s working-class voter base and the populist rhetoric on which he campaigned.

## Results in New York City

New York voters got off to a strong start in November, setting a record for the highest first-day in-person early voting turnout.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, overall turnout among registered voters

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- 23 Goldmacher, Shane. “[Harris Raised \\$81 Million in First 24 Hours as Candidate.](#)” *The New York Times*, 22 Jul 2024.; Goldmacher, Shane and Maggie Haberman. “[Kamala Harris Has Raised \\$1 Billion Since Entering 2024 Presidential Race.](#)” *The New York Times*, 09 Oct 2024.
  - 24 Sun, Albert, Andrew Park, Saurabh Datar, and Christine Zhang. “[Who Are Kamala Harris’ 1.5 Million New Donors?](#)” *The New York Times*, 22 Aug 2024.
  - 25 Khan-Millins, Kyle and John Hyatt. “[The Billions Behind the 2024 Presidential Election.](#)” *Forbes*, 07 Nov 2024.
  - 26 Schleifer, Theodore and Maggie Haberman. “[Elon Musk Backed Trump With Over \\$250 Million, Fueling the Unusual ‘RBG PAC.’](#)” *The New York Times*, 05 Dec 2024.; and Larson, Rob. “[The Billionaires’ Election.](#)” *In These Times*, 19 Dec 2024.
  - 27 Shear, Michael D. and Eric Lipton. “[Trump Taps Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy to Slash Government.](#)” *The New York Times*, 12 Nov 2024.; and Sorkin, Andrew Ross, Ravi Mattu, Bernhard Warner, Sarah Kessler, Michael J. de la Merced, Lauren Hirsch, and Edmund Lee. “[The Billionaires’ Row at the Inauguration.](#)” *The New York Times*, 21 Jan 2025.
  - 28 Bergin, Brigid. “[New York City Voters Set New Record for First Day Early Voting Turnout.](#)” *Gothamist*, 27 Oct 2024.

clocked in at 58.4%, lower than that of 2020 and the second lowest of the 50 biggest cities in the country.<sup>29</sup> While many were prepared for a long wait for final results similar to that of 2020, former President Trump was declared the winner of the electoral college in the early hours of the following morning. At the federal level, Republicans won majorities in the Senate and the House of Representatives, securing the governing trifecta—a majority in all three branches of government.

Although Harris won 68% of the vote share in New York City, both the city and state saw a “red wave,” or a rightward shift to the Republican candidate that aligned with the national landscape. This trend was evident in many of CFB’s priority neighborhoods, areas that historically have lower voter turnout than the rest of the city.<sup>30</sup> While Trump gained nearly 95,000 votes across New York City compared to the 2020 results, Harris received nearly 575,000 fewer votes than Biden did in 2020—likely a combination of Democrats staying home and fewer registered Democrats in New York City, partially as a result of pandemic outmigration.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike the presidential race, which is largely decided in “purple” states, control of the U.S. House of Representatives was decided in several “blue” states, including New York and California. Even though Republicans took control of the House, Democrats flipped three New York House seats in the 2024 general election.<sup>32</sup> While most New York State lawmakers who faced challengers held onto their seats, Republican Steve Chan ousted Democratic incumbent Iwen Chu for State Senate in South Brooklyn.<sup>33</sup>

## Ballot proposals

In addition to candidates, New York City voters had six proposals on the ballot—one statewide and five NYC-specific. The first ballot proposal asked New York voters whether

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- 29 Bergin, Brigid. [“We’re Number 49! NYC Ranks Second-to-Last in Voter Turnout for Big Cities.”](#) *Gothamist*, 05 Dec 2024.
- 30 Rubenstein, Dana and Stefanos Chen. [“New York City is Still a Democratic Town. But Trump Made Inroads.”](#) *The New York Times*, 06 Nov 2024.; Honan, Katie, Gwynne Hogan, Haidee Chu, Jonathan Custodio, Samantha Maldonado, and Rachel Kahn. [“Trump Sweeps to National Victory and Makes Inroads in NYC.”](#) *The City*, 05 Nov 2024.; and Bloch, Matthew, Keith Collins, Robert Gebeloff, Marco Hernandez, Malika Khurana, and Zach Levitt. [“Election Results Show a Red Shift Across the U.S. in 2024.”](#) *The New York Times*, 17 Dec 2024.
- 31 Collins, Keith, Zach Levitt, Malika Khurana, and Nicholas Fandos. [“Trump Gained 95,000 Votes in New York City. Democrats Lost Half a Million.”](#) *The New York Times*, 22 Nov 2024.
- 32 *The New York Times*. [“U.S. House Election Results.”](#) 05 Nov 2024.
- 33 Hogan, Gwynne. [“Red Wave Lifts Republican Challenger to State Senate in Southern Brooklyn.”](#) *The City*, 06 Nov 2024.

additional protections should be added to the state Constitution’s Bill of Rights to prohibit discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, origin, age, disability, and sex—including sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, and pregnancy outcomes.<sup>34</sup> Although this proposal ultimately appeared on the ballot, it was not without legal uncertainty. In May 2024, a judge ruled the proposal must be removed from the ballot due to a procedural error, after which another judge reinstated it in June.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, following 2023 legislation requiring all ballot proposals to be written in plain language, voters sued the State Board of Elections because the draft language did not explicitly reference abortion or LGBTQ+ rights. Though the State BOE made slight tweaks, these terms remained absent from the final language.<sup>36</sup>

Ballot Proposal 1 passed statewide, with higher overall approval rates in New York City (78.1%) compared to the rest of the state (55.1%). See the “[On the Ballot](#)” section of this report for more detailed analysis. In 2024, New York State was one of ten states in which voters cast ballots to decide whether to enshrine abortion rights into their state constitutions.<sup>37</sup> These measures passed in six other states plus New York, proving that issues of abortion rights continue to resonate with voters across the country, regardless of party affiliation.

The remaining five ballot proposals appeared only on ballots for New York City voters, and their path to the ballot was not without political gamesmanship. In early June, the City Council passed a bill, with a veto-proof majority, that would have required the Council’s approval of multiple mayoral appointments, requiring advice and consent for 20 additional commissioner-level positions.<sup>38</sup> The move represented the latest in an ongoing power struggle between the City Council and New York City Mayor Eric Adams. The next step would have been for this legislation to appear on the ballot for voters to approve. However,

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34 NYC Votes. “[Ballot Proposal 1](#).”; In order to amend the State Constitution, the State Legislature needed to pass the amendment in two consecutive sessions before the amendment could be placed on the ballot for voters to decide. The amendment passed in both chambers of the Legislature in 2022 and again in 2023, which led to a 2024 ballot proposal. The amendment was pushed through the State Legislature on the heels of the US Supreme Court’s 2022 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which stripped Americans of the constitutional right to have an abortion.

35 Bragg, Chris, Rachel Holliday Smith, and New York Focus. “[N.Y. Equal Rights Amendment Thrown Off November Ballot by Upstate Judge](#).” *The City*, 07 May 2024.; and AP News. “[New York’s ‘Equal Rights’ Constitutional Amendment Restored to Ballot by Appeals Court](#).” 18 Jun 2024.

36 Lewis, Rebecca C. “[Hundreds Ask State Board of Elections to Clarify that ERA Ballot Proposal Would Protect Abortion](#).” *City & State*, 24 July 2024.; and Hill, Michael and Anthony Izaguirre. “[Judge Declines to Order New York to Include ‘Abortion’ in Description of Ballot Measure](#).” *AP News*, 23 Aug 2024.

37 *The New York Times*. “[Abortion on the Ballot](#).” 24 Jan 2025.

38 McDonough, Annie. “[Some of the Most Contentious Fights Between Eric Adams and Adrienne Adams](#).” *City & State*, 01 Aug 2024.; and Donaldson, Sahalie. “[NYC Council Votes to Expand Authority over Mayoral Appointments](#).” 06 Jun 2024.

Mayor Adams called a Charter Revision Commission to review the City Charter and put forth its own proposals, legally preempting the Council’s advice and consent legislation from moving forward, leading to allegations that the commission was an effort to block the Council’s legislation.<sup>39</sup> Mayor Adams appointed all 13 members of the Charter Revision Commission, which held a series of hearings to solicit input from the public over the course of 8 weeks, after which it produced a final report at the end of July.<sup>40</sup> The report recommended five ballot proposals for voters to approve or reject. The five ballot proposals covered wide-ranging topics including clean streets, fiscal responsibility, public safety, capital planning, and Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) and the modernization of city operations.<sup>41</sup>

## Mayoral indictment

Meanwhile, as fall began, more local politicians made headlines. On September 26, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York indicted Mayor Adams on five federal charges including bribery, wire fraud, and soliciting illegal foreign campaign donations.<sup>42</sup> The 57-page indictment alleged that Adams accepted bribes from Turkey, used his position to pressure city officials to approve the inspection of a Turkish consulate building without proper procedures, and conspired with Turkish officials to funnel illegal contributions into his 2021 mayoral campaign.<sup>43</sup> In the indictment, Mayor Adams was accused of soliciting and funneling illegal campaign funds through straw donors, individuals that make contributions to a campaign and then are reimbursed, or that make a campaign contributions in someone else’s name, both of which are illegal.

On December 16, 2024, when the CFB voted to approve the first public matching funds payments for the 2025 citywide elections, the Board shared a statement saying it “determined there is reason to believe the Adams campaign has engaged in conduct

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39 Rubenstein, Dana. “[Adams vs. Adams: A Power Struggle In New York City Turns Ugly.](#)” *The New York Times*, 21 May 2024. The City of New York. “[Mayor Adams Announces New Charter Revision Commission.](#)” 21 May 2024.; As outlined in [Municipal Home Rule Law § 36\(5\)\(e\)](#), questions derived from the Mayor’s Charter Revision Commission would supersede the Council’s ballot question because no other questions can be on the ballot with those proposed by a Charter Revision Commission if they relate to the functions, powers, or duties of City elected officials and/or the City Charter.

40 The City of New York. “[2024 New York City Charter Revision Commission Releases Final Report.](#)” 21 Jul 2024.

41 NYC Votes. “[2024 Ballot Proposals.](#)”

42 United States Attorney’s Office, Southern District of New York. “[New York City Mayor Eric Adams Charged with Bribery and Campaign Finance Offenses.](#)” 26 Sep 2024.

43 Rothfeld, Michael, Nicole Hong, and Bianca Pallaro. “[Here Are the Charges Eric Adams Faces, Annotated.](#)” *The New York Times*, 26 Sep 2024.

detrimental to the matching funds program, in violation of law, including the Campaign Finance Act and Board Rules. His campaign also failed to provide documents and information requested by the Board. Accordingly, Mayor Adams' campaign for reelection has failed to demonstrate eligibility for public funds payment at this time."<sup>44</sup>

In light of the indictments, ongoing resignations, and investigations of members of Adams' cabinet members and inner circle, many viewed the five Charter Revision Commission ballot proposals as a litmus test for Adams' support.<sup>45</sup> A coalition of dozens of organizations created 'No Power Grab NYC,' a campaign calling on New Yorkers to vote "no" on the five citywide proposals.<sup>46</sup>

Despite this, New York City voters approved four of the five citywide ballot proposals. The proposal that did not pass, Ballot Proposal 6, would have created a Chief Business Diversity Officer, authorized the mayor to designate which agency issues film permits, and merged two boards that manage city records into one.<sup>47</sup> The "[On the Ballot](#)" section of this report includes detailed analyses of how New Yorkers voted on all six ballot proposals.

## Looking back, looking forward

Much like in recent years, 2024 brought a whirlwind of news cycles and unprecedented developments and tested the attention spans of voters. Candidates on the ballot changed, elections were called with minimal advance notice, new voting methods were available, and New Yorkers were asked to show up for three (and in some cases, four) elections. Many New Yorkers chose to sit out of this year's elections entirely, with consistently low voter turnout across all elections.

The sections that follow provide research and data analysis on voter behavior across the city and propose a series of recommendations to combat voter fatigue, increase voter engagement, and ensure all voters have an opportunity to make their voices heard. The "[Policy and Legislative Recommendations](#)" section includes a recommendation for New York State to join a multi-state voter list maintenance organization, a recommendation to center the needs of voters when scheduling elections, and an explainer on how New York State

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44 New York City Campaign Finance Board. "[NYC Campaign Finance Board Approves Matching Funds Payments to 2025 Candidates.](#)" 16 Dec 2024.

45 McDonough, Annie and Holly Pretsky. "[Who Has Left the Adams Administration?](#)" *City & State*, 19 Dec 2024.; and Mays, Jeffery C. "[NYC Voters Approve Four Ballot Measures Proposed by Mayor Adams.](#)" *The New York Times*, 06 Nov 2024.

46 [No Power Grab NYC.](#) [www.nopowergrabnyc.org/](http://www.nopowergrabnyc.org/).

47 NYC Votes. "[Ballot Proposal 6.](#)"

decides when to schedule presidential primary elections and the impact of timing on voter engagement and participation.

There is always more work to be done to ensure all New Yorkers can fully participate in the democratic process. 2024 represented a major year in the national election space and ushered in a shift in the political landscape under a new presidential administration. 2025 will be even bigger for New York City and for the CFB. In 2025, NYC will hold municipal elections for offices including Mayor, Comptroller, Public Advocate, Borough President, and City Council. Voters will use ranked choice voting for the third time in the municipal primary election in June. The CFB's Matching Funds Program will provide eligible candidates with millions of public dollars to incentivize campaigns to engage with average New Yorkers instead of seeking large contributions from special interests. Through all of this, New Yorkers will have the opportunity to once again show up to the polls and exercise their democratic right to vote.

# **NYC Votes in 2024**

# NYC Votes in 2024

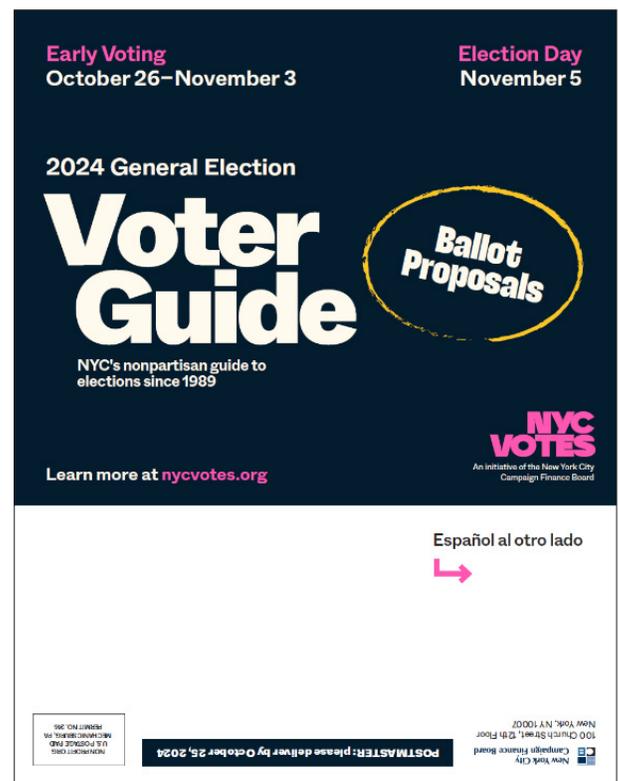
2024 was a busy year for NYC Votes, the CFB’s City Charter-mandated nonpartisan voter engagement initiative. Amidst an unpredictable presidential election and an always-evolving media landscape, the NYC Votes team engaged and informed New Yorkers about how to participate in the democratic process. The work to encourage all New Yorkers to take an active role in elections begins with data-driven research that helps identify barriers to participation in diverse communities citywide. Through targeted marketing and communication strategies, effective messaging, and thoughtful collaboration with community partners, the NYC Votes team worked to increase voter engagement, using language access, accessibility, and clarity as our guiding principles.

## By the numbers

Voter engagement is no small feat in a city of more than 8 million people, nearly 4.7 million of whom are active registered voters. There were special elections in two districts in February, a presidential primary in April, a state and congressional primary in June, and a general election in November. In total, there were 40 days of early and Election Day voting. The CFB mailed 4.5 million print Voter Guides to registered voters citywide to help them navigate the elections over the course of the year.

## Who we engage

NYC Votes identifies priority communities by analyzing voter behavior data, including low voter turnout. Low turnout voters may lack access to resources and education, which hinders their participation in the political process. These priority communities include voters under the age of 30, immigrant voters, voters with limited English proficiency, voters with disabilities, and voters impacted by the criminal legal system.



Cover of the 2024 General Election Voter Guide, which was mailed to all registered voters across New York City

## Online and print voting materials

Our Product Management and Operations team was the backbone of the operation that churned out materials distributed to educate voters and candidates, including the Voter Guide and candidate materials. Our Language Access team facilitated the translation of many of these voting materials into 13 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (simplified and traditional), French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Korean, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu.

NYC Votes shared educational materials directly with community organizations, at events and through outreach on the ground in neighborhoods across the city. These voting materials included door hangers to share information with New Yorkers at their homes during canvassing, large-print flyers for high visibility information-sharing at events and for partners, palm cards to share a snapshot of essential election information, Voter Guides, and booklets with voting information.

In the April presidential primary, we printed and distributed 47,000 large print flyers and 91,000 palm cards at 422 sites. In the June state and congressional primary, we printed and distributed 51,000 large print flyers and 119,000 palm cards. In the November general election, we distributed 10,000 door hangers throughout the city, printed and distributed 65,000 large print flyers to 586 sites, and handed out 120,000 palm cards. We distributed 40,000 “Voting in NYC” booklets, a comprehensive voting resource. Finally, we printed 20,000 pledge cards that were used to engage voters across the boroughs by asking them to “pledge” to check their voting status, vote in upcoming elections, and encourage others to vote as well. These assets connected with digital pledge efforts and formed a multi-platform approach to getting voters involved in elections.

**Your vote,  
NYC's future**

**2024 General Election**

**Saturday, October 26**

- First day of Early Voting
- Voter registration deadline
- Last day to request mail ballot, online or by mail

**Sunday, November 3**

- Last day of Early Voting

**Monday, November 4**

- Last day to request mail ballot, in person

**Tuesday, November 5**

- **Election Day**
- Last day to submit mail ballot

**On the Ballot**

- President and Vice President
- U.S. Senate and House of Representatives
- New York State Senate and Assembly
- Judicial Races
- Ballot Proposals

[nycvotes.org](https://nycvotes.org) | [@nycvotes](https://twitter.com/nycvotes)

**NYC  
VOTES**

2024 General Election large print flyer, which the NYC Votes team distributed across the city

Our Voter Guide remained a useful voting resource for voters both online and in print. We published online Voter Guides for the February special elections, the April presidential primary, the June state and congressional, and the November general election. For the November general election, we also sent 4.5 million guides to the mailboxes of registered voters and distributed an additional 100,000 guides to 701 sites across the city; these sites included libraries, community-based organizations, community boards, and elected offices.

In 2025, the team is focused on strengthening our ability to meet the evolving needs of the agency and New York voters at large.

## Crafting the message

The Public Relations team played a crucial role in disseminating vital information and resources for the press to share with the public. The team adopted a proactive communications strategy to navigate the complexities of the election year.



New York City Campaign Finance Board Executive Director Paul S. Ryan on NY1's "Inside City Hall"

We garnered press coverage for NYC Votes' voter engagement initiatives, garnering mentions in 752 articles, for which links were shared and engaged with approximately 9,000 times on social media platforms, and by journalists an average of five times per article.

For the general election, the team collaborated on media opportunities on networks including CBS, Fox, NY1, Univision, and Hot 97. The CFB's Executive Director, Paul S. Ryan, joined the agency in February and hit the ground running with several media interviews in which he discussed the CFB's [Matching Funds Program](#), with appearances on City & State, Capitol

Pressroom, and WNYC-FM. Members of the CFB's 2024 NYC Votes Youth Ambassador Program were featured on Harlem World, Epicenter NYC, the [New York Daily News](#), WNYC's [Suds and Civics](#) series, and [Columbia Neighbors](#).



New York City Campaign Finance Board Executive Director Paul S. Ryan's opinion piece in the *New York Daily News*



2024 voter pledge card, distributed by the NYC Votes Partnerships and Outreach team at various Get Out the Vote events

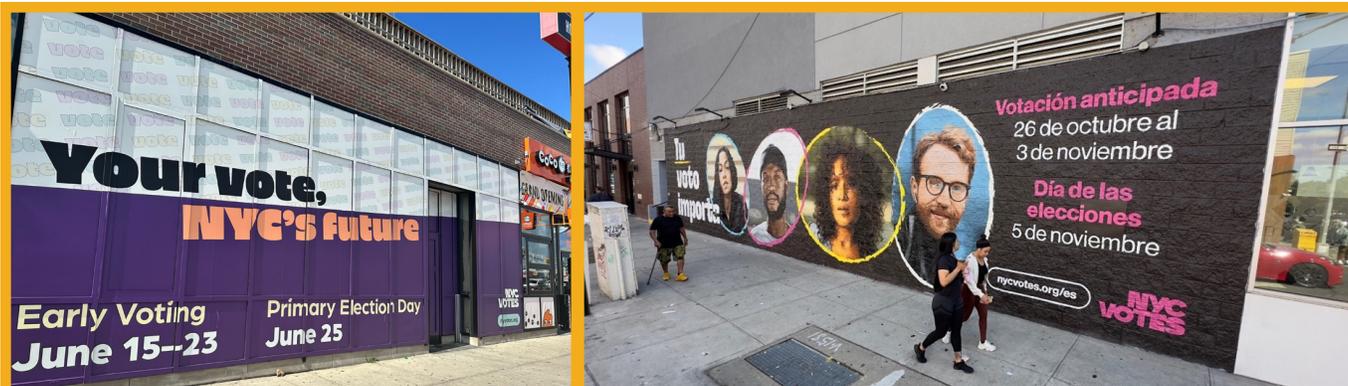
faith-based spaces, and community centers. The Marketing team leaned heavily on research on Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns, running our own successful campaign throughout the year that included a digital page and a physical card that voters filled out and then received in the mail in the weeks leading up the general election.

The Public Relations team facilitated the media rollout of the [2023 Voter Analysis Report](#) with an appearance by our Executive Director on NY1 and [an opinion piece in the New York Daily News](#) uplifting our recommendation that NYC align local elections with state and federal elections to increase voter turnout and engagement. We also conducted briefings to train reporters on how to use the CFB's online tools and resources in reporting on campaigns and elections and provided comprehensive information about voting and ballot proposals.

In the year ahead, the team will prioritize engaging with non-English language press and hyperlocal press, sharing education on CFB systems and processes as well as thought leadership on issues of campaign finance, voting, and democracy.

## Marketing NYC Votes

In 2024, the Marketing and Digital Communications team's paid advertising efforts centered on election awareness while building our community of engaged voters and growing our follower base. NYC Votes aimed to add about 100,000 new voters from our priority neighborhoods and target audiences. We began this work through the lens of meeting voters where they were — at summer concerts, sporting events, local



(Left to right) Primary election and general election murals in priority neighborhoods of Coney Island and West Bronx

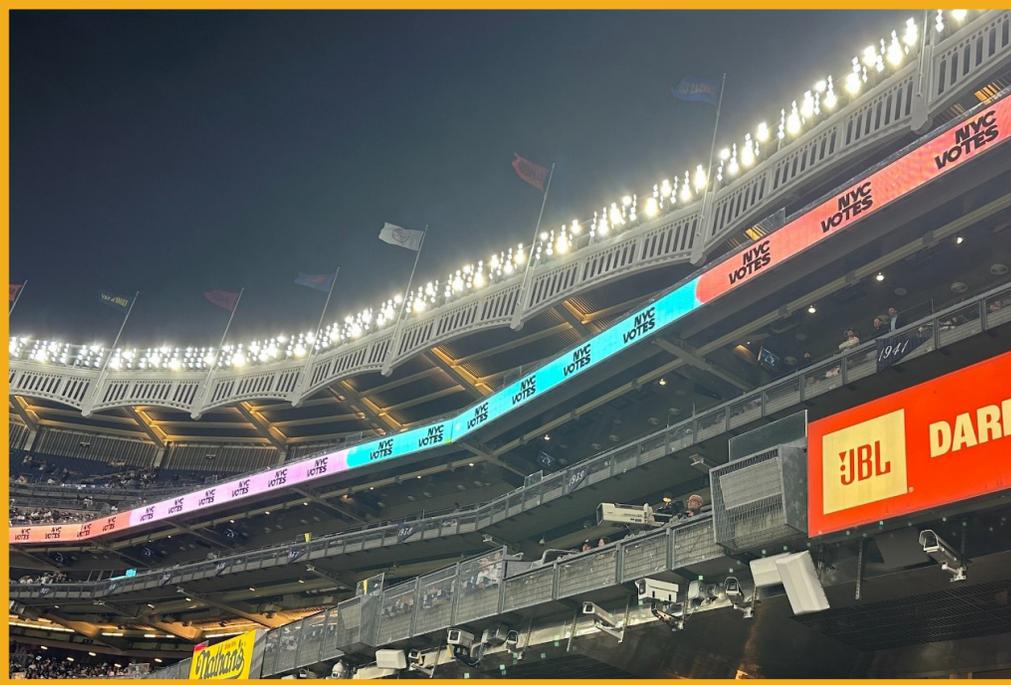
To expand awareness, we created 216 different creative advertisements placed throughout the city, including Citi Field, subway cars, train station kiosks, bus shelters, neighborhood murals, and billboards. To meet our mandate of reaching New Yorkers in 13 different languages, we created 88 in-language ads for a total of 693 placements throughout the year. Our ad campaigns reached approximately two million New Yorkers, had 20 million impressions, and received 30,000 clicks to the NYC Votes website, where voters could learn more about elections, candidates, and ballot proposals. In-language ads garnered 11.4 million impressions, 9 million of which were in Spanish.



General election information displayed in Traditional Chinese on LED truck

For the first time, our marketing efforts supported more than 15 marketing activation events with the Partnerships and Outreach team, including high visibility events such as the Dominican Day Parade, the West Indian Day Parade, the Bronx Native Block Party, Summer Stage, and Carnaval de La Cultura Latina. These events brought the marketing strategy full circle, spreading awareness of the NYC Votes mission while meeting New Yorkers where they were.

Sporting events, including partnerships with the Mets and the Yankees, were a new paid marketing strategy that proved successful in creating excitement around elections and incentivizing voters to show up to the polls.



The NYC Votes wordmark projected across LED screens during a summer baseball game at Yankee Stadium.

The team also developed and cast commercials in both English and Spanish, featuring actors representing a host of identities coming together to deliver authentically New York content.

By leaning into playful tactics (such as taglines like “let’s go NYC!”, humorous illustrations, prize wheels, voting props, and photo booths) and incentives (such as NYC Votes merch and ticket giveaways), we kept voters interested in the election season and aware of the impact their vote has on the fate of all New Yorkers.

In 2025, we will engage with ethnic media by using small, local outlets for harder-to-reach languages including Bengali, Haitian Creole, Russian, and Urdu. Additionally, we will continue to find ways to engage more New Yorkers in our local elections by educating new voters with an extensive educational campaign for ranked choice voting (RCV), targeting our priority communities across a variety of platforms and formats.

## Leveraging digital platforms



NYC Votes email sharing important voting information on Election Day

The Digital and Editorial Content team worked to engage audiences on a variety of digital platforms—including email, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and LinkedIn. The team transformed complex topics into digestible, engaging content tailored to each channel. Whether collaborating with social media influencers or engaging directly with communities at events across the city, the team worked to increase accessibility, interest, and meaningful connections with diverse audiences.

In 2024, our Instagram posts gave us a profile reach of over 8 million users. Profile reach refers to the number of people who were exposed to our posts, beyond follower count. This led to 13 million impressions, the number of times users saw a post, story, or ad from us. Across all other social channels, we had a combined 1.8 million impressions and more than 21,000 shares. We increased our follower count by 4%.

The team spearheaded a successful influencer campaign that built connections with priority and existing audiences while welcoming new ones. Working with influencers helped us tap into different personalities, each with a different audience, style, message, and following.

Our multimedia efforts produced engaging videos that reached wide audiences and sparked conversations, even catching the attention of figures including Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and comedian and actor Ilana Glazer. NYC Votes social media content expanded the algorithm to reach followers outside our traditional audience while staying local and true to the New Yorkers we serve.

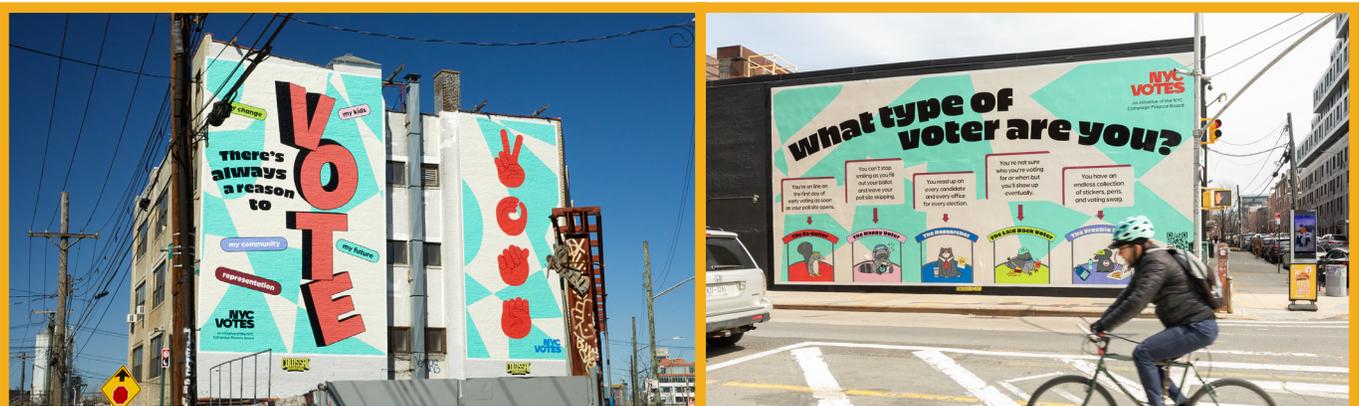
We finished the year with nearly 75,000 subscribers of our election alert emails, and more than 18,000 digital pledge-takers from March to November. In 2024, the NYC Votes website had approximately 830,000 new visitors and one million sessions, or the period when a user is actively interacting with the site. We launched a “[News and Press](#)” section on the NYC Votes website to connect with voters in a new way, keeping them current on agency happenings, while also increasing our search engine optimization (SEO) standing as a trusted voting resource.

In 2025, we will look to expand partnerships with influencers and reach voters through mobile text alerts. We also plan to expand our website content for voters; while we will continue to share candidate information in our online Voter Guide, we will also share interactive ranked choice voting content, information on the CFB’s Debate Program, and information on the CFB’s Matching Funds Program and its impacts.

## Creating visual impact

The Design team led the creative strategy and production of our designed voter materials. We developed digital assets with low-vision audiences in mind, selecting typefaces and color palettes to ensure optimal legibility and accessibility.

With the help of our design partner, the team created multi-channel creative ad campaigns. Working with Colossal Media, the CFB team produced large-scale, hand-painted, in-language murals in our priority communities, creating high-visibility touchpoints across the city. The team designed six murals promoting the April and June primaries, two of which were large “hero” (ground level) murals. One mural debuted our popular animal voting personas. Due to their popularity, the team created other animal persona materials throughout the year, including pop sockets, tote bags, pins, stickers, and voter persona palm cards.



(Clockwise from top) Hand-painted murals in neighborhoods of Chelsea, Williamsburg, and Bushwick promoting awareness of the 2024 primary elections.

*Photos courtesy of Colossal Media*

The Design team worked with the Product Management and Operations team to create and produce branded promotional items that were distributed at Partnerships and Outreach team events. These items helped boost engagement on social media channels and ultimately increased NYC Votes brand awareness and visibility.

In 2025, the Design team will continue to strengthen the brand’s visual impact. Through social listening and observing trends in pop culture and the news, we aim to create content that resonates and connects with New Yorkers authentically. The team plans to do this by focusing on hyperlocal themes, expanding photography that shows New Yorkers of all backgrounds, and delving further into experiential design and 360-degree marketing. Voters seeing advertisements on public transit, integrated into public spaces, and in-person during events, allows us to more effectively educate and engage with the public while creating visibility and building trust with our audience.

### Ensuring language equity

The Language Access team continued to expand language services and developed the agency’s first [Language Access Implementation Plan](#) (LAIP), in accordance with Local Law 30 of 2017. The three-year LAIP is a significant milestone in demonstrating the CFB’s commitment to language access and equity and sets a roadmap to implementing its obligations across the agency. Commitments in the LAIP include increasing translation offerings, partnering with vendors to expand contracted services, and increasing internal language access capacity through staff trainings and more multilingual staffing.



NYC Votes branded pledge cards and palm cards



NYC Votes branded tote bags  
*Photo courtesy of NYC Votes community partner*

The team led the multilingual transcreation (in-language creation as opposed to strictly translating) of digital and out-of-home assets. At the start of each campaign, the team provided feedback and cultural sensitivity consultation on English text and visuals. All text in English was transcreated into nine languages; images and copy direction were carefully selected to ensure they were reflective of our target communities.

In addition, the team provided the creative direction for the agency's first Spanish language commercial and provided on-set support, directing the talent and providing voiceovers. The team also participated in media opportunities, including as Spanish-language interviews with La Mega (radio) and Univision (television) for National Voter Registration Day.

The team rolled out in-person simultaneous interpretation for outreach events in 2024. This included the use of professional interpretation equipment. We worked with interpreters to ensure services were properly rendered. These events served as a case study of how to expand engagement within non-English speaking communities.

The CFB's Language Access team, which was established in 2022 and initially tasked with leading the language expansion from the four City BOE languages to 13 city-designated languages, now manages nearly all aspects of language support for the agency. The team has participated in cross-unit collaborations, such as



CFB staff members at Homecrest Community Services event offering simultaneous interpretation to engage with non-English speaking communities



Santiago Torres, Associate Director of Language Access (center), at La Mega 97.9's El Vacilón de la Mañana morning show

being integrated into working groups, committees, and staff selection committees to ensure language access is integrated into the internal initiatives of the agency.

In 2025, the Language Access team will lead the implementation of the LAIP across the agency. While the LAIP covers three years, in the first year we will roll out telephonic interpretation services for our public-facing staff, finalize an emergency preparedness plan for urgent multilingual communications, develop and establish a formal cadence for language access trainings across the agency, develop a feedback loop with community partners, and build our monitoring and reporting infrastructure to demonstrate the program’s progress over time.

Alongside the LAIP, the team continues to work towards improving the quality of the agency’s linguistic assets. Implementing our glossaries and style guides and sharing relevant resources with partners ensures our messaging is consistent across materials, platforms, and audiences.

## Building trusted relationships

The Partnerships team focused on building relationships with community organizations to disseminate NYC Votes resources and provide tailored voting education. Through these relationships, we shared NYC Votes print materials and tailored voter education in places with historically low voter turnout and for underrepresented audiences, including immigrants, those who primarily speak languages other than English, young people and voters under 30, the disability community (deaf and visually impaired), and voters who have been impacted by the criminal legal system (those in jail, juvenile detention centers, or homeless shelters). In 2024, the team continued cultivating relationships with organizations that directly serve each of these communities, providing opportunities to partner with us in hosting educational sessions across the city.



NYC Votes partners with Sapna NYC at an in-language Voting and Taking Action event, providing voting education and resources to the Bangla community

The team participated in more than 300 partner meetings, hosted more than 150 educational workshops, and distributed Voter Guides to more than 400 sites across the city through our partner organizations. In our post-election event survey, 94% of attendees reported that they would return and would recommend NYC Votes events to a friend.

Highlights of these partnerships include the creation of Braille materials for the disability community; in-language events in Bangla, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu, in close partnership with the Language Access team; our first event to discuss election results and the effects on communities most impacted by the outcomes; new partnerships and voting information for survivors of domestic violence; and a civic curriculum implemented to people held in Department of Correction custody at Rikers Correctional Facility.

The team’s tailored approach to community engagement fostered a sense of belonging in the voting process. The team’s work in immigrant communities pushed us to try to ensure our learning opportunities were inclusive regardless of citizenship status and eligibility to vote.

In 2025, the team continues to work on growing our partner portfolio by increasing priority audience partner relationships by 25%, specifically systems-impacted (such as criminal, legal, or housing systems), disability, and immigrant communities. We hope to expand our paid partnerships by engaging our existing NYC Votes partners in year-round contracts. Finally, we hope to establish a formalized feedback loop for partners to provide input on how we can better serve their needs and the needs of their community members.

## Engaging communities

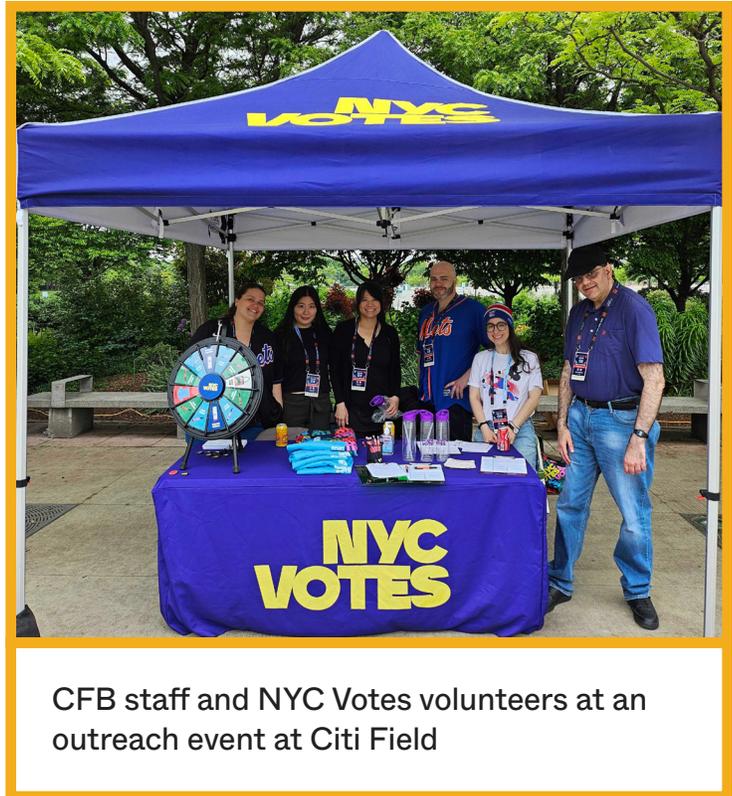
The Outreach team led our on-the-ground work of making election information accessible and relevant to all New Yorkers. The team hosted more than 500 events, including phone banks, text banks, canvassing, and voter registration drives — and over 70% of those outreach activities occurred in priority neighborhoods.

The team also led an outside brand ambassador group that focused on our priority neighborhoods and added language capacity to our team in Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hindu,



Assistant Executive Director for Public Affairs Eric Friedman engaging with the public at the West Indian Day Parade

Russian, Spanish, and Urdu. We distributed more than 15,000 pieces of literature, collected more than 14,000 pledge cards, and registered more than 6,000 new voters. We reached more than 10,000 registered voters by phone call and more than 1.9 million voters by text message. We activated more than 50 partners in outreach events, including highly successful partnerships with Dominicanos USA, the West Indian Day Carnival Association, the Atlantic Avenue Development Corporation, HeadCount, the YMCA, the Sunset Park Business Improvement District (BID), the Brighton Beach Neighborhood Association, Bronx Native, and the New York Mets.



We launched our distributed voter outreach program, which provided partners with training and resources to execute outreach on their own and return data to our team. This led to over 1,000 new voter contacts from partners including HeadCount, Democracy NYC and the YMCA—all of whom contacted voters on behalf of NYC Votes to further our reach in underrepresented communities.

The small but mighty team scheduled nearly 800 volunteer shifts, coordinating efforts that generated 8,000 new voter contacts. The team also introduced a new voter data tool to enhance targeting efforts. Despite capacity constraints and challenges with phone bank engagement, we connected with more new voters in new and expansive ways.

In 2025, the team plans to focus on more impactful events with community partners, re-connect with voters we've previously reached to gauge progress, and expand the brand ambassador program to provide additional language capacity. The team also hopes to develop volunteers into team leaders through our Organizers Training Program.

## Empowering the next generation

The Youth Programs team kept their fingers on the pulse of what mattered to young voters (and future voters) and how to reach them throughout the year. The team expanded outreach to high schools, implemented paid programming, and deepened relationships with partners. We conducted outreach to NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) Youth Detention sites and supported the pre-registration and registration of 114 young people and 8 staff members.

We also received more than 700 applications for the Youth Ambassador Program and accepted 17 young people, ages 14 to 19, into the 2024 cohort. Combined, the 17 Youth Ambassadors spoke eight languages. Ambassadors learned about the voting process, the history of democracy in New York City, how to get involved in local government and politics, and how to educate and engage young voters. Alongside our staff, Youth Ambassadors also had the chance to gain skills in professional development, communication and media relations, qualitative research, and content creation.

The team hosted 110 events, reaching more than 1,200 youth, educators, and service providers. Notable projects included the NYC Votes Youth Ambassador Program, Civics Week Training in partnership with New York City Public Schools, the Youth Voter Activation Summit, and monthly workshops with youth in foster care.

In 2025, the team aims to expand paid programming, including paid teacher training in partnership with Civics for All. This work aims to support teachers in implementing voter registration in their classrooms, creating incentivized workshops with ACS youth in foster care, and launching a paid CUNY organizer program in the fall. The team will continue uplifting partnerships with organizations including Urban Word and ACS to facilitate youth voter outreach, in the hopes of gaining an increased presence in communities reaching out to the next generation of New York voters.



(Left to right) 2024 Youth Ambassadors: Mariame Sow, Ronae Watson, Rio Thompson, Lillian Parrella, CFB Youth Programs Manager Olivia Brady, Jainaba Sowe, Shirley Contreras, and CFB Director of Public Relations Amy Lebowitz at the 42nd Annual Coney Island Mermaid Parade



# **Voter Registration**

# Voter Registration

This section includes analysis on voter registration rates in New York City. We first disaggregate registered voters by borough and highlight registration rates in the CFB's priority community districts. We then focus on newly registered voters, with analyses by priority community district and age. We look at voter participation among newly registered voters compared to their previously registered peers. This section concludes with analysis on pre-registration rates among 16- and 17-year-olds in New York.

## Breakdown of registered voters

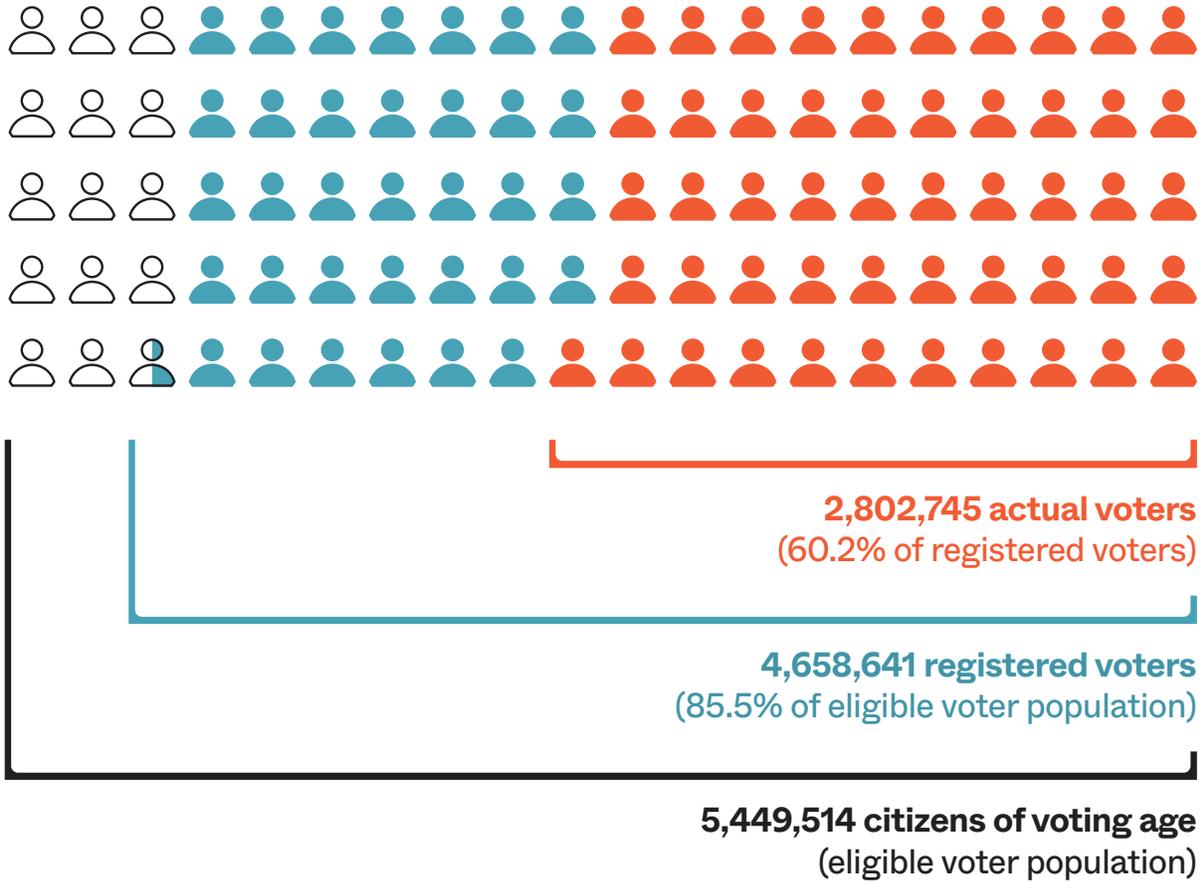
As of the 2024 general election in November, there were 4,658,641 active registered voters in New York City, representing a voter registration rate of 85.5% of the eligible voting population, all citizens of voting age.<sup>48</sup> This represents an increase of 129,739 registered voters, or 3.7%, from the previous year.<sup>49</sup> Figure 4.1 depicts the total universe of eligible voters, the portion of eligible voters who are registered, and the portion of registered voters who voted in the 2024 general election.

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48 The estimate for the eligible voting population in NYC comes from the [2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates](#).; As per New York State Election Law § [5-400](#), voters are deemed inactive if they moved outside the state, died, were convicted of a felony, or personally requested removal.

49 2023 Voter Analysis Report. "[On the Ballot](#)."

**Figure 4.1: Percent of registered and actual voters, general election**



## Location

New York City has high voter registration rates across all five boroughs. Voter registration rates in 2024 ranged from 82.4% in Manhattan to 88.7% in Staten Island.

**Figure 4.2: Voter registration by borough**

Borough	Registered voters	Registration rate (% of eligible voting population)
Manhattan	967,448	82.4%
Bronx	708,026	85.5%
Brooklyn	1,455,844	86.5%
Queens	1,218,525	86.0%
Staten Island	308,798	88.7%
Citywide	4,658,641	85.5%

### CFB priority communities

The CFB identified priority communities underrepresented in the electoral process based on analyses of voter education, turnout, and engagement. These communities include:

- Young voters under the age of 30
- Immigrant voters including New Americans
- Voters who primarily speak a language other than English
- Voters with disabilities
- Voters who have been impacted by the criminal legal system

In addition to priority communities, the CFB identified priority community districts, areas with large concentrations of these groups of voters, based on additional U.S. Census and voter turnout data. Priority neighborhoods within these community districts include the South Bronx, South Brooklyn, Northern Queens, and Central Queens. The CFB uses this designation to target voter outreach and education efforts. See Figure 4.3 for a map of the CFB’s priority community districts.

**Figure 4.3: CFB priority community districts**

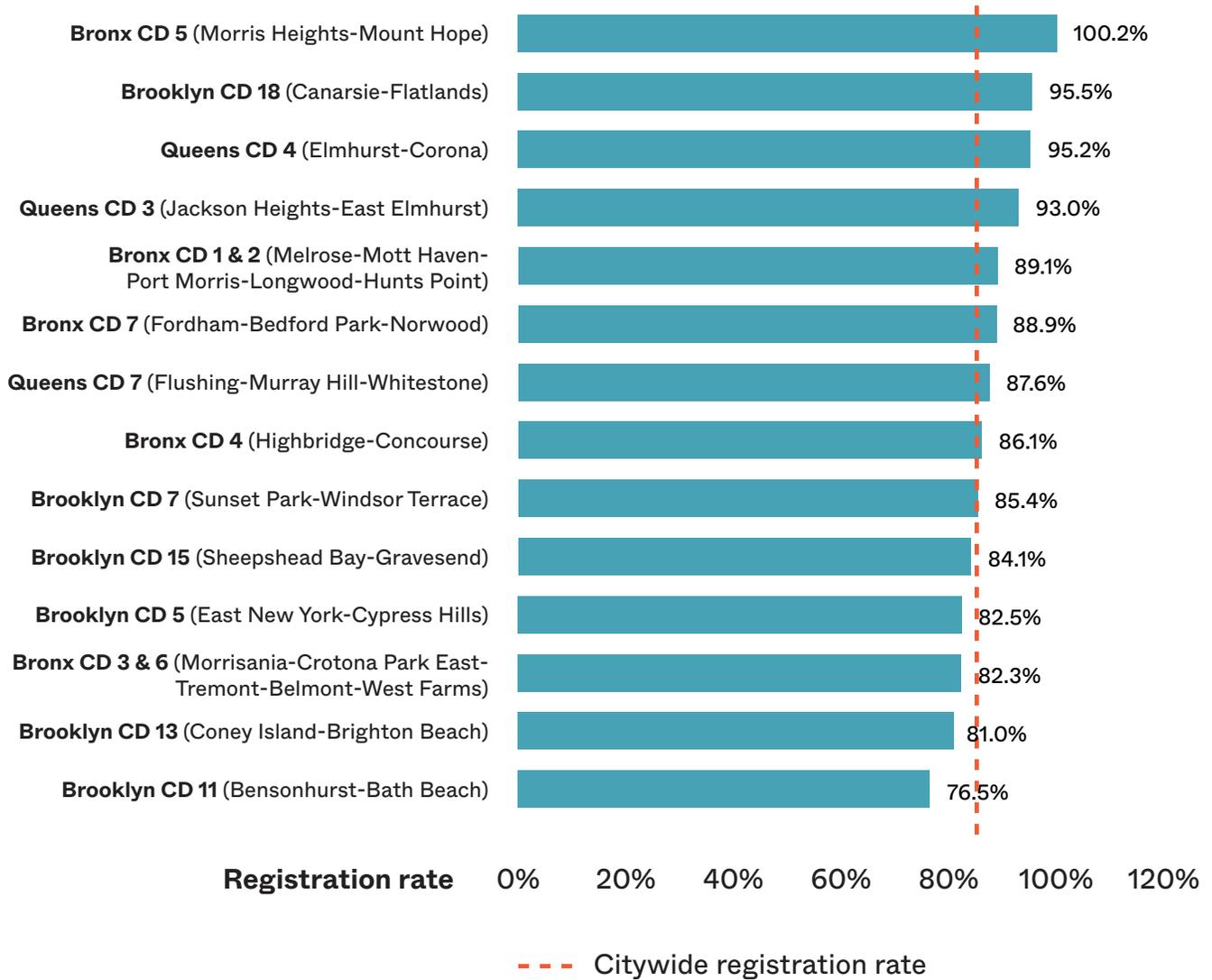


Voter registration rates differed across priority community districts in 2024. Brooklyn Community District 11 (Bensonhurst and Bath Beach) recorded the lowest voter registration rate of 76.5%. Bronx Community District 5 (Morris Heights and Mount Hope) had the highest registration rate of 100.2%.<sup>50</sup> More than half of the CFB’s priority community districts surpassed the citywide voter registration rate of 85.5%. As discussed in the next section, [“On the Ballot,”](#) high voter registration rates do not always lead to high voter turnout, especially in priority community districts.

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50 Registration rate calculates are generated using two different sources. The numerator of registered voters comes from the City BOE voter file. The denominator of eligible voters comes from U.S. Census Bureau population estimates. As a result, registration rates may exceed 100%.

**Figure 4.4: Voter registration in CFB priority community districts<sup>51</sup>**



51 Some priority community districts have been grouped together in the registration rate calculation because the Citizen of Voting Age Population (CVAP) estimate comes from Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs)—statistical geographic units that each cover at least 100,000 people. In the “[2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates](#),” PUMAs are used to approximate NYC Community Districts. However, since PUMAs do not always align perfectly with community district boundaries, some districts are combined in the dataset.

## Newly registered voters

A total of 295,465 voters registered for the first time in 2024. Of these new registrants, 38,574 (13.1%) registered in time to vote in the April primary election, 39,758 (13.5%) registered in time to vote in the June primary election, and 217,133 (73.5%) registered after the June primary election deadline but in time to vote in the general election.

## CFB priority communities

Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show the priority community districts with the three highest and lowest number of newly registered voters in 2024. The highest numbers of newly registered voters came from community districts in Queens and Brooklyn, whereas the lowest numbers of newly registered voters came from community districts in the Bronx. See [Appendix A](#) for the number of newly registered voters in all the CFB's priority community districts.

**Figure 4.5: CFB priority community districts with highest number of newly registered voters**

CFB priority community district	Number of newly registered voters
Queens CD 7 (Flushing-Murray Hill-Whitestone)	6,537
Brooklyn CD 18 (Canarsie-Flatlands)	5,230
Brooklyn CD 11 (Bensonhurst-Bath Beach)	5,056

**Figure 4.6 CFB priority community districts with lowest number of newly registered voters**

CFB priority community district	Number of newly registered voters
Bronx CD 3 (Morrisania-Crotona Park East)	2,249
Bronx CD 6 (Tremont-Belmont-West Farms)	2,083
Bronx CD 2 (Longwood-Hunts Point)	1,197

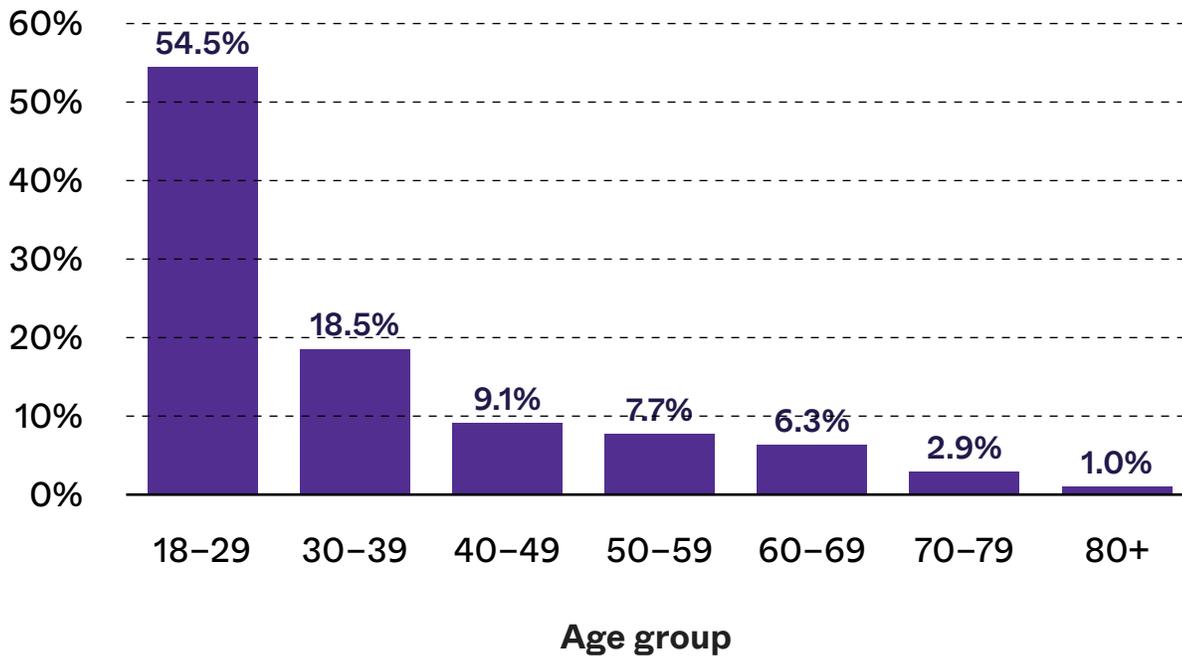
## Age

Newly registered voters skewed significantly younger than those who had been registered for a year or more, at an average age of 34 compared to 50.<sup>52</sup> As shown in Figure 4.7, more than half (54.5%) of newly registered voters were ages 18 to 29. Although newly registered voters came from all age groups, there was a consistent downward trend in voter registration as age increased.

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<sup>52</sup> Age is calculated as of the date of the 2024 general election.

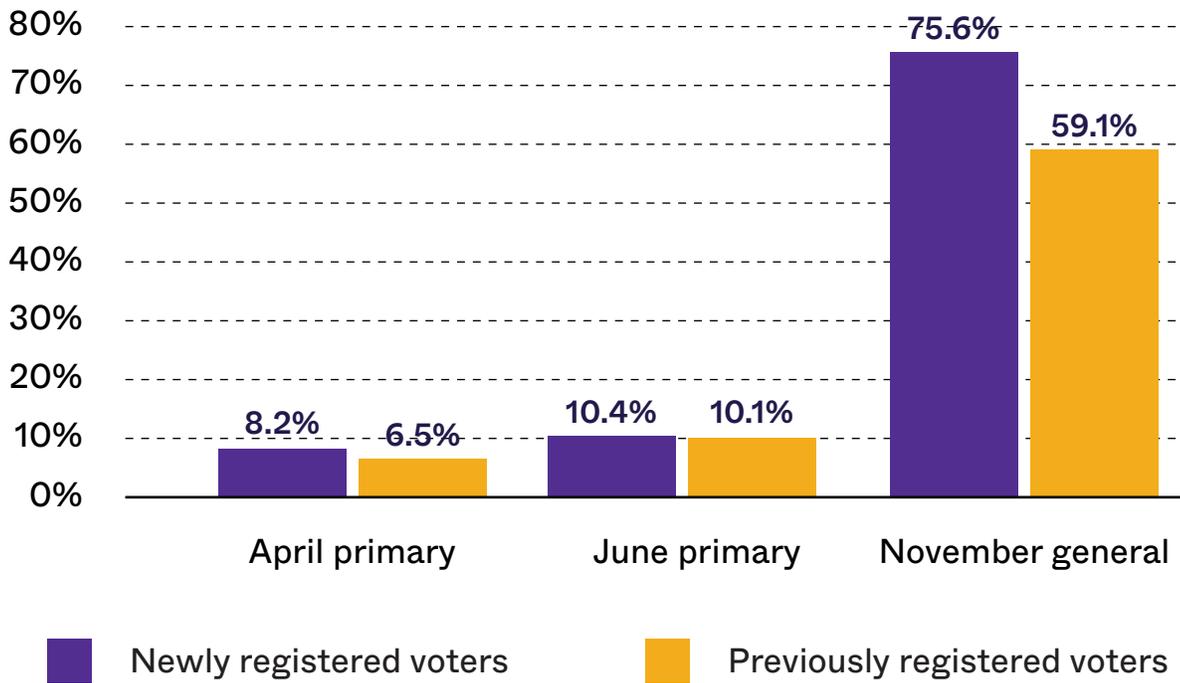
**Figure 4.7: Percent of newly registered voters by age group**



### **Voter turnout by length of voter registration**

Throughout 2024, newly registered voters consistently turned out at higher rates than previously registered voters, defined as those registered for a year or more. In the April primary, newly registered voters participated at a slightly higher rate (8.2%) than previously registered voters (6.5%). 10.4% of newly registered voters turned out to vote in the June primary, just above the 10.1% turnout rate of previous registrants. This trend increased by a wide margin in the general election, where newly registered voters achieved a 75.6% turnout rate, exceeding that of previously registered voters (59.1%) by nearly 17 percentage points.

**Figure 4.8: Voter turnout, by length of voter registration**



### Pre-registration rates in New York City

The CFB has identified young voters, ages 18 to 29, as a priority group for voter education and outreach, due to barriers in access to voting and subsequent low turnout rates. In 2024, 75.9% of eligible New Yorkers under 30 were registered to vote, compared to 87.9% of eligible New Yorkers ages 30 and older.<sup>53</sup>

53 The voter registration rate was calculated exclusively for voters under 30 and above 30 because the Citizens of Voting Age Population (CVAP) estimates from the [2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates](#) categorize age groups differently than our methodology. The CVAP age group classifications—18–29, 30–44, 45–64, and 65 and older—do not align in a way that allows for consistent comparisons across all age groups.

In order to address low voter registration among young people and encourage civic participation from a young age, New York State amended the Election Law in 2019, allowing eligible 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register.<sup>54</sup> Since this law went into effect in 2020, those ages 16 and 17 can fill out voter registration applications online or in person at the Board of Elections office or at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and their voter registration will automatically go into effect when they turn 18.<sup>55</sup> While New York’s pre-registration policy goes a long way to address an existing barrier, more work can be done to educate young people and encourage voting. In 2024, only 5.2% of 16- and 17-year-olds in New York City took advantage of this opportunity, falling well behind the state average of 20.3%.<sup>56</sup> The [“Research on Young Voters”](#) section of this report covers pre-registration in more detail.

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54 New York State Senate. S1100 (2019-20): [“Relates to Voter Pre-Registration.”](#)

55 Grosserode, Sarah. [“How Teenagers in New York Can Now Pre-Register to Vote.”](#) *Lohud*, 07 Jan 2020.

56 The pre-registration rate is calculated by dividing the number of voters who pre-registered to vote (as recorded in the New York State voter file) by the total number of residents ages 16 and 17 in NYC (2020 Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau). Due to data limitations, the number of residents is used instead of the number of citizens.

# On the Ballot

# On the Ballot

In 2024, New Yorkers voted for candidates for federal offices (including President, U.S. Senate, and U.S. House of Representatives), state offices (including State Senate, State Assembly, and judicial positions), and state and local ballot proposals. New York City held three major elections—the April presidential primary, the June state and congressional primary, and the November general election. In addition, February special elections were held in Congressional District 3 and Assembly District 77. This section includes analysis on voter turnout in New York City across age, geography, and voting methods. The section concludes with a look at voter behavior as it relates to the general election ballot proposals.

The following analyses compare voter behavior in 2024 to that of 2016 and 2020, the two most recent years in which President led the top of the ballot. However, while these election years are comparable, there are some key differences between 2024 and previous presidential election years.<sup>57</sup>

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57 Prior to 2020, New York State had a bifurcated election system in which state and congressional races were held on separate election dates, in addition to a separate presidential primary election date. Additionally, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, New York combined the presidential primary, previously scheduled for April 2020, to occur at the same time as the state and congressional primary, held in June 2020.

**Figure 5.1: Historical voter turnout by election cycle**

Year	Election	On the ballot	Primary turnout	General turnout
2016	Federal	President	32.2%	60.5%
	Federal	U.S. Congress	7.7%	
	State	State Senate, State Assembly, Judges	9.1%	
2017	City	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%	
	City	Ballot Proposals	N/A	
2019	City	Council District 45, Queens District Attorney	11.9%	17.2%
	City	Public Advocate, Ballot Proposals	N/A	
2020	Federal/State/City	President, U.S. Congress, State Senate, State Assembly, Queens Borough President	25.7%	61.9%
	City	Council District 37	N/A	
2021	NYC/State	Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, City Council, District Attorney, Judges	26.5%	23.3%
	State	Ballot Proposals	N/A	

Year	Election	On the ballot	Primary turnout	General turnout
2022	State	Governor, Lt. Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General, State Assembly, Judges	14.5%	38.3%
	Federal/State	U.S. Congress, State Senate	14.7%	
	State/City	Ballot Proposals	N/A	
2023	City	City Council, District Attorney, Judges	7.2%	12.8%
	State	Ballot Proposals	N/A	
2024	Federal	President	6.6%	60.2%
	Federal/State	U.S. Congress, State Senate, State Assembly	10.1%	
	Federal/State	Ballot Proposals	N/A	

## Special election analysis

On February 13, 2024, New York held two special elections in New York City: one in Congressional District 3 (covering parts of Long Island and a small part of Queens) and another in Assembly District 77 in the Bronx. Thomas R. Suozzi (Democrat) and Mazi Melesa Pilip (Republican/Conservative) were the nominees for the 3rd Congressional District seat after George Santos’ expulsion.<sup>58</sup> Landon C. Dais (Democrat) and Norman Sobe McGill (Republican/Conservative) were the nominees for the 77th Assembly District seat following Latoya Joyner’s resignation in January.<sup>59</sup>

58 Office of Governor Kathy Hochul. [“Governor Hochul Issues Proclamation for Special Election to Replace George Santos.”](#) 05 Dec 2023.

59 Office of Governor Kathy Hochul. [“Governor Hochul Announces Special Election in 77th Assembly District.”](#) 18 Jan 2024.

Voters from both Queens County and Nassau County participated in the Congressional District 3 special election. In the Nassau County portion of Congressional District 3, 37.9% of eligible voters cast their ballots. Voters in Queens County lagged behind their neighboring peers at 27.9%. However, this turnout significantly surpassed the average special election turnout in New York City. The special election in Congressional District 3 was seen as another opportunity for the Democratic Party to get closer to a majority in the House, which made this election one of the most significant and competitive races of the year.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, turnout for Assembly District 77 was much lower at 3.4%—a rate more typical of special elections in NYC.

**Figure 5.2: Voter turnout in the special elections**

	Congressional District 3		Assembly District 77
	Nassau County	Queens County	
Eligible voters	355,680	91,059	44,406
Actual voters	134,851 <sup>61</sup>	25,373	1,525
Turnout	37.9%	27.9%	3.4%

Older voters, ages 70–79, had the highest turnout across both races, while younger voters, ages 39 and under, had the lowest turnout rates.

60 Shepard, Steve. “[New York 3rd Special General.](#)” *Politico*, 13 Feb 2024.

61 In Nassau County, our calculations were missing 12,778 voters from the [official results](#) reported by the State BOE. This analysis relied on the April 2024 State BOE voter file, which was the first version of the state file we requested with complete voter history for this special election. The State BOE voter file is regularly updated, so missing voters may have relocated or otherwise been legally purged from the file, making it challenging to track their voting history.

**Figure 5.3: Voter turnout by age group, special elections**

Age group	Congressional District 3		Assembly District 77
	Nassau County	Queens County	
18–29	24.3%	17.0%	1.0%
30–39	22.8%	14.5%	1.1%
40–49	34.5%	21.4%	2.2%
50–59	43.6%	29.0%	3.6%
60–69	50.1%	36.5%	5.6%
70–79	50.3%	40.9%	7.1%
80+	33.0%	28.1%	5.3%

Democrat Thomas R. Suozzi won the election for Congressional District 3 with 93,183 votes.<sup>62</sup> Democrat Landon C. Dais won the election for Assembly District 77 with 1,143 votes.<sup>63</sup>

## Primary election analysis

New York holds closed primary elections, which means voters must be registered to a specific political party to vote in that party’s primary election. Voters who are not registered with a political party, or who are registered to a political party that is not holding a primary election, are not eligible to vote in primary elections. In 2024, New York State held two primary elections—a presidential primary on April 2, and a state and congressional primary on June 25 to elect members of the State Senate and Assembly and the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

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62 New York State Board of Elections. “[2024 Special Election - Congressional District 3 - February 12, 2024.](#)”

63 City of New York, Board of Elections. “[2024 Special Election - Assembly District 77 - February 12, 2024.](#)”

In the April presidential primary, a total of 228,551 New York City voters cast their ballots, making up 6.6% of eligible registered voters. In the June state and congressional primary, 224,921 voters cast their ballots, accounting for 10.1% of eligible registered voters.

**Figure 5.4: Voter turnout, primary elections**

	April primary	June primary
Eligible voters	3,488,165	2,222,678
Actual voters	228,551	224,921
Turnout	6.6%	10.1%

### Age of voters

The average age of voters in the 2024 primaries was 60 years old in the April primary and 58 years old in the June primary, both older than the average age of 49 among registered voters in 2024. On average, primary election voters in 2024 were older than primary voters in 2020, when the average voter was 50 years old. This indicates that fewer young people voted in the 2024 primaries than in the 2020 primary.

**Figure 5.5: Average age of voters, primary elections**

	All registered voters	April primary voters	June primary voters
Average age	49	60	58

**Presidential primary elections:** Voter turnout in presidential primary elections is typically higher than turnout in state and congressional primaries. However, overall turnout in the 2024 presidential election was much lower than turnout in recent presidential elections. Furthermore, turnout among voters under 30 in the April 2024 presidential primary was exceptionally low at 3.7%, a sharp decline from 28.1% in April 2016 and 24.6% in June 2020. Voters ages 70–79 had the highest turnout in the April 2024 primary, at 12.9%.

For more details on why turnout was lower in 2024 compared to other years, see [“Explainer: Why was New York’s presidential primary election held so late?”](#) in the [“Policy and Legislative Recommendations”](#) section of this report.

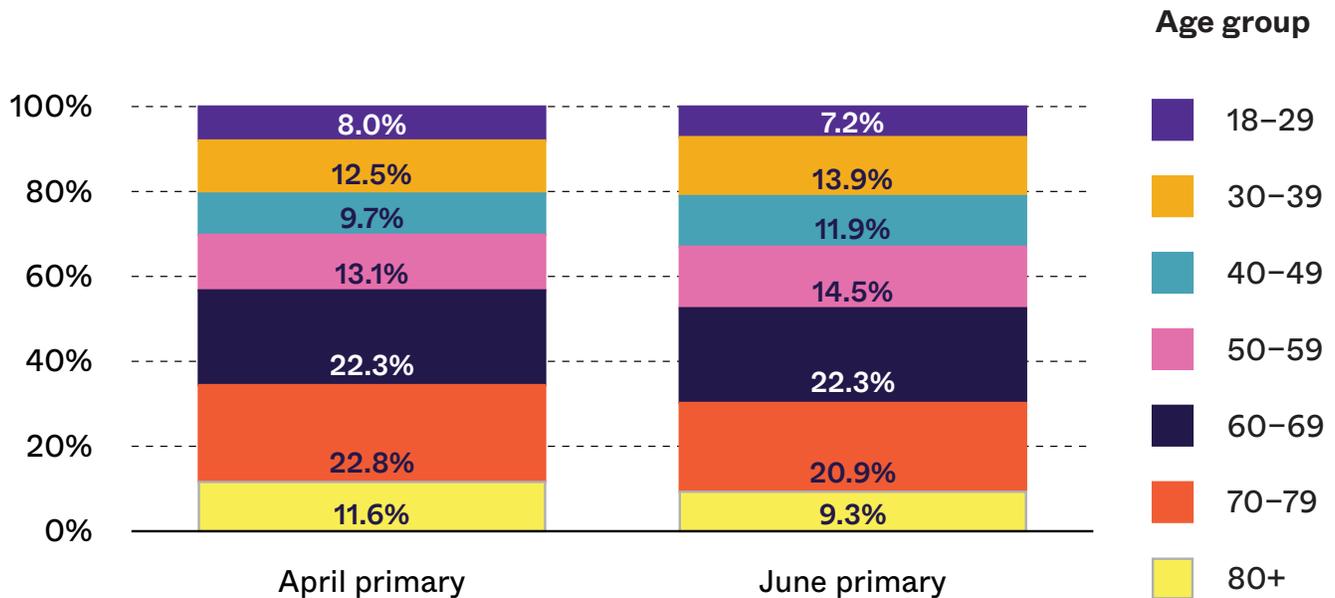
**State and congressional primaries:** In the June 2024 state and congressional primary election, turnout among voters under 30 was the lowest of all age groups at 5.0%, though it represented a slight increase compared to past state and federal primaries (just 2.5% in June 2016 and 3.1% in September 2016). As observed in the 2024 April presidential primary, voters ages 70–79 had the highest turnout in the June 2024 primary, reaching 18.7%. This group also had the highest turnout in prior state and congressional primaries.

**Figure 5.6: Voter turnout by age group, primary elections, 2016, 2020, and 2024**

Age group	2016			2020	2024	
	April (President)	June (Congress)	Sept. (State)	June (President, State, Congress)	April (President)	June (State and Congress)
18–29	28.1%	2.5%	3.1%	24.6%	3.7%	5.0%
30–39	27.7%	3.2%	4.3%	24.8%	4.4%	7.3%
40–49	29.6%	5.1%	6.6%	22.9%	4.1%	7.6%
50–59	35.1%	8.8%	10.5%	26.4%	5.4%	9.4%
60–69	40.4%	14.0%	16.0%	30.8%	9.1%	14.2%
70–79	39.5%	17.0%	19.0%	30.7%	12.9%	18.7%
80+	25.5%	13.1%	13.2%	17.8%	9.6%	12.3%

Older voters accounted for the largest share of the electorate in both 2024 primaries, while younger voters, ages 18–29, represented the smallest share of the electorate in both primaries, making up just 8.0% of voters in the April primary and 7.2% in the June primary.

**Figure 5.7: Percent of voters by age group, primary elections**



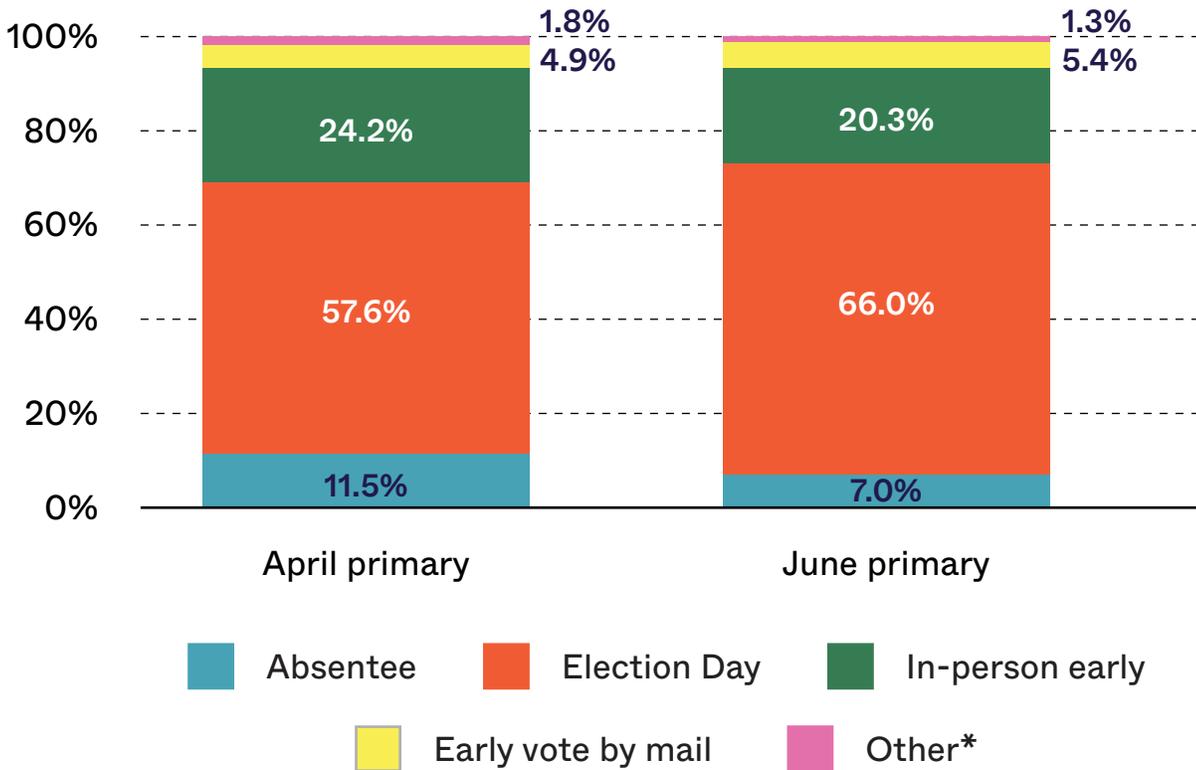
## Voting method

Consistent with previous years, voters had multiple methods to cast their ballot—voting in person on Election Day, voting in person during the early voting period, and voting via absentee ballots. In addition, 2024 marked the first year that New York voters were able to vote early by mail, a new voting method signed into law to broaden access to democracy for New Yorkers. Early vote by mail allows voters to apply for and receive a mail ballot without needing to provide an excuse, as is required for an absentee ballot.<sup>64</sup> This new method saw minimal usage in the 2024 primary elections, with 4.9% of voters casting mail ballots in April and 5.4% in June.

Voting in person on Election Day was the most popular choice among voters in both primary elections. However, a higher share of voters cast their ballots on Election Day in the June primary (66.0%) compared to in the April primary (57.6%). A slightly higher share of voters used in-person early voting in the April primary (24.2%) compared to the June primary (20.3%). There was also a larger percentage of voters that used absentee voting in the April primary (11.5%) than in the June primary (7.0%).

<sup>64</sup> New York State Senate. S7394A (2023–2024): [“Establishes the ‘New York Early Mail Voter Act.’”](#)

**Figure 5.8: Percent of voters by vote method, primary elections**



\* Includes ballot categories such as special, affidavit, and military ballots

### Location of voters

Voter turnout in the 2024 primaries varied across boroughs. In the April presidential primary, Manhattan had the highest turnout at 9.5%. However, this marked a significant drop compared to past presidential primaries, where turnout reached 41.7% in April 2016 and 29.5% in June 2020, both exceeding the 2024 turnout rate by more than 20 percentage points. Meanwhile, the Bronx recorded the lowest turnout in the April primary at 4.8%, demonstrating a shift from past presidential primaries, where Staten Island had the lowest turnout—27.5% in April 2016 and 20.6% in June 2020.

Manhattan continued to lead voter participation in the June state and congressional primary, at 13.0%. This rate closely mirrored past primary election turnout results for Manhattan—12.7% in June 2016 and 11.6% in September 2016. Queens reported the lowest turnout in the June 2024 primary, at 8.9%.

**Figure 5.9: Voter turnout by borough, primary elections, 2016, 2020, and 2024<sup>65</sup>**

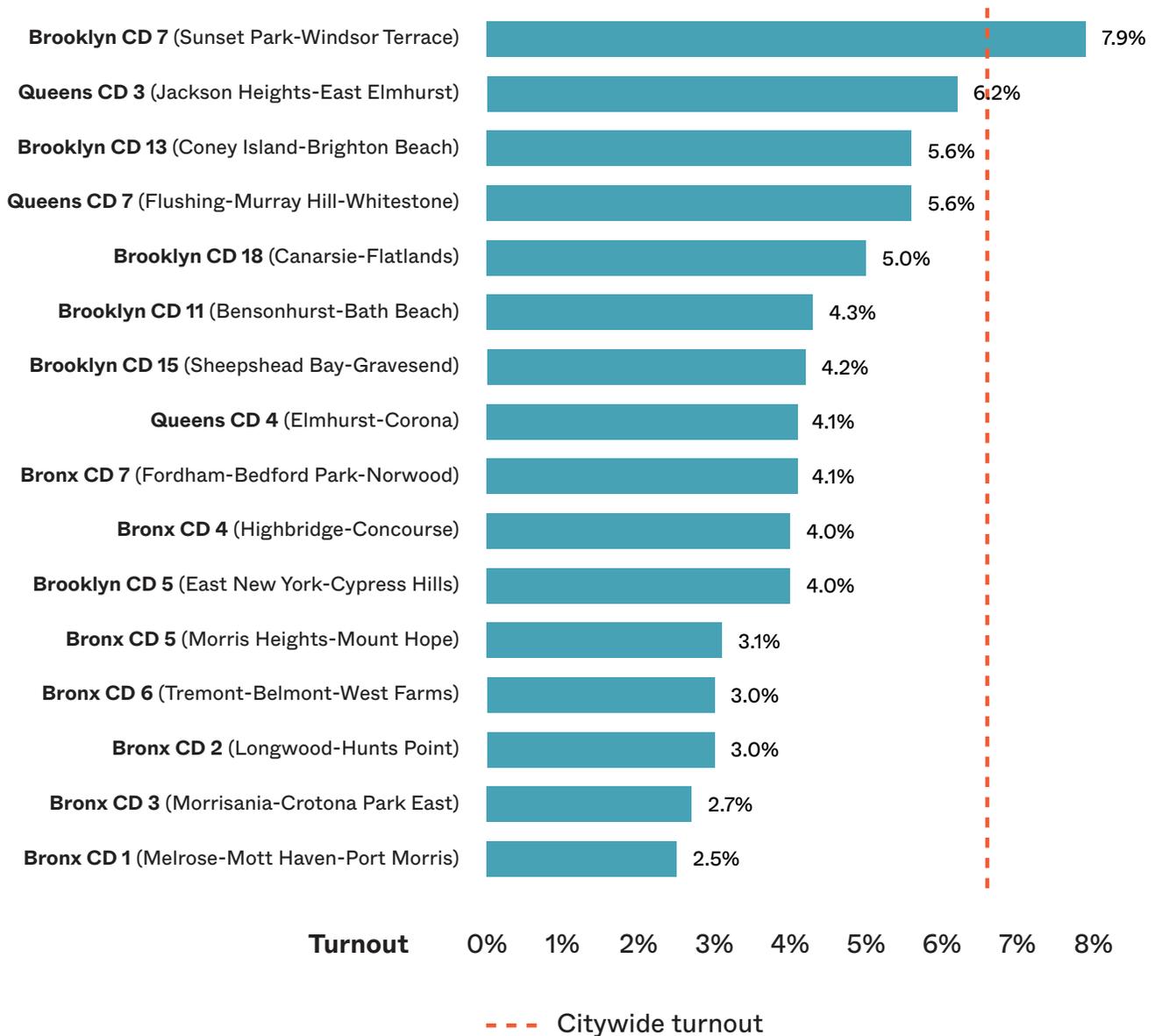
Borough	2016			2020	2024	
	April (President)	June (Congress)	Sept. (State)	June (President, State, Congress)	April (President)	June (State and Congress)
Manhattan	41.7%	12.7%	11.6%	29.5%	9.5%	13.0%
Bronx	28.7%	4.8%	8.4%	23.9%	4.8%	10.4%
Brooklyn	30.4%	5.1%	8.3%	25.8%	6.1%	9.5%
Queens	30.0%	3.9%	8.7%	24.9%	5.9%	8.9%
Staten Island	27.5%	—	9.2%	20.6%	6.0%	—
Citywide	32.3%	7.7%	9.1%	25.7%	6.6%	10.1%

***CFB priority community districts***

The CFB identified priority community districts that are underrepresented in the electoral process, based on analyses of voter education, turnout, and engagement. In the April presidential primary, turnout by priority community district ranged from a low of 2.5% in Bronx Community District 1 (Melrose, Mott Haven, and Port Morris) to a high of 7.9% in Brooklyn Community District 7 (Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace). Figure 5.10 and Figure 5.11 display voter turnout in the 2024 primary elections in our priority community districts compared to the overall turnout across the city.

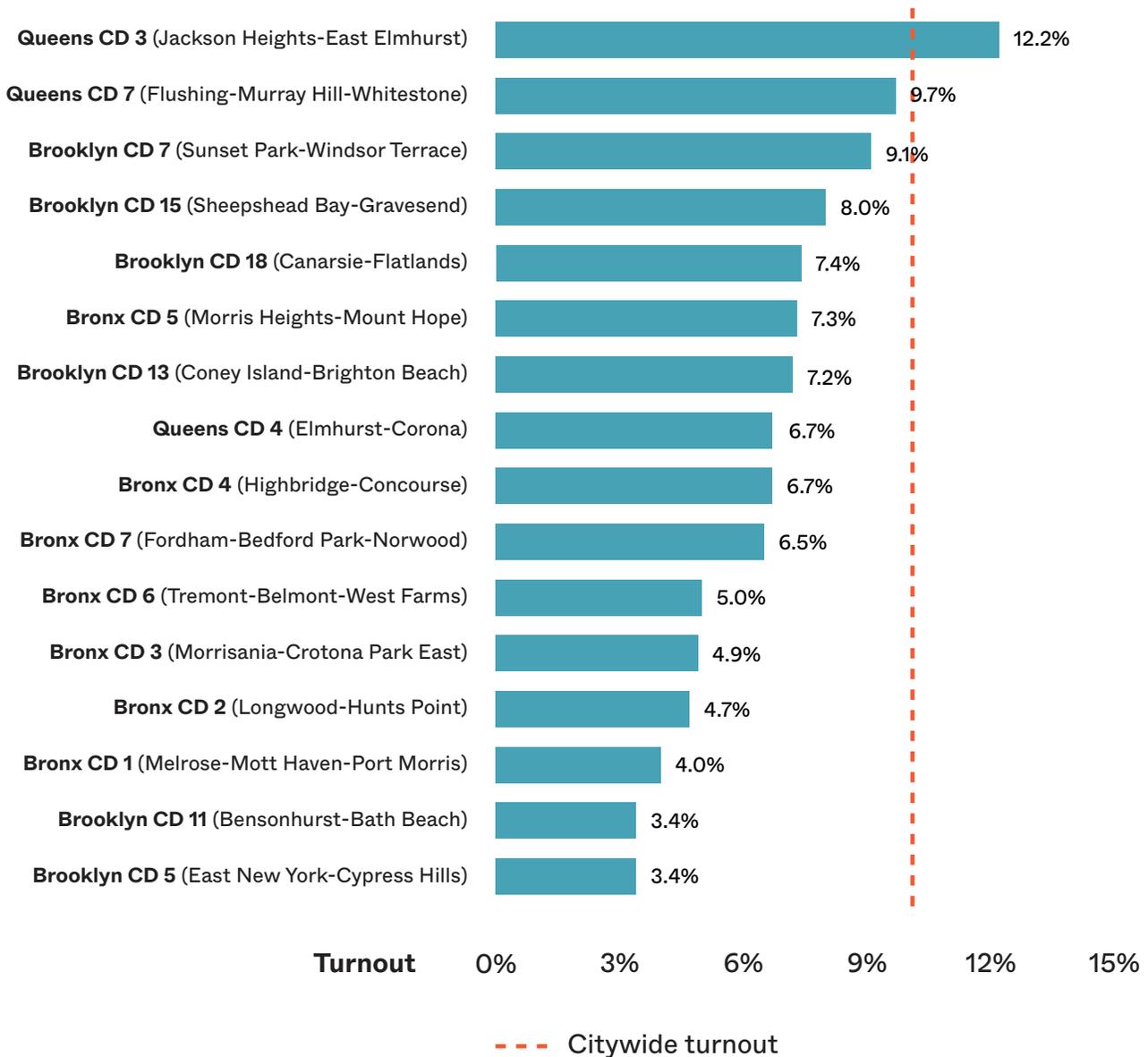
65 No state and federal primaries were held in Staten Island during the June 2016 and June 2024 elections.

**Figure 5.10: Voter turnout in CFB priority community districts, April primary**



Turnout in our priority community districts varied significantly in the June state and congressional primary. Queens Community District 3 (Jackson Heights and East Elmhurst) led with the highest turnout at 12.2%, while Brooklyn Community District 11 (Bensonhurst and Bath Beach) recorded the lowest turnout at 3.4%.

**Figure 5.11: Voter turnout in CFB priority community districts, June primary**



### Blank ballots in the Democratic presidential primary election

As previously referenced in the “[2024 Year in Review](#)” section, many Democrats across the country organized a campaign to cast “uncommitted” ballots in the presidential primary. Since no such option exists in New York, progressive organizers in New York started the “Leave it Blank NY” campaign, which urged voters to show up and submit a blank ballot.

The City Board of Elections categorizes blank ballots in the overall “unrecorded ballot” category, which also includes “void” ballots due to mismarking or overvoting. However, the sharp rise in the volume of unrecorded ballots in 2024 suggests the “Leave It Blank” campaign likely had an impact on voter behavior. Unrecorded votes represented 1.1% of ballots in the 2016 Democratic presidential primary and 4.2% of ballots in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary. In 2024, unrecorded votes made up 14.8% of all ballots, or 29,684 of the 200,043 ballots in New York City.<sup>66</sup>

**Figure 5.12: Percent of unrecorded ballots in the Democratic presidential primary elections, 2016, 2020, and 2024**

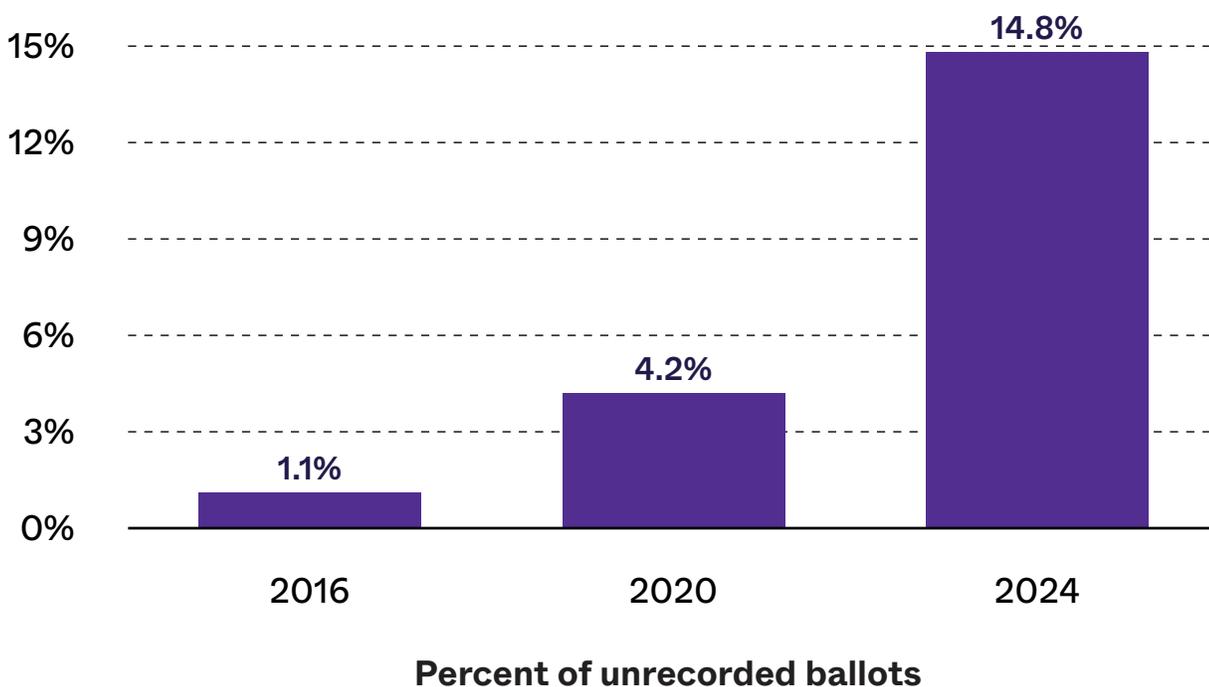
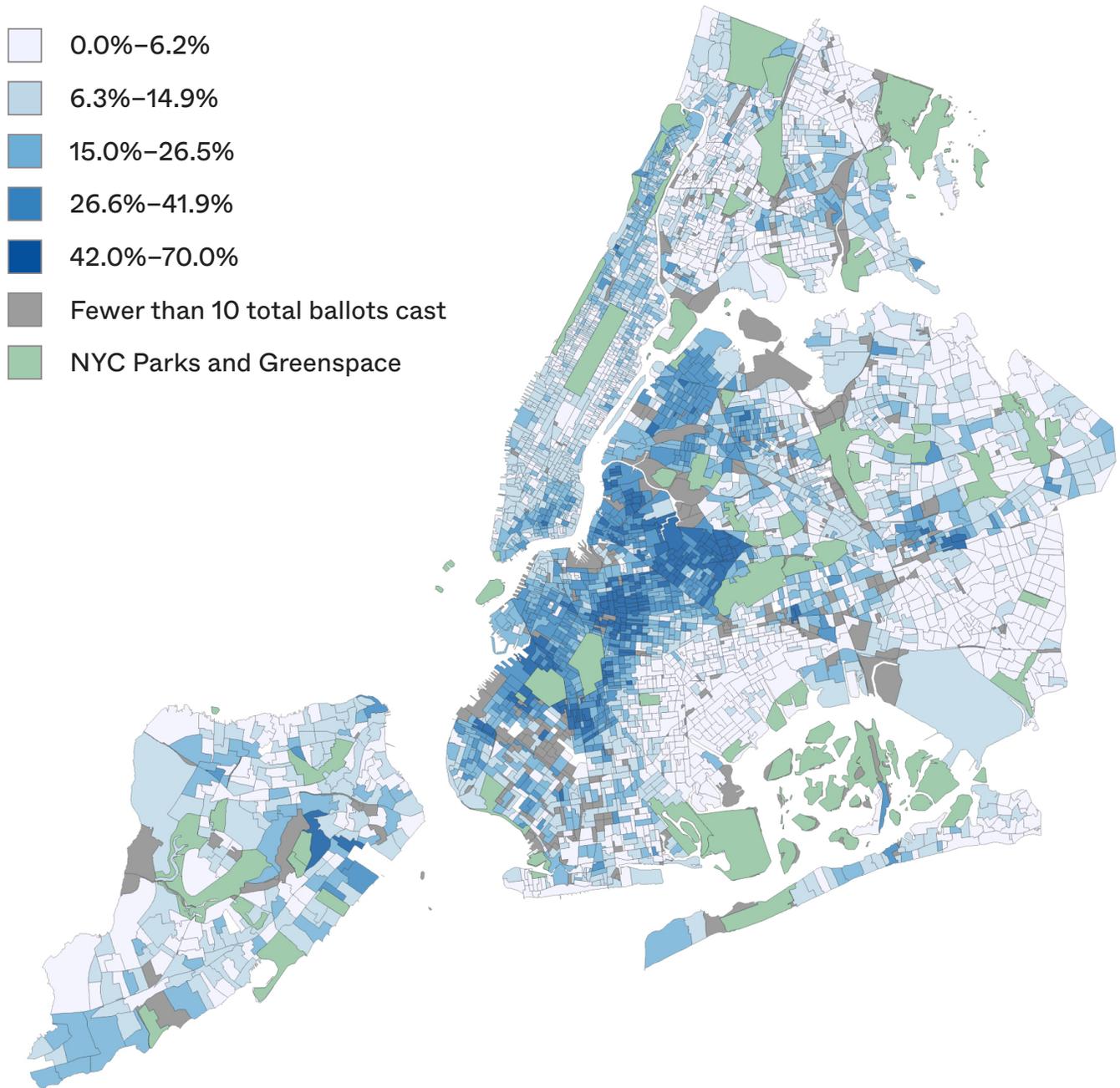


Figure 5.13 illustrates the percentage of unrecorded ballots across NYC by election district in 2024. Most election districts in Western Queens and in North and Southwest Brooklyn displayed high percentages of unrecorded ballots in the 2024 Democratic presidential primary. For comparison, web maps for 2016 and 2020 are available at [nycceb.info/voter-analysis-report](https://nycceb.info/voter-analysis-report). Patterns of voters casting unrecorded ballots are much less discernable in previous years.

<sup>66</sup> City of New York, Board of Elections. “[2024 Presidential Primary - Democratic Primary - April 2, 2024](#).”; By contrast, in the 2024 Republican presidential primary, unrecorded votes made up just 1.3% of all votes cast.

**Figure 5.13: Percent of unrecorded ballots by election district, Democratic presidential primary**



## General election analysis

All registered voters in New York City are eligible to vote in the general election, regardless of political party affiliation. At the time of the 2024 general election, held on November 5, there were 4,658,641 eligible registered voters in New York City.

As is commonly observed, voters turned out at higher rates in the general election than in the primary elections. 60.2% of eligible registered voters cast their ballots in the general election, compared to 6.6% in the April primary and 10.1% in the June primary. However, general election turnout in 2024 was slightly lower than in 2016 (60.5%) and 2020 (64.4%).

**Figure 5.14: Voter turnout, general election**

Eligible registered voters	Actual voters	Turnout
4,658,641	2,802,746	60.2%

## Age of voters

The average age of voters in the general election (50) closely aligned with the average age of all registered voters (49). Voters in the general election tended to be younger on average than voters in the primary elections (average age of 50 compared to 60 in the April primary and 58 in the June primary).

**Figure 5.15: Average age of voters, general election**

	All registered voters	Actual voters
Average age	49	50

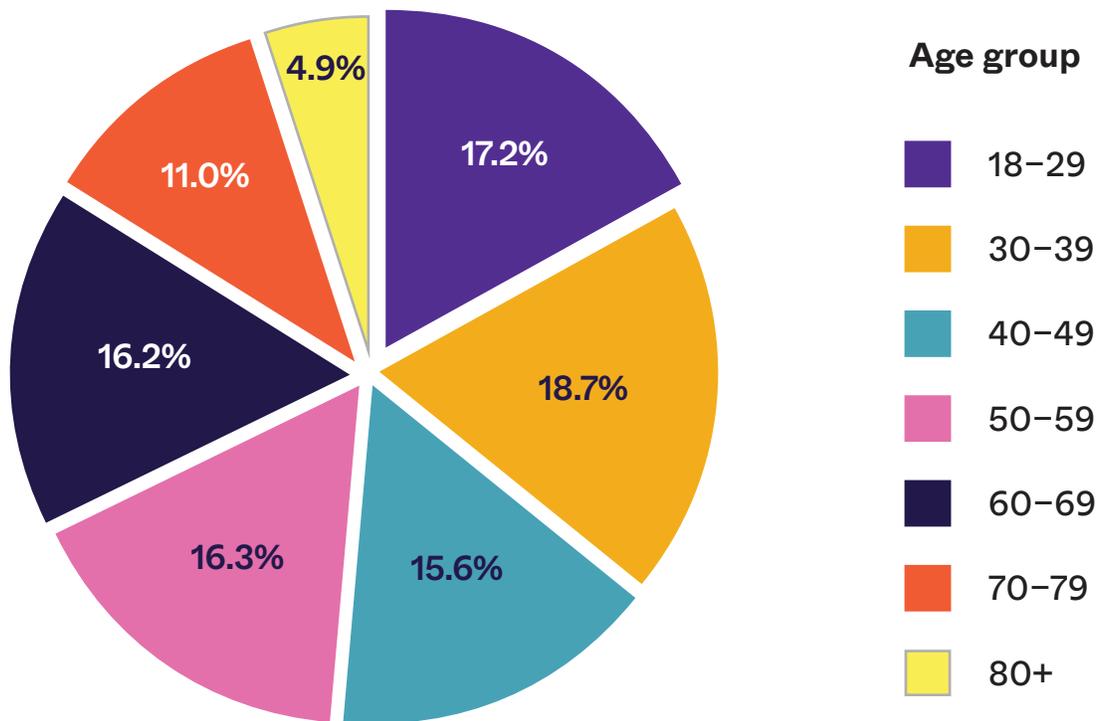
Voters ages 60–69 had the highest turnout in the general election, at 67.0%, consistent with trends witnessed in 2016 and 2020. While young voters (under 30) had the lowest turnout in the 2024 primary elections, the oldest group of voters (80 and older) recorded the lowest voter turnout in the general election, at 45.8%. This trend also mirrors patterns seen in previous years.

**Figure 5.16: Voter turnout by age group, general elections, 2016, 2020, and 2024**

Age group	2016	2020	2024
18–29	56.4%	61.3%	57.1%
30–39	58.9%	61.4%	57.2%
40–49	61.8%	64.7%	59.3%
50–59	65.7%	69.2%	64.4%
60–69	66.9%	71.2%	67.0%
70–79	62.9%	68.0%	65.8%
80+	43.0%	46.2%	45.8%

In the general election, younger voters between 18 and 39 made up the largest share of the electorate, a change from the primaries. 17.2% of general election voters were ages 18 to 29, and 18.7% of voters were ages 30–39.

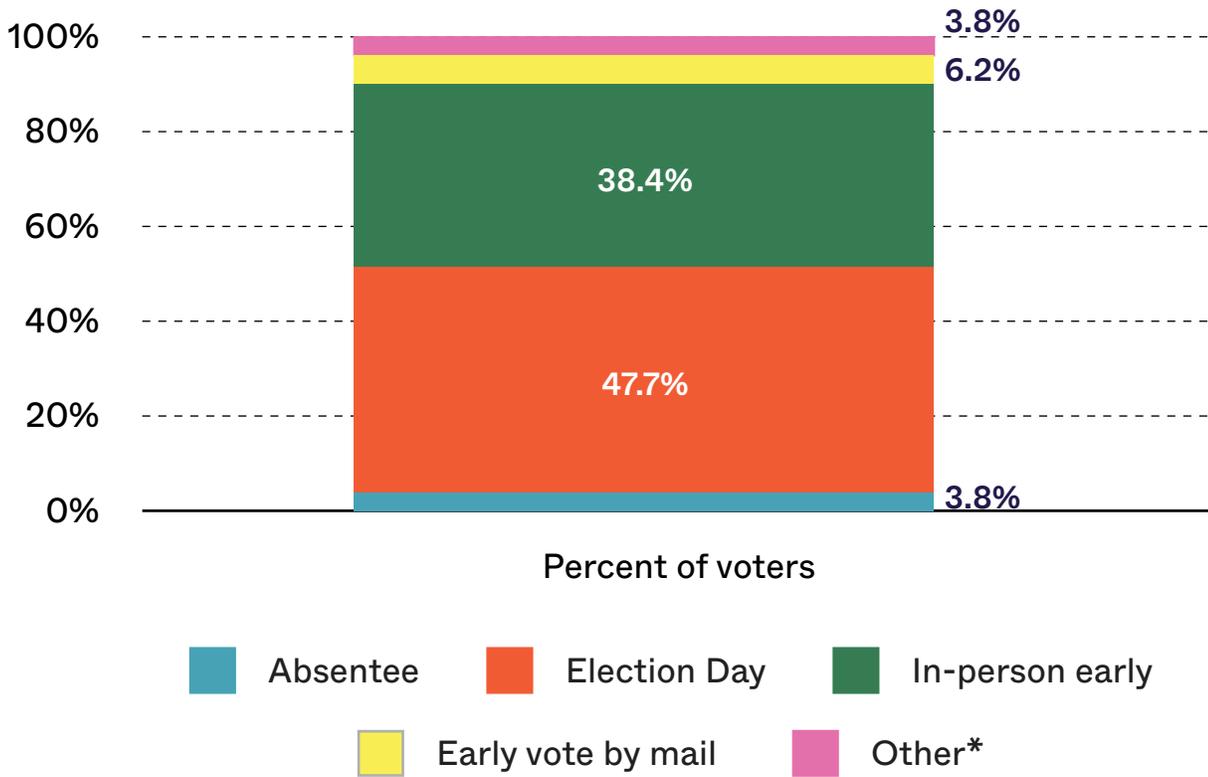
**Figure 5.17: Percent of voters by age group, general election**



### Voting method

In-person Election Day voting was the most common method among general election voters, accounting for nearly half of all voters (47.7%). However, this was significantly lower than the rates observed during the primary elections, where 57.6% of voters cast their ballots on Election Day in April and 66.0% in June. In-person early voting represented the second-largest share of general election voters at 38.4%, reflecting a notably higher usage compared to the primary elections (24.2% in April and 20.3% in June). In addition, 6.2% voted by mail and 3.8% voted by absentee ballot.

**Figure 5.18: Percent of voters by vote method, general election**



\* Includes ballot categories such as special, affidavit, and military ballots

### Location of voters

Much like in the 2024 primary elections, Manhattan once again had the highest voter turnout of all boroughs in the general election, at 68.4%. Conversely, the Bronx had the lowest general election turnout, at 52.0%.

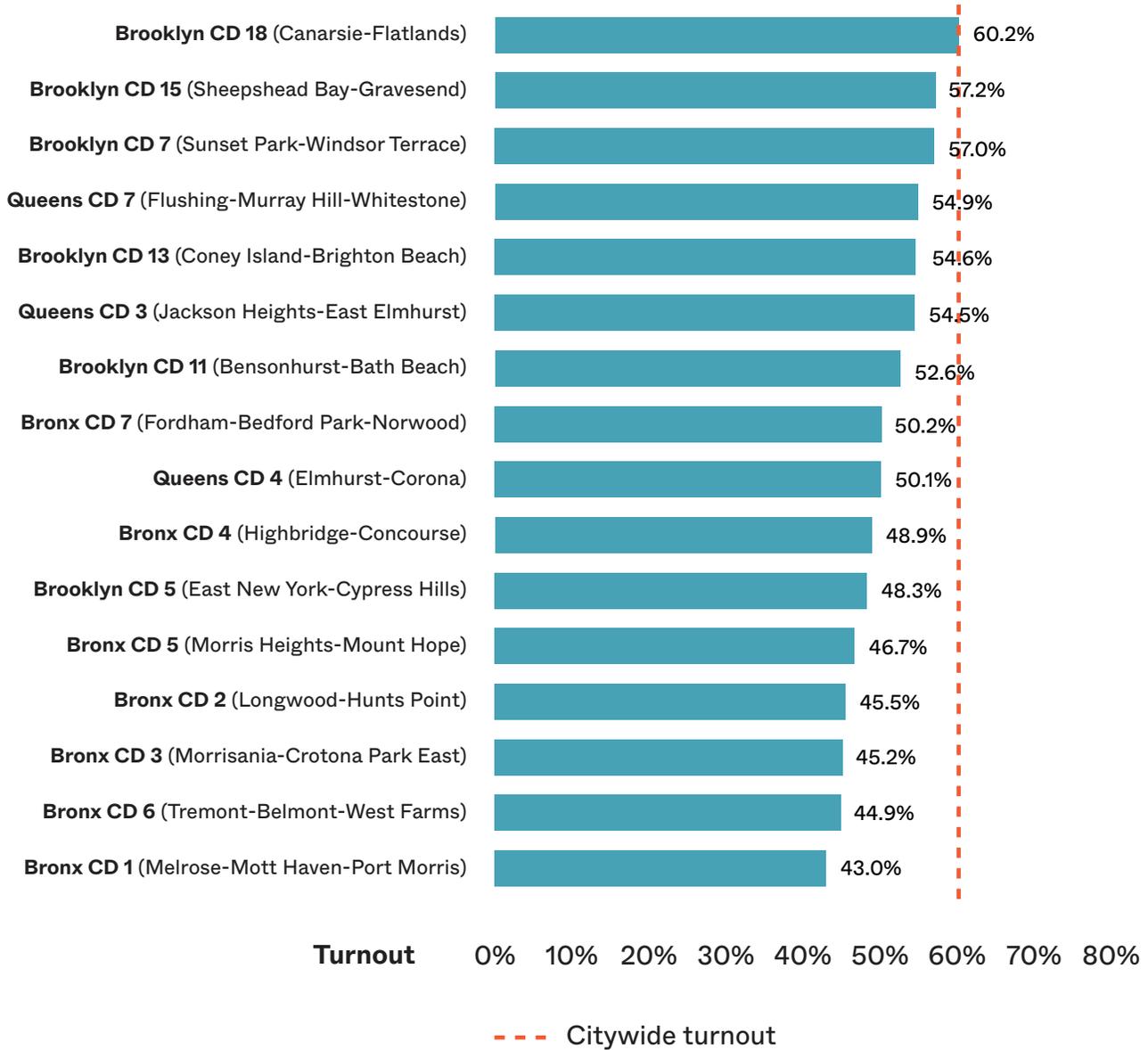
**Figure 5.19: Voter turnout by borough, general elections, 2016, 2020, and 2024**

<b>Borough</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2024</b>
Manhattan	66.5%	68.7%	68.4%
Bronx	57.1%	58.6%	52.0%
Brooklyn	57.0%	62.5%	58.9%
Queens	60.9%	64.8%	58.6%
Staten Island	64.3%	71.6%	65.1%
Citywide	60.5%	64.4%	60.2%

***CFB priority community districts***

Turnout in priority community districts ranged from a low of 43.0% in Bronx Community District 1 (Melrose, Mott Haven and, Port Morris) to a high of 60.2% in Brooklyn Community District 18 (Canarsie and Flatlands). Figure 5.20 displays voter turnout in the 2024 general election in priority community districts, compared to the overall turnout across the city. Fifteen of 16 priority community districts performed below the citywide average.

**Figure 5.20: Voter turnout in CFB priority community districts, general election**



## Ballot proposals

In the 2024 general election, New York City voters weighed in on six ballot proposals. This was the highest number of proposals on a single ballot in the last six election cycles. The first proposal appeared on all ballots across the state, and asked voters to approve or reject a statewide constitutional amendment. Ballot Proposals two through six appeared only on ballots in New York City, and asked voters to consider amendments to the City Charter.

The six ballot proposals were as follows:<sup>67</sup>

- **Ballot Proposal 1:** The proposal adds protections to the state Constitution’s Bill of Rights to prohibit discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, origin, age, disability, and sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, and pregnancy outcomes.
- **Ballot Proposal 2:** The proposal increases the authority of The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) to keep all city property clean, including parks and highway medians, and to hold street vendors accountable for following rules at those locations.
- **Ballot Proposal 3:** The City Council provides cost estimates of proposed laws before voting on them. The proposal would give the Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget the opportunity to provide its own cost estimates for proposed laws and require the Council to publish their cost estimates before public hearings on proposed laws. This proposal would also require the Council to formally notify the mayor’s office before holding public hearings or votes on proposed laws. Lastly, this proposal would extend the deadline for certain budget reports in the first year of a new mayoral administration and permanently extend the deadline for the mayor to publish their annual city budget.
- **Ballot Proposal 4:** The proposal would require the City Council to give 30 days notice before voting on public safety operations that impact the Police, Correction, or the Fire Departments.
- **Ballot Proposal 5:** The proposal would amend the City Charter to assess the cost of maintaining city facilities and publish these assessments in capital planning reports.
- **Ballot Proposal 6:** The proposal would create a new role to support Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBES), establish a Chief Business Diversity Officer, and authorize the mayor to designate which agency issues film permits, and combine two boards that manage city records into one.

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67 NYC Votes. “[2024 Ballot Proposals](#).”

Ballot Proposal 1 passed by substantial margins, both within New York City and across the state. Figure 5.21 presents the total “yes” vote percentages. The proposal received strong support in NYC, with 78.1% of voters casting “yes” votes—more than 20 percentage points higher than the 55.1% of “yes” votes among voters in the rest of NYS (passing with a total of 62.5% of “yes” votes statewide).

**Figure 5.21: Percent of “yes” votes for statewide ballot proposal, general election**

NYC "yes" votes	Outside of NYC "yes" votes	Overall statewide "yes" votes
78.1%	55.1%	62.5%

Whereas voters in NYC overwhelmingly voted to pass Ballot Proposal 1, New Yorkers voted “yes” to subsequent proposals at much lower rates: 62.1% for Ballot Proposal 2, 55.9% for Ballot Proposal 3, 57.2% for Ballot Proposal 4, 58.0% for Ballot Proposal 5, and 47.6% for Ballot Proposal 6. Ballot Proposal 6 was the only one that did not pass.

**Figure 5.22: Percent of “yes” votes for citywide ballot proposals, general election**

Ballot Proposal	Citywide "yes" votes
Ballot Proposal 2	62.1%
Ballot Proposal 3	55.9%
Ballot Proposal 4	57.2%
Ballot Proposal 5	58.0%
Ballot Proposal 6	47.6%

While most proposals passed, the percentage of “yes” votes for Proposals two through six underperformed relative to historical trends observed over the past six election cycles. Between 2018 and 2023, the average percentage of “yes” votes across all ballot proposals in NYC was 72.3%. The lower percentage of “yes” votes could have been a result of public criticism of these citywide proposals and a concerted movement encouraging voters to vote “no.” Some Council members used social media to urge voters to “vote NO to proposals 2 through 6,” in partnership with a coalition of approximately 50 advocacy organizations that spent more than \$218,000 in mailers, digital advertisements, and other outreach efforts to encourage voters to reject the proposals.<sup>68</sup>

The percentages listed in Figure 5.23 demonstrate the “drop-off” rates of voters who chose not to vote for each ballot proposal. There are many possible reasons that voters might not vote for ballot proposals, such as a lack of understanding of the ballot proposal language, decision fatigue, or ballot design in which proposals appear on the back of the ballot.

The first proposal recorded the lowest drop-off rate at -12.6%, meaning that 12.6% of voters who cast ballots for candidates left Ballot Proposal 1 blank. This is likely because voters are most likely to answer the first question — a trend consistent with previous general elections. The drop-off rate increases significantly for the next two ballot proposals, rising by 1.8 percentage points to -14.4% for Ballot Proposal 2 and by 2.0 percentage points to -16.4% for Ballot Proposal 3. However, the drop-off rate for the last three ballot proposals remains relatively steady, though slightly higher than that of Proposals 2 and 3. As previously discussed, there are various reasons for drop-off outcomes. However, the ballot proposal data used in this analysis, provided by the City Board of Elections, does not reflect voter intent or attitudes. This limitation makes it challenging to determine how voters engaged with and understood the 2024 ballots proposals after New York State’s requirement to have ballot proposals written in “plain language” following 2023.<sup>69</sup>

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68 Honan, Katie. [“Voters Back Equal Rights Proposal and Most of Eric Adams’ ‘Power Grab’ Ballot Measures.”](#) *The City*, 05 Nov 2024.

69 New York State Senate. S1381 (2023–24): [“Requires Proposed Amendment to the Constitution or Other Question Provided by Law to be Submitted to a Statewide Vote be Submitted to the People for their Approval in Plain Language.”](#)

**Figure 5.23: Ballot proposal votes and drop-off rates, general election**

	Votes	Drop-off
Total Ballots Cast	2,799,784	—
Ballot Proposal 1	2,446,948	-12.6%
Ballot Proposal 2	2,397,488	-14.4%
Ballot Proposal 3	2,340,519	-16.4%
Ballot Proposal 4	2,340,767	-16.4%
Ballot Proposal 5	2,324,077	-17.0%
Ballot Proposal 6	2,322,616	-17.0%

Drop-off rates varied across the five boroughs. Brooklyn recorded the highest drop-off rate for all six proposals, a pattern consistent with previous general elections. Manhattan had the lowest drop-off rate for the first two proposals, while Staten Island had the lowest for the remaining four. See [Appendix B](#) for a full breakdown of ballot proposal drop-off rates by borough.



# **Analysis of Unaffiliated Voters**

# Analysis of Unaffiliated Voters

New York is one of ten states that have a “closed primary” system, meaning voters must be registered to the political party holding a primary to vote in that party’s primary election. This leaves out a large swath of “unaffiliated voters,” individuals who are registered to vote but not registered with a specific political party.<sup>70</sup> In 2024, there were 1,002,606 registered unaffiliated voters in New York City, making up 21.1% of registered voters.

Although approximately one in five registered voters in New York City are unaffiliated, a surprisingly small amount of research exists on these voters. Previous research has focused on unaffiliated voter registration, turnout, demographics, attitudes, and beliefs in states around the country including North Carolina, Colorado, Utah, and New York State.<sup>71</sup> The CFB is expanding this research by analyzing unaffiliated voters at the local level in New York City.

Our analyses are limited to the City BOE’s voter files from 2020 to 2024. Using the voter file and voter history information available to the CFB, along with publicly available data on the unaffiliated voter population, we aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the distribution of voter registration by political party?
2. Who are unaffiliated voters?
3. What are the characteristics and experiences of unaffiliated voters across the country?
4. How has voter turnout among unaffiliated voters in New York City differed across various election types, and how does it compare to turnout rates for voters affiliated with major and minor political parties?

Aside from the following section, which disaggregates voter registration by political party, our analyses categorize political parties into three groups: major political parties (includes

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70 While the CFB defines unaffiliated voters as voters who are not registered to any political party, others sometimes refer to unaffiliated voters and independents interchangeably.

71 Bitzer, Michael J., Christopher A. Cooper, Whitney Ross Manzo and Susan Roberts. “[Growing and Distinct: The Unaffiliated Voter as Unmoored Voter.](#)” *Social Science Quarterly*, 103(7), 1587-1601. 27 Nov 2022.; Goff, Sarah. “[Independent State of Mind: The Rise of New York’s Unaffiliated Voters.](#)” *Common Cause New York*. 30 Nov 2023.; Kelley, Debbie. “[Number of Unaffiliated Voters in Colorado has Hit a Record High — Here’s One Key Reason Why.](#)” *The Denver Gazette*, 18 Oct 2024.; and McKellar, Katie. “[Most Utahns Who Changed Party Affiliation Switched to Unaffiliated, 2024 Election Data Shows.](#)” *Utah News Dispatch*, 17 Aug 2024.

the Democratic and Republican parties), minor political parties (includes the Conservative Party, the Working Families Party, and other minor parties), and unaffiliated voters (voters not registered to a political party).

## Voter registration by political party

In 2024, voters registered to the Democratic Party made up almost two-thirds of the New York City electorate. Unaffiliated voters formed the second-largest bloc at 21.1%, followed by voters registered to the Republican Party at 11.0%, voters registered to minor political parties that have been unable to maintain their ballot lines at 2.0%, voters registered to the Conservative Party at 0.4%, and voters registered to the Working Families Party at 0.4%. See Figure 6.1 for a breakdown of voter registration by political party in 2024.

**Figure 6.1: Voter registration by political party**

Political party	Percent of voters
Democrat	65.0%
Unaffiliated	21.1%
Republican	11.0%
Other*	2.0%
Conservative	0.4%
Working Families	0.4%

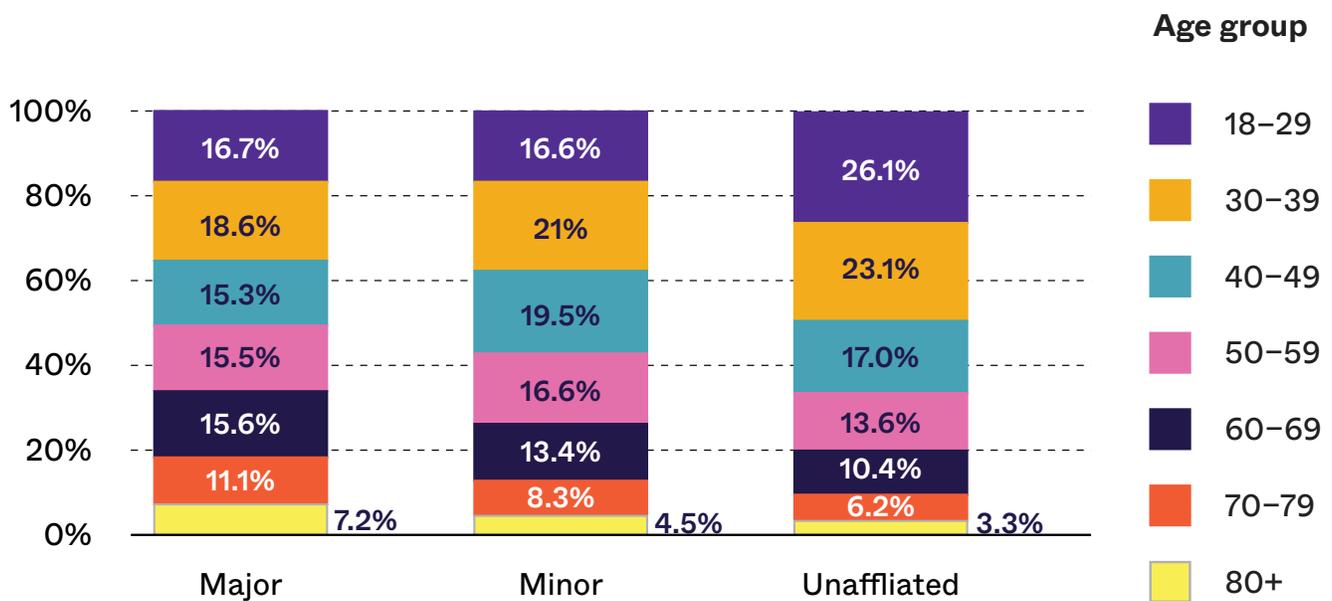
\* Other political parties include ones that have not been able to maintain their ballot lines, such as the Green Party. The Conservative Party and the Working Families Party are the only two minor parties that appear on the New York State voter registration form.

# Unaffiliated voters in New York City

## Age of unaffiliated voters

In 2024, more than a quarter of unaffiliated voters were under 30, followed by the second youngest group of voters, voters ages 30–39, making up 23.1% of unaffiliated voters. In contrast, those registered to both major and minor parties skewed slightly older—only 16.7% of major party voters and 16.6% of minor party voters were in the youngest age bracket.

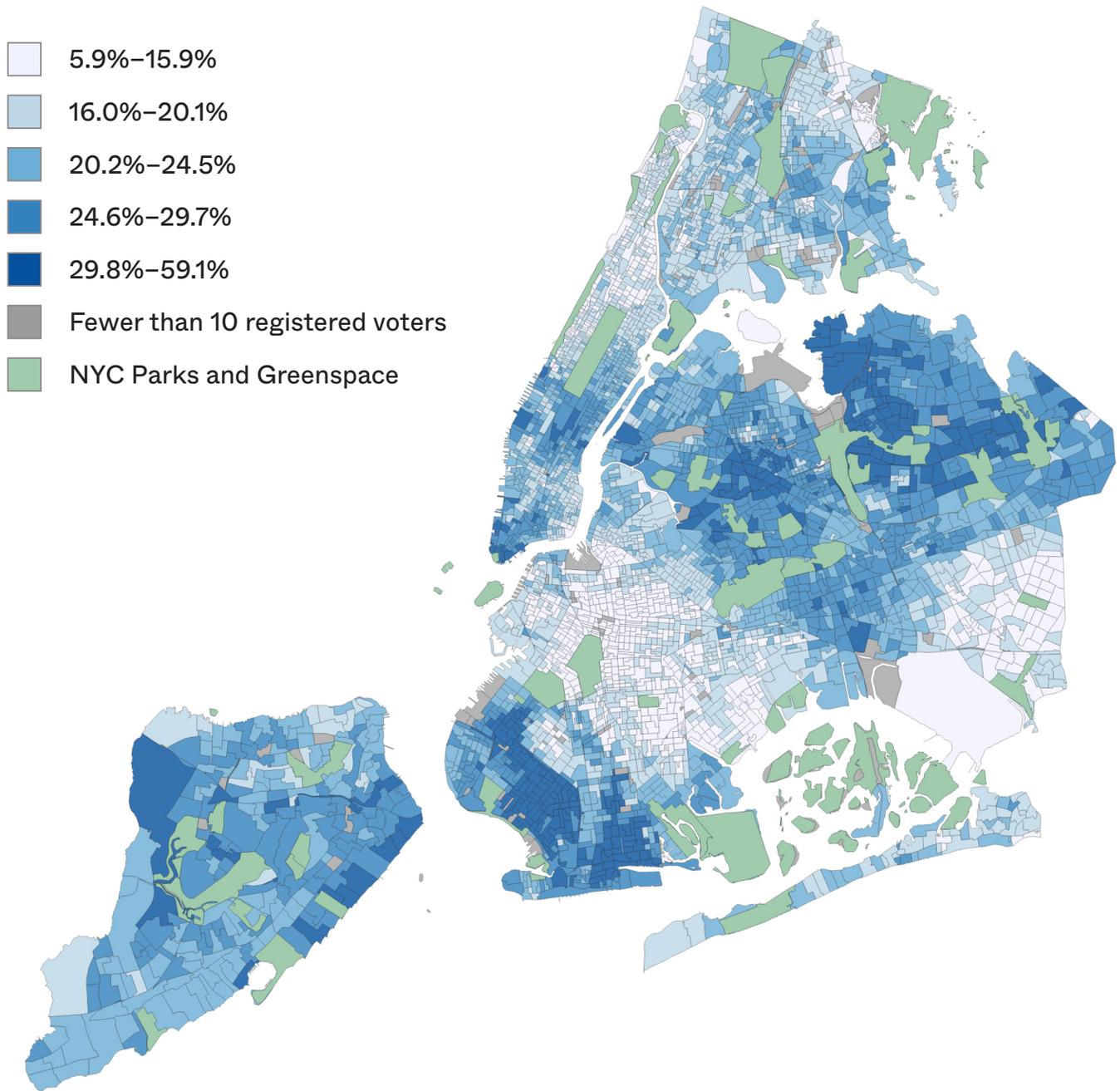
**Figure 6.2: Percent of voters by political party group, by age group**



## Location of unaffiliated voters

The concentration of unaffiliated voters varies geographically across New York City. Figure 6.3 maps the percentage of registered unaffiliated voters across the city by election district. Staten Island has a consistently high concentration of unaffiliated voters throughout the borough. In Brooklyn, unaffiliated voters are primarily concentrated in southern and southeastern election districts. Queens also has a notable share across the borough, with the highest concentrations in the northeastern election districts. Meanwhile, election districts in Manhattan and the Bronx exhibit more mixed distributions of unaffiliated voters.

**Figure 6.3: Percent of registered unaffiliated voters by election district**



## National landscape of unaffiliated voters

New York City’s unaffiliated voters share commonalities with unaffiliated voters nationally. According to Gallup, in 2023, 43.0% of U.S. adults identified as “political independents,” far surpassing the 27.0% of the population that identified as Democrats and another 27.0% that identified as Republicans.<sup>72</sup> The share of unaffiliated voters in the U.S. has grown over the past few decades, up from 33.0% in 1988.<sup>73</sup> While this increase is due in part to the number of states that do not have party registration as part of their voter registration system, there has been a shift away from party registration across the country in recent years.<sup>74</sup> Increased polarization has led to a growing chasm of voters that simply do not identify with the nation’s two major political parties.<sup>75</sup>

In a national online survey conducted in 2017, the Pew Research Center found that 42.0% of male and 32.0% of female respondents self-identified as purely “independent” or unaffiliated with either of the two major parties. When racial demographics are considered, 37.0% of White respondents, 27.0% of Black respondents, and 37.0% of Hispanic respondents identified as purely independent.<sup>76</sup> This research, while providing important insight into the demographics of unaffiliated voters on the national level, is limited in scope because it relies on self-reported survey data. As previously stated, more research is needed to better understand the identities, beliefs, and experiences of unaffiliated voters across the country.

Across presidential swing states, much like in New York City, the average age of unaffiliated voters tends to be younger than that of registered Democrats and Republicans. Young voters in Generation Z—ages 18 to 27—make up 26% of unaffiliated voters, and Millennials and Generation Y—ages 28 to 43—make up 36% of unaffiliated voters.<sup>77</sup> The “[Research on Young Voters](#)” section of this report discusses various specific dynamics that younger voters experience more acutely.

Additionally, New York, like many other jurisdictions across the country, excludes unaffiliated voters from the candidate nomination process by holding closed primary elections. Closed

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72 Jones, Jeffrey M. “[Independent Party ID Tied for High; Democratic ID at New Low.](#)” *Gallup News*, 12 Jan 2024.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Troiano, Nick. *The Primary Solution: Our Rescuing Democracy from the Fringes*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 27 Feb 2024.

76 Pew Research Center. “[Trends in Party Affiliation Among Demographic Groups.](#)” 20 Mar 2018.

77 Slobin, Sarah. “[Understanding Independents: Who Comprises the Nonpartisan Electorate?](#)” *Reuters*, 11 Apr 2024.

party primaries restrict voting to those registered to the specific party. The closed primary system originated as a way to allow voters to have a say in the party’s nominee leading up to the general election. Previously, party nominees were selected by party leaders.<sup>78</sup> Primaries have become an important part of this nation’s electoral process. However, restricted voter participation and low voter turnout have allowed national party organizations and political leaders to maintain positions of power and challenge incumbents when politically necessary.<sup>79</sup> Closed primaries mean that unaffiliated voters are unable to weigh in on which candidates will appear on the ballot in the general election, and thus candidates are less likely to reflect the interests and priorities of unaffiliated voters.

The exclusion of unaffiliated voters, both from primary elections and from input in party platforms, impacts attitudes around voting. Researchers at Unite America found that only a third of independent voters across key swing states felt that their vote mattered.<sup>80</sup> However, 58% of voters excluded from voting in primaries said they would be more likely to vote for a party that allowed them to participate in partisan primaries.<sup>81</sup> In 2018, the Pew Research Center identified only 7.0% of surveyed independent voters who did not lean to either of the two major parties. However, there is a growing base of voters who do not identify with either of the two major parties regardless of how their values may “lean.”<sup>82</sup> Restrictive policies that exclude unaffiliated voters are emblematic of a system that disregards a rapidly growing electorate bloc, which in turn impacts voter behaviors and attitudes about voting along party lines.

At the municipal level, most cities—42 of America’s 50 largest cities—practice some form of nonpartisan primaries.<sup>83</sup> Research shows primary systems that are open to unaffiliated voters or entirely nonpartisan tend to result in higher voter turnout and more representative electorates. When studying the impact of recent primary system reform on elections in Colorado, Idaho, and Oklahoma, researchers found there was an average five-percentage

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78 Troiano, Nick. *The Primary Solution: Rescuing Our Democracy from the Fringes*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 27 Feb 2024.

79 Ibid.; This practice is known as “primarying out,” when leaders of political parties invest heavily in a candidate to challenge incumbents during the primary election under the assumption that incumbents will not have anticipated the need to campaign heavily during this period.

80 Macomber, Carlo and Tyler Fisher. “[Not Invited to the Primary Party: Independent Voters and the Problem with Closed Primaries.](#)” *Unite America*. Feb 2024.

81 Ibid.

82 USC Dornsife News Staff. “[As 2024 Elections Approach, Experts Discuss the Rising Tide of Independent Voters Sweeping the Nation.](#)” 17 Nov 2023.

83 Troiano, Nick. *The Primary Solution: Rescuing Our Democracy from the Fringes*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 27 Feb 2024.

point increase in voter participation across these states.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, these researchers found that allowing unaffiliated voter participation yielded more demographically and politically representative voting populations.<sup>85</sup> Opening New York’s closed primary system to unaffiliated voters would likely increase voter turnout and make the electorate more representative.

## **Voter turnout of registered unaffiliated voters in New York City**

### **General elections**

Much like those registered to major and minor parties, unaffiliated voters in New York City have turned out at different rates depending on what races are on the ballot. Unaffiliated voters cannot vote in primary elections in New York State. However, they can and do vote in general elections, particularly in presidential election years. 52.1% of unaffiliated voters cast their general election ballots in 2020 and 49.3% in 2024. Turnout in the 2022 general election, which featured state and congressional races including Governor, was 24.7%—a considerable drop compared to presidential election years. Unaffiliated voters historically turn out at even lower rates in local election years, falling to 11.7% in the 2021 general election, which included Mayoral and City Council races. Turnout dropped even more to just 5.7% in the 2023 general election, an off-year election with no citywide races and few City Council races on the ballot. These findings indicate that unaffiliated voters in New York City are more inclined to vote in national contests than in local contests.

Unaffiliated voters in New York City have consistently recorded the lowest turnout compared to major and minor political party groups. Major party voters have had the highest voter turnout in the past five general elections, followed by minor party voters. See Figure 6.4 for the general election turnout by political party group from 2020 to 2024. Voter trends among unaffiliated, major, and minor party voters mirror broader voter participation patterns in New York City and cities across the United States, where national contests draw higher turnout than local ones.<sup>86</sup>

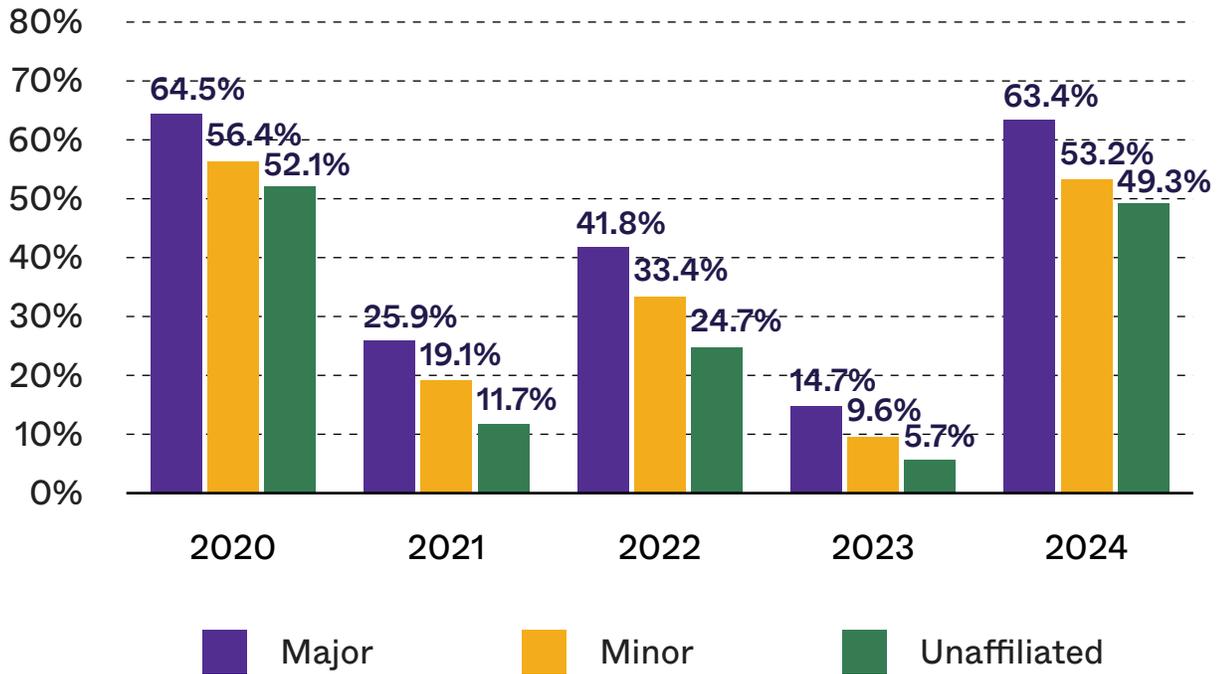
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84 Ferrer, Joshua, Michael Thorning, and J.D. Rackey. “[The Effect of Open Primaries on Turnout and Representation.](#)” *Bipartisan Policy Center*. 30 Oct 2024.

85 Ibid.

86 Hajnal, Zoltan and Avi Green. “[Big Cities—Tiny Votes? America’s Urban Voter Turnout.](#)” *Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research, UC San Diego*. Dec 2024.

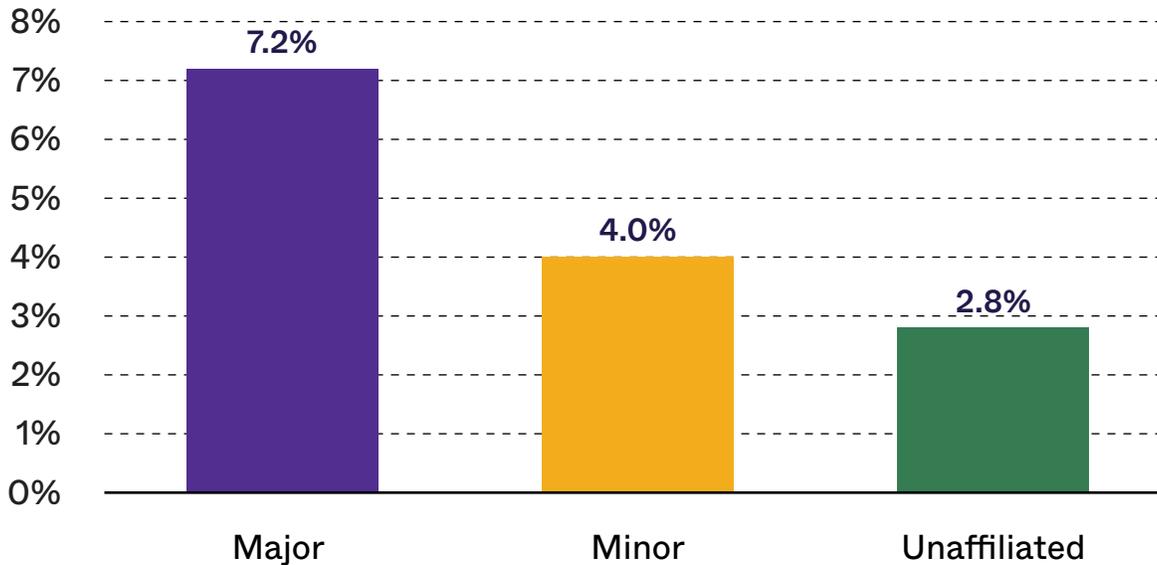
**Figure 6.4: General election turnout by political party group, 2020 to 2024**



### Special elections

Much like general elections, special elections in New York are open to all voters, regardless of political party. This means unaffiliated voters could participate in special elections. However, much like in other elections, their participation in special elections lags behind their major and minor party counterparts. In the special elections held across the city between 2020 and 2024, unaffiliated voters recorded an average special election turnout of just 2.8%. This turnout lags behind major party voters, with an average turnout of 7.2%, and minor party voters, with an average turnout of 4.0%. Figure 6.5 displays the average turnout in special elections by political party group, from 2020 to 2024.

**Figure 6.5: Average special election turnout by political party group, 2020 to 2024<sup>87</sup>**



Compared to general elections, the low average special election turnout among the three groups aligns with historical trends, as special election participation has consistently been lower in New York City.<sup>88</sup> Several factors contribute to New York City’s low turnout in special elections. One factor is the last-minute scheduling, which limits the timeframe to inform voters. Since political parties and campaigns often target their efforts on individuals who are highly engaged and most likely to vote, unaffiliated voters are often not included in outreach, making it increasingly likely that this population will not turn out to vote.<sup>89</sup> Another factor is voter fatigue, when voters become less likely to vote when asked to do so too frequently. Similarly, at the national level, special election voters tend to be more partisan-affiliated and politically active, with lower participation among unaffiliated voters.<sup>90</sup> The “[Policy and Legislative Recommendations](#)” section discusses the issue of special elections scheduling in more detail and includes a recommendation to prioritize voters when scheduling elections throughout the year.

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87 The November 2, 2021, special election was excluded from the analysis because the City BOE voter file and the voter history data do not distinguish between the general election and the special election, which was held on the same day.

88 2022–23 Voter Analysis Report. “[2022 Special Elections Analysis](#).”

89 Cohn, Nate. “[Turnout Data Reveals the Core of Democrats’ Success in Special Elections](#).” *The New York Times*, 02 Feb 2024.

90 Ibid.

## Discussion

Our analyses examine voter behavior and characteristics of the unaffiliated electorate in New York City. However, these analyses are constrained by data limitations. While the City BOE voter file and voter history data provide valuable insights into metrics such as voter registration and turnout, they offer minimal demographic details beyond voter age and geography. Moreover, neither the voter file nor the voter history data capture voter intent or attitudes, which as a result are absent from our analyses. Common Cause New York delved into the qualitative perspectives of unaffiliated voters across the state, exploring their motivations and self-perception within the political system.<sup>91</sup> Their findings suggest unaffiliated voters in New York would be more likely to increase their participation in the political process, particularly in primary elections, if they were given the opportunity.

Most of the research discussed in this section examines unaffiliated voter turnout in general elections. However, there is a significant gap in research on unaffiliated voter participation in special elections and on special elections more broadly. Our findings show that unaffiliated voters in New York City had the lowest average turnout in special elections compared to their party-affiliated peers, but there is limited research explaining the reasons for the trend. We believe further quantitative analysis of unaffiliated voter turnout in special elections, combined with collecting qualitative insights, would provide a deeper understanding and awareness of perceptions and engagement with special elections among unaffiliated voters.

Additionally, our findings may not be fully applicable to all unaffiliated voters at the state or national levels. To address this, we plan to expand our analyses in the future to include statewide data, which would enable a comparison of voter registration and turnout patterns in New York City with patterns for the rest of the state. However, limitations of the State Board of Elections voter file, including the variability in timelines and reporting processes across counties, may impact the accuracy of our results. Additionally, variations in primary election systems in municipalities and states across the country could make direct comparisons difficult.<sup>92</sup>

Overall, this analysis underscores the growing importance of understanding unaffiliated voters in New York City, who consistently make up the second-largest segment of the electorate yet exhibit the lowest turnout. To build on these findings, future research should aim to uncover more nuanced trends in voter behavior and participation of unaffiliated voters at the city, state, and national levels. See the “[Research on Young Voters](#)” section for more information on young unaffiliated voters and the barriers they face to voter participation.

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91 Goff, Sarah. “[Independent State of Mind: The Rise of New York’s Unaffiliated Voters.](#)” *Common Cause New York*. 30 Nov 2023.

92 States across the United States typically adopt one of the six following primary systems: closed, partially closed, partially open, open to unaffiliated voters, open, and multi-party/nonpartisan primaries.



# Research on Young Voters

# Research on Young Voters

In 2024, there were more than 40 million eligible Gen Z voters across the United States. Eight million of these potential voters, the latest generation to become eligible to vote, turned 18 since the 2022 midterm elections.<sup>93</sup> “Young voters,” which the CFB defines as voters under the age of 30, are often characterized as a group with low voter turnout, high sensitivity to election law changes, vulnerability to gaps in civic education, and a lack of outreach and engagement from campaigns and elected officials.

Guided by the City Charter mandate to identify communities in NYC that are underrepresented within the electoral process, the CFB has identified young voters as a priority community for voter education and outreach.<sup>94</sup> Voters ages 18–29 consistently turn out at lower rates in New York City compared to all other age groups. In 2024, young voters cast their ballots at turnout rates of 3.7% in the presidential primary, 5.0% in the state and congressional primary, and 57.1% in the general election.

This section examines the voter behavior of individuals under 30 in 2024, the history of civic engagement among young people, the policies that influence younger voters, and the barriers they face in voter education, outreach, and participation. To further ground this research, this section concludes with findings from qualitative research conducted by the CFB’s 2024 cohort of Youth Ambassadors, a group of passionate young people ages 14–19 that engaged in research to understand and expand voter access and civic engagement in their communities.

## Turnout among voters under 30 in 2024

In 2024, all eligible New Yorkers could vote in three major elections—the April presidential primary, the June state and congressional primary, and the November general election. Figure 7.1 shows voter turnout for individuals ages 18–29 in these three elections, compared to voter turnout for individuals ages 70–79, the age group that typically has the highest turnout.<sup>95</sup> While turnout for voters ages 70–79 was still relatively low in both primary elections in 2024, it was more than triple that of voters ages 18–29.

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93 Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. “[41 Million Members of Generation Z Will be Eligible to Vote in 2024.](#)” 18 Oct 2023.

94 New York City Charter Revision Commission. “[Final Report of the 2010 New York City Charter Revision Commission.](#)” 23 Aug 2010.; and New York City Charter § [1054](#).

95 In the 2024 November general election, the 60–69 age group had the highest voter turnout, at 65.4%.

**Figure 7.1: Voter turnout for age groups 18 to 29 and 70 to 79**

Age group	April primary	June primary	November general
18–29	3.7%	5.0%	57.1%
70–79	12.9%	18.7%	65.8%
All ages	6.6%	10.1%	60.2%

Low turnout among young voters was reflected nationally in 2024. In the general election, 42% of young voters turned out in 2024, compared to 50% of young voters in the 2020 general election.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, even though young voter turnout in New York City surpassed that of the national average, it was still lower than in 2016 (56.4%) and 2020 (61.3%).

## Civic and political engagement of young people

Despite chronic low voter turnout, young people play a vital role in civic engagement. In immigrant communities, many of which are represented across New York City, young people act as information conduits and translators for their elders who experience linguistic and cultural barriers. Young people in New York City have a rich history of activism that has shaped public policy decisions for decades. This is reflected across the nation, with countless examples of electoral and non-electoral forms of engagement that have defined political movements.

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96 Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. [“Overall Youth Turnout Down From 2020 But Strong in Battleground States.”](#) 07 Nov 2024.; and Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. [“Half of Youth Voted in 2020, an 11-Point Increase from 2016.”](#) 07 Nov 2024.

From 1964, when 400,000 students boycotted against segregation in New York City schools, to the student-led anti-gun violence marches in 2018, New York’s young people have led history-shaping movements for causes such as civil rights, gun control, and climate change, among others.<sup>97</sup> Because campaigns so rarely engage young voters effectively, young people often opt to practice non-electoral civic engagement. Young people have organized their communities, donated, protested, and collaborated with policymakers to make legislative changes on issues they care about. Researchers at the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University (CIRCLE) found there has been a national upward trend of young people participating in marches and protests since 2016.<sup>98</sup>

**Figure 7.2: Youth participation in marches or protests in the U.S., 2016 to 2020\***

	2016	2018	2020
Percent of young people who reported participating in marches or protests	5%	16%	27%

\* Source: The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. [“Protests, Politics, and Power: Exploring the Connections Between Youth Voting and Youth Movements.”](#) Aug 2021.

The investment in social issues among young people is reflected in the ways they engage in elections. Young voters are characterized as a group motivated by issues and policies rather than candidates.<sup>99</sup> When polled, the issues young voters are interested in often reflect the issues raised in popular social movements over the past decade. For example, of the voters who indicated in 2023 that they were not committed to voting for President in 2024, 22% stated they would “definitely vote on a state abortion referendum.”<sup>100</sup> During the 2022 midterm election cycle, 44% of voters ages 18 to 29 reported abortion was their top issue

97 Museum of the City of New York. [“Civil Rights: New York and Civil Rights 1945–1964.”](#)

98 Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. [“Protests, Politics, and Power: Exploring the Connections Between Youth Voting and Youth Movements. Aug 2021.”](#)

99 Medina, Alberto, Kelly Siegel-Stecher, and Sara Suzuki. [“Young People and the 2024 Election: Struggling, Disconnected, and Dissatisfied.”](#) *The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University.* 15 Jan 2025.

100 Milligan, Susan. [“Young Voters See Abortion as Key Motivating Factor, Poll Finds.”](#) *U.S. News,* 05 Dec 2023.

when deciding whether to vote.<sup>101</sup> In recent polling, when asked to identify issues that were important to them, 64% of young voters identified inflation, 54% gun violence, 50% abortion, 47% immigration, and 43% climate change.<sup>102</sup> While voters of all age groups care about certain issues, research suggests that younger voters face greater dissatisfaction with candidates.

Historically, young people have made an impact on elections when they engage. For example, in 2020, 51% of young people nationwide voted in the presidential election, an increase of 8 percentage points from the 2016 presidential election.<sup>103</sup> This increase in turnout proved decisive in several battleground states, including Arizona, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, where the margins of victory were less than 50,000 votes.<sup>104</sup> In 2024, however, the national turnout rate among young voters dropped to an estimated 42%.<sup>105</sup>

In the 2024 Democratic presidential primary, many young people across the country used their vote to express their disapproval of U.S. military aid to Israel. NPR referred to this movement as “led by young organizers and amplified by young leaders.”<sup>106</sup> The movement included New York’s “Leave it Blank” campaign, discussed in more detail in the “[On the Ballot](#)” section of this report, which encouraged voters to cast blank ballots in the Democratic presidential primary.

## Policy landscape: Context for young voter participation

Despite the history and continued civic engagement of young people in New York City and across the country, voter turnout remained lower than that of other age groups. This gap begs a deeper look into public policies and young people’s relationship to government. Researchers cite lack of habit formation, the high opportunity cost of voting, institutional barriers, and a lack of outreach from candidates as some of the main reasons why turnout

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101 Booth, Ruby Belle. “[The Abortion Election: How Youth Prioritized and Voted Based on Issues.](#)” *Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University*. 14 Nov 2022.

102 Institute of Politics, Harvard Kennedy School. “[Harvard Youth Poll.](#)” Spring 2024.

103 KIDS COUNT Data Center, The Annie E. Casey Foundation. “[Young Adults Ages 18 to 24 Who Voted in the Last Presidential Election in United States.](#)” Aug 2021.

104 Hope, Elan C. “[Rethinking Civic Engagement.](#)” *Brennan Center For Justice*. 16 Feb 2022.

105 Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. “[Overall Youth Turnout Down From 2020 But Strong in Battleground States.](#)” 07 Nov 2024.

106 Moore, Elena. “[On Primary Day, Young Michigan Voters are Leading Call to be ‘Uncommitted’ to Biden.](#)” *NPR*, 27 Feb 2024.

rates may be lower among younger voters.<sup>107</sup> Younger voters can experience restrictions on their time due to work or school, a greater likelihood of living away from their voting address, and critical gaps in information regarding elections because of their involvement in school and entering the workforce—all of which likely impact their ability to vote.<sup>108</sup>

Policies and programs related to elections and voting have disparate and unequal impacts on young people. New York’s closed primary system prevents unaffiliated voters from casting their ballots; since unaffiliated voters are more likely to be young, this policy disproportionately impacts young people. Unequal access to civic education in schools across New York City creates disparate access to civic education. Lastly, different levels of knowledge of and interactions with systems that promote and encourage pre-registration yield minimal and unequal participation. The remainder of this section explores these policies in more detail.

## Unaffiliated voters under age 30

Unaffiliated voters, or voters that are not registered to a political party, are excluded from primary elections in New York State. In New York (and nine other states), primaries are “closed,” meaning political parties hold primary elections that only voters registered to their party can participate in.<sup>109</sup> As detailed in the [“Analysis of Unaffiliated Voters”](#) section, in 2024 unaffiliated voters made up 21.1% of registered voters in New York City, with 1.0 million voters. Young people made up more than a quarter (26.1%) of all registered unaffiliated voters. Figure 7.3 shows the distribution of registered unaffiliated voters by age group.

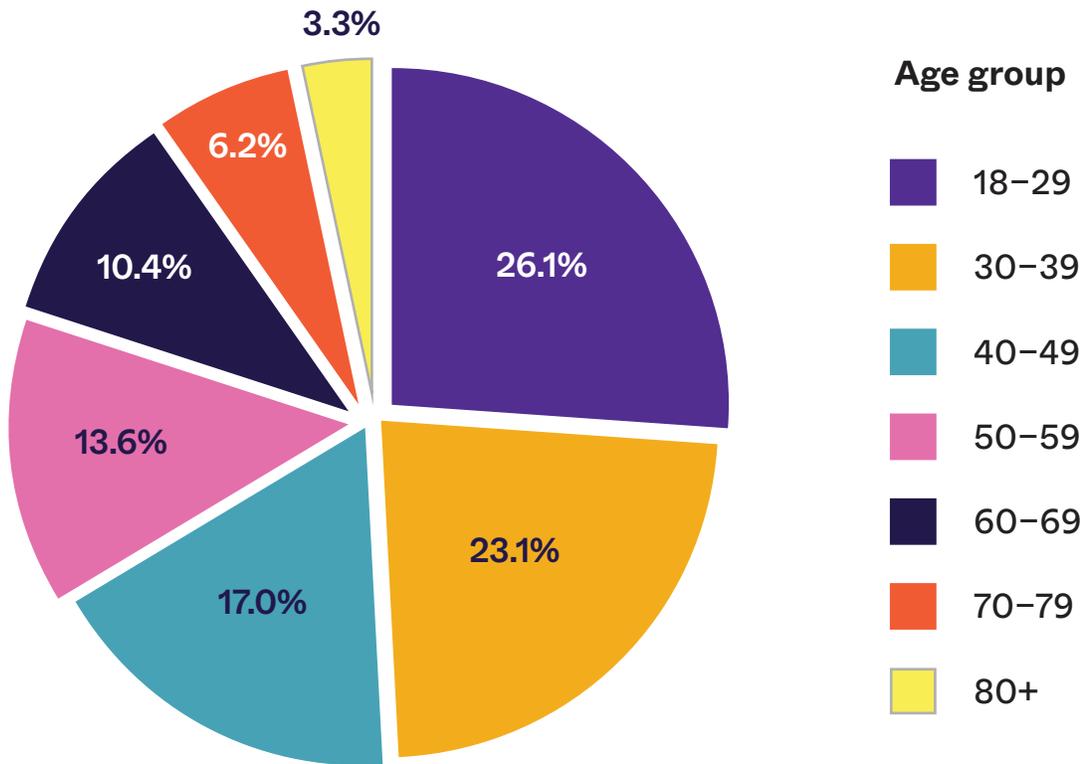
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107 Tor, Erin. [“Why So Many Young People Don’t Vote – And How to Change That.”](#) *Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia*. 20 Feb 2020.

108 Symonds, Alexandria. [“Why Don’t Young People Vote, and What Can be Done About It?”](#) *The New York Times*, 08 Oct 2020.

109 NCSL. [“State Primary Election Types.”](#) 06 Feb 2024.

**Figure 7.3: New York City unaffiliated voters by age group**



Because of New York’s closed primary system, young voters are shut out of New York City primary elections at higher rates than their older peers. Given low voter turnout rates among young people, it is unsurprising that campaigns reach out to young voters at lower rates than other age groups.<sup>110</sup> However, this lack of outreach and engagement further removes younger voters from the electoral process, leaving them more likely to feel disengaged, disconnected, and disillusioned from party politics, candidates, and voting overall. These sentiments are likely carried over into the general election, which is open to unaffiliated voters. Finally, the exclusion of many young voters means the nominating candidates are less likely to represent the issues most important to young people.

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110 Medina, Alberto, Peter de Guzman, Kelly Siegel-Stechler, and Kelly Beadle. “[Youth in 2022: Concerned About Issues but Neglected by Campaigns.](#)” *Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University.* 19 Dec 2022.

## Civic education deserts

Civic education is not only about gaining knowledge of government and our electoral system, but is also about acquiring the tools to understand, engage with, and advocate for issues that impact voters. One of the barriers young people face is access to information, which our 2024 Youth Ambassadors also identified in their research. Researchers in the field coined the term “civic education desert” to describe areas that are “characterized by a dearth of opportunities for civic and political learning and engagement.”<sup>111</sup> Researchers identified that 60% of rural youth and 30% of urban and suburban youth across the U.S. reside in civic education deserts.<sup>112</sup> A lack of formal and/or informal civic education can make individuals less likely to recognize their place within their community and the electoral system, as well as the electoral system’s impact on their lives.

In addition to civic education deserts creating a lack of access to knowledge, it can also impact voters’ innate motivation to engage in the political process.<sup>113</sup> 35% of young people living in civic education deserts did not vote in 2016, and in 2024 only 17% of individuals ages 18–29 nationwide expressed trust in the federal government.<sup>114</sup> The impact of growing up in a civic education desert is found to have more influence than the typical predictors of civic engagement, such as education and income level.<sup>115</sup>

While New York City on the whole is not considered a civic desert, civic engagement opportunities vary greatly across the city, in scope and quantity. Some civic education is required; for example, New York City public high school students must complete eight social studies credits to graduate, and one of those credits must be in “Participation in Government.” However, the number and diversity of civic engagement courses beyond the minimum requirements can vary greatly across schools depending on the school’s funding and location. Researchers at the Center for Educational Equity found that New York City public schools in high- and average-income areas offered more courses above the required

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111 DeCesare, Tony. “[Centered Democratic Education: Public Schools as Civic Centers.](#)” *Philosophical Studies in Education* 51, 33–43. 2020.

112 Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. “[Civic Deserts: 60% of Rural Millennials Lack Access to a Political Life.](#)” 26 Mar 2017.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.; Institute of Politics, Harvard Kennedy School. “[Harvard Youth Poll.](#)” 2024.

115 Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University. “[Civic Deserts: 60% of Rural Millennials Lack Access to a Political Life.](#)” 26 Mar 2017.

minimum, compared to schools in low-income areas that only offered students the required minimum of credits.<sup>116</sup>

New York City and State have launched civic education initiatives; however, participation is not required, and schools may elect to participate in these optional programs. In 2018, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) launched its “Civics for All” initiative to provide resources, professional development, and programming for civics education for all middle and high school students. The CFB collaborates with NYCPS to offer student trainings leading up to “Civics Week,” a week-long celebration of all forms of civic engagement.

New York State offers the “Seal of Civic Readiness” for graduating high school students. Students can achieve the “Seal of Civic Readiness” by completing a combination of the following tasks:<sup>117</sup>

- Complete 4 social studies credits
- Achieve a mastery or proficiency level on the Social Studies Regents exam
- Complete a civic research project
- Complete a service-learning project (minimum of 25 hours)
- Complete an elective course that promotes civic engagement
- Complete a civic capstone project

While this program seeks to encourage students to receive a well-rounded civic education, funding and staffing disparities across schools can make it difficult to meet every requirement. Additionally, not all schools opt to make these programs available to their students. Researchers also found that students that attended high- and average- income New York City public schools had greater access to experiential learning about civic engagement both in and outside of the classroom.<sup>118</sup>

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116 Wolff, Jessica R. and Joseph R. Rogers. “[Resources and Readiness: Exploring Civic Education Access and Equity in Six New York High Schools.](#)” *The Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University*. Jun 2019.

117 New York State Education Department. “[Seal of Civic Readiness.](#)”

118 Ibid.

The CFB’s 2023 Voter Analysis Report recommended the creation of a civic engagement fellowship program that would place fellows in local community-based organizations (CBOs) to expand the reach of the CFB’s existing voter education and civic engagement programs.<sup>119</sup> Since then, CFB staff have been working to bring this recommendation to life. While not the only solution, a civic engagement fellowship program would provide targeted outreach to young people in the CFB’s priority communities to increase civic education and engagement.

## Registration and pre-registration

According to U.S. Census data, over 95,000 NYC residents turned 18 in 2024. In New York State, young people ages 16 and 17 can pre-register to vote, after which they automatically become registered when they turn 18. However, in 2024, only 5.2% of young people were pre-registered to vote in New York City.

Registration rates among young people and pre-registration rates among New Yorkers ages 16 and 17 vary by borough. While the citywide voter registration among young people was 75.9% in 2024, this ranged from 67.7% in Manhattan to 89.4% in Staten Island. Similarly, while the pre-registration rate was 5.2% citywide, this ranged from 4.7% in Brooklyn to 14.2% in Staten Island. Figure 7.4 displays young voter registration and pre-registration rates by borough.

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119 2023 Voter Analysis Report. [“Policy and Program Recommendations.”](#)

**Figure 7.4: Young voter registration and pre-registration rates in New York City**

Borough	Voter registration rate, ages 18–29	Pre-registration rate, ages 16 and 17
Manhattan	67.7%	8.1%
Bronx	72.1%	5.9%
Brooklyn	76.3%	4.7%
Queens	83.6%	7.6%
Staten Island	89.4%	14.2%
Citywide	75.9%	5.2%

Youth pre-registration is often correlated with two factors: the frequency with which youth obtain a driver’s licenses and register to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and the frequency and success of voter registration drives in schools.<sup>120</sup> Because many young people in the city under 18 do not drive and therefore do not have a driver’s license, they are less likely to interact with pre-registration systems, meaning pre-registration rates tend to be low.<sup>121</sup> This may also mean that young people who do not interact with these systems may be less likely to know about pre-registration.

While policies such as pre-registration for young voters and registration through the DMV promote voter registration and civic engagement, more can be done to ensure young people are aware of these opportunities and that these policies are equitable and accessible to all, even those who do not regularly interact with the DMV.

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120 Force, Eliot. “[Report: NYC has Dismal Voter Registration Rates for 18-Year-Olds.](#)” *City & State*. 21 Jun 2024.

121 Brill, Laura. “[New York: 150,000 18-Year-Olds Remain Unregistered to Vote in the Empire State.](#)” *The Civic Center*. 21 Jun 2024.

# Spotlight: Research from the CFB's 2024 Youth Ambassadors

In the summer of 2024, five CFB Youth Ambassadors—Kaden Charles (age 17), Lillian Parrella (age 16), Sarahi Pickering (age 15), Stella Vrapı (age 15), and Ronae Watson (age 17)—joined an Education and Outreach committee, led by members of the CFB’s Policy and Research unit. Their goal was to design and conduct qualitative research to understand the voting behaviors and beliefs of their peers.

The Youth Ambassadors came up with the following research question:

**“How do identity, experience, and values impact voter turnout for New Yorkers ages 16–25?”<sup>122</sup>**

Looking to their immediate communities, the five Youth Ambassadors interviewed 15 individuals across all five boroughs. Ten interviewees were below the age of 18, and eight were pre-registered to vote. The remaining five interviewees were over the age of 18 but were either not yet registered or had not yet voted in an election. After the Youth Ambassadors conducted research and analyzed their interviews together, they identified four major themes that distilled their findings: (1) access to information, (2) individual identity, (3) community values, and (4) alienation of voters.

After completing their research, the Youth Ambassadors reflected on their experience in writing. Their reflections are summarized below, by key theme.

## 1. Access to information

Researchers found that access to information was a limitation to voting. One interviewee stated that a lack of information about candidates and elections barred individuals from voting because they would not want to vote while being “ill-informed.” Interviewees were also not aware of pre-registration. One interviewee expressed that they did not know one could pre-register until someone came to their school for a voter registration drive.

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122 The age group of interest in this research question deviates from the CFB’s definition of the youth voter to capture the experiences of the Youth Ambassador peers.

Reflecting on their research findings, the Youth Ambassadors concluded that a major reason there may be lower turnout among young people is not that young people are disengaged or uninformed about issues that take center stage during elections, but rather that many may be uninformed about how to vote and may feel disconnected from the electoral process.

## **2. Individual identity**

Researchers determined that the individual identities of interviewees impacted the ways in which they interacted with the electoral system. Many interviewees shared their backgrounds, values, and personal identities when discussing their engagement with the electoral system. Researchers concluded that the individual and communal identities of interviewees impacted their experiences with the electoral system and, in some cases, greatly influenced some of the interviewees' political beliefs. Interviewees discussed how different cultural or ethnic identities and sexual orientations impacted their alignment with political parties and candidates. One interviewee discussed being the child of immigrants and growing up in a diverse community in Brooklyn that impacted their perception of which political issues are important.

Reflecting on their research findings, the Youth Ambassadors shared that their individual identities also drove their political beliefs, as well as their desire to conduct this research because they valued voting.

## **3. Community values**

Researchers found that in addition to interviewees' personal identities, many also discussed their community's values and the way they influenced their engagement in the electoral process. For example, one interviewee identified that their community valued honesty and hard work, so they tended to support candidates that were transparent and focused on the economy. Some respondents viewed engagement in the electoral process as a community event. Some noted that they gauged whether voting was important through the ways their community expressed engagement, such as activities like putting up campaign signs. One interviewee remembered an election acting as a major unifying event in their neighborhood. Reflecting on their research findings, the Youth Ambassadors expressed that their research gave them greater insight into the ways their community members value voting. One researcher noted that this process allowed them to learn how much they had in common with their peers even if they did not hold the same political beliefs.

#### 4. Alienation of voters

Many interviewees felt that most candidates failed to represent their communities, values, or experiences. They felt that candidate platforms and conduct during campaigns contributed to growing political contention and marked a concerning shift in the overall tone of American politics. For example, one interviewee from the Bronx stated that they identified as an independent voter because they felt that candidates ignored community issues or lacked genuine investment in addressing root causes of problems.

Interviewees cited factors such as age, perceived corruption, and personal attacks on the campaign trail as reasons that they felt disconnected from candidates and the electoral process. One interviewee stated that because the behavior of major party candidates did not reflect their community values, they were more likely to register as an independent voter than affiliate with a major political party.

Upon reflecting on these research findings, the Youth Ambassadors determined that the alienation of young people kept informed voters out of electoral politics despite engaging with political and community issues outside of elections.

Through their research, the Youth Ambassadors demonstrated the ways in which national trends of youth voters are reflected in New York City, across a wide range of communities and identities. Youth Ambassador researchers and their interviewees cited the same major topics that were identified as “most important” to youth voters on a national level.<sup>123</sup> Both researchers and interviewees also repeatedly expressed that a lack of knowledge on how to vote, alienation by and from candidates, and lack of representation were major inhibiting factors when conducting Get Out the Vote efforts to young people. While this section identifies numerous barriers that young people experience in the electoral and voting space, either uniquely or disproportionately, there are policy and legislative changes that can address these challenges. The next section, “[Policy and Legislative Recommendations](#),” includes recommendations that would address these barriers and encourage increased voter engagement and participation, especially among young people.

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123 Institute of Politics, Harvard Kennedy School. “[Harvard Youth Poll](#).” 2024.

# **Policy & Legislative Recom- endations**

# Policy and Legislative Recommendations

The NYC Charter mandates the CFB to “encourage and facilitate voter registration and voting by all residents of New York City who are eligible to vote and recommend methods to increase the rate of registration and voting by such residents.”<sup>124</sup> This report concludes with two recommendations and an explainer, all of which aim to address gaps in our electoral processes and to increase voter engagement and participation.

1. **Recommendation 1:** Join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a multi-state voter list maintenance organization, to improve the accuracy and safety of New York’s voter list.
2. **Recommendation 2:** Prioritize voters when choosing election dates to reduce voter fatigue and increase participation.
3. **Explainer:** Why was New York’s presidential primary election held so late?

## **Recommendation 1: Join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a multi-state voter list maintenance organization, to improve the accuracy and safety of New York’s voter list.**

Accurate voter rolls are a critical tool for maintaining election integrity and public trust. Each state has a federal mandate to keep their voter rolls—databases of eligible voters—as accurate as possible.<sup>125</sup> Maintaining these rolls is a complex and dynamic task, one with an immense impact on how people perceive, trust, and engage with voting. A state’s voter database can change daily as people die, become eligible to vote, or move within or out of state.

In New York, where election administration is decentralized to 62 county election boards, the challenges of managing voter rolls are amplified by outdated, paper-based processes that are prone to errors and delays. These inefficiencies disproportionately impact young voters and communities of color, who experience higher rates of mobility and systemic barriers to registration.<sup>126</sup> To modernize its voter roll system and strengthen democracy, New

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124 New York City Charter § [1054](#).

125 H.R.2 – 103rd Congress (1993–1994): “[National Voter Registration Act of 1993](#).”

126 Singh, Simrun and Katherine Fallon. “[Housing Instability Is a Critical Barrier to Voting Access](#).” *Housing Matters, Urban Institute*. 23 Oct 2024.; and Wray-Lake, Laura, Dr. Chris M. Wegemer, Ryo Sato, Leslie Ortiz, and Amy Wong. “[From Barriers to Ballots: Identifying and Reducing Voting Barriers for Young People](#).” *UC Center Sacramento*. 29 May 2024.

York should take legislative action to join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which has already proven its effectiveness in improving voter roll accuracy in other states across the country. Moreover, ERIC has demonstrated success in increasing civic participation through its membership mandate that requires all member states to provide voter registration information directly to eligible voters who are identified as unregistered.

## Voter rolls in New York

In New York State, voter rolls are currently updated through a combination of manual processes and automated systems, which requires collaboration across levels of government. Local election administration agencies are primarily responsible for maintaining voter rolls in their respective counties, while the New York State Board of Elections (State BOE) provides oversight and ensures compliance with state laws. Traditional methods of updating voter rolls, such as manual address verification or responding to voter inactivity, are often slow and prone to errors; the Pew Center on the States reported in 2012 that one in eight voter registrations are “significantly inaccurate or no longer valid.”<sup>127</sup>

New York relies on voter registration forms submitted by individuals (electronically and by mail), changes of address filed with the United States Postal Service (USPS), and information from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). New York has one of the largest numbers of registered voters in the country; the number of registered voters in New York City alone outpaces the total registered voters in most states. Yet the state’s decentralized approach can lead to inconsistencies in how voter information is maintained and updated across each county.

Compared to smaller states with more streamlined, centralized systems, New York faces higher levels of coordination and logistical hurdles, making the process of maintaining accurate and up-to-date voter rolls particularly complex. For example, a report by the Brennan Center for Justice highlights the opportunities for human error when state agencies complete registration applications in person; even when forms are submitted, clerical errors can result in inaccurate or incomplete registration records, leading to administrative challenges and potential disenfranchisement.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, New York has seen significant delays in the implementation of both online and automatic voter registration systems, in part due to the bureaucratic differences between state agencies.<sup>129</sup>

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127 The Pew Center on the States. [“Inaccurate, Costly, and Inefficient: Evidence That America’s Voter Registration System Needs an Upgrade.”](#) 14 Feb 2012.

128 Brennan Center for Justice. [“Modernizing Voter Registration in New York.”](#)

129 Munson, Emilie. [“New York’s Automatic Voter Registration Launch Will Be More Than 22 Years Late.”](#) *Times Union*, 29 Dec 2024.

## Voter roll accuracy and marginalized/disenfranchised voting populations

While these challenges impact the overall success of the state’s electoral system, inaccurate voter rolls disproportionately impact young people and people of color.<sup>130</sup> Individuals in these demographics are more likely to experience frequent changes in residence due to factors such as moving for school, work, or housing instability, which can lead to outdated or incomplete registration information.<sup>131</sup> Research has shown that young voters, particularly those under 30, are more likely to have mismatched or inactive registrations due to these frequent moves.<sup>132</sup>

People of color also face higher rates of mobility and are more likely to live in areas with greater housing instability and/or higher rental turnover, increasing the likelihood that their voter registration information will become outdated. Furthermore, voter suppression tactics, such as purges of voter rolls and challenges in voter registration updates, often target communities of color.<sup>133</sup>

Maintaining accurate voter rolls is critical to ensuring these groups are not disenfranchised by administrative issues related to outdated or inaccurate registration information.

## History of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC was established as an innovative solution to tackle persistent issues of outdated voter rolls and registration inefficiencies in the United States. Formed in 2012 by a bipartisan group of election officials from seven states, the goal of ERIC is twofold: to ensure voter rolls are accurate while also identifying and reaching out to unregistered yet eligible voters.

To become a member of ERIC, states pay annual dues based on the size of their voting age population. States that participate in ERIC submit their voter registration and motor vehicle data, which is then cross-referenced with other member states’ records as well as

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130 Cummings, Mike. “[Study Uncovers Flaws in Process for Maintaining State Voter Rolls.](#)” *Yale News*, 25 Feb 2021.

131 Singh, Simrun and Katherine Fallon. “[Housing Instability Is a Critical Barrier to Voting Access.](#)” *Housing Matters, Urban Institute*. 23 Oct 2024.

132 Searles, Sam and Sara Suzuki. “[Black Youth Are Invested in their Communities but Encounter Barriers to Voting.](#)” *Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University*. 29 Oct 2024.

133 Waldman, Michael. “[Mass Purges Are the New Voter Suppression.](#)” *Brennan Center for Justice*. 12 Mar 2024.; and Brennan Center for Justice. “[The Impact of Voter Suppression on Communities of Color.](#)” 10 Jan 2022.

federal sources, like the Social Security Administration’s death files and the USPS’s National Change of Address database.<sup>134</sup> Member states must submit data to ERIC at least every 60 days; ERIC then creates four different “list maintenance” reports that analyze data from all member states. Reports include cross-state movers, in-state movers, duplicate records, and deceased individuals.<sup>135</sup> Upon receiving this information from ERIC, states are required to update their voter rolls while acting in accordance with federal laws that protect voter data.

By identifying and addressing issues such as duplicate registrations, voter relocations, and outdated records due to deaths, ERIC strengthens electoral integrity and ensures cleaner voter rolls. Furthermore, ERIC mandates member states provide voter registration information to unregistered individuals identified as eligible, which has proven to increase voter participation.<sup>136</sup> Member states must also review any possible cases of illegal voting that ERIC reports identify.

## ERIC in other states

ERIC has demonstrated significant success in states across the country, improving the accuracy of voter rolls and bolstering election integrity. As of 2025, 24 states plus the District of Columbia are active ERIC members. Almost half of the eligible voters in the United States reside in an ERIC member state. Between 2012 and 2021, ERIC identified over 25 million out-of-date voter records and nearly 56 million eligible but unregistered voters.<sup>137</sup>

In Colorado, for example, ERIC has helped identify and update thousands of voter registrations, with state officials noting that ERIC has contributed to an 8% increase in registered voters since joining the program.<sup>138</sup> Common Cause Pennsylvania found that since 2020, the state was able to reduce duplicate voter registrations by more than 80% due to ERIC membership.<sup>139</sup>

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134 The Council of State Governments. “[Electronic Registration Information Center \(ERIC\)](#).” 18 Oct 2022.

135 Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. “[How Does It Work](#).” 2025.

136 Lohr, Steve. “[Another Use for A.I.: Finding Millions of Unregistered Voters](#).” *The New York Times*, 05 Nov 2018.

137 Gross, Joelle. “[Encouraging Voter List Maintenance Efforts with an ERIC Indicator](#).” Elections Performance Index, MIT Election Data + Science Lab. 01 Jun 2022.

138 Lohr, Steve. “[Another Use for A.I.: Finding Millions of Unregistered Voters](#).” *The New York Times*, 05 Nov 2018.

139 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of State. “[Administration of Voter Registration in Pennsylvania: 2022 Annual Report to the Pennsylvania General Assembly](#).” 30 Jun 2023.

Member states' efforts to mail notifications to individuals identified as eligible but unregistered to vote has proven successful. Research conducted among ERIC member states found that 10 to 20% of contacted individuals subsequently registered to vote, indicating a strong response rate for direct mail outreach.<sup>140</sup>

## Concerns about ERIC

At its height in 2022, ERIC had more than 30 member states. Nine states have since left the program, citing concerns over privacy, the cost of participation, and political reasons.<sup>141</sup> Following the 2020 presidential election cycle, election denial movements targeted ERIC and propelled concerns about data privacy without evidence to support these claims.<sup>142</sup> Although ERIC employs secure data transmission methods, some opponents fear that such data sharing could compromise voter privacy.<sup>143</sup>

Opposition to ERIC often centers on questions of potential political influence, with some critics suggesting that ERIC could be shaped by partisan interests in ways that could influence the voter registration process.<sup>144</sup> Conspiracy theories and misinformation have led states to withdraw from the program, with officials arguing that ERIC could influence voter registration in a way that favors one political party over another.<sup>145</sup> There is no national standard across states with regard to criteria for inactive voter removal, and there are numerous legal debates about removal practices across the country especially considering the misinformation and conspiracy theories that state withdrawals have perpetuated.<sup>146</sup> These withdrawals that cite partisanship as a reason for leaving the leading nonpartisan electronic voter registration database in the country represent a serious threat to our democracy, with election experts citing the risk of using less reliable list maintenance tools and spreading misinformation about election integrity.<sup>147</sup>

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140 Lohr, Steve. "[Another Use for A.I.: Finding Millions of Unregistered Voters.](#)" *The New York Times*, 05 Nov 2018.

141 American Oversight. "[Explaining the Campaign Against Nonpartisan Voter-Roll Tool ERIC: A Four-Part E-Course.](#)" 03 Jan 2024.

142 Parks, Miles. "[How the Far Right Tore Apart One of the Best Tools to Fight Voter Fraud.](#)" *NPR*, 06 Jun 2023.

143 Vigdor, Neil. "[G.O.P. States Abandon Bipartisan Voting Integrity Group, Yielding to Conspiracy Theories.](#)" *The New York Times*, 07 Mar 2023.

144 American Oversight. "[Explaining the Campaign Against Nonpartisan Voter-Roll Tool ERIC: A Four-Part E-Course.](#)" 03 Jan 2024.

145 Pavior, Ben and Miles Parks. "[Virginia Becomes the Latest GOP-Governed State to Quit a Voter Data Partnership.](#)" *NPR*, 11 May 2023.

146 Ibid.

147 American Oversight. "[Explaining the Campaign Against Nonpartisan Voter-Roll Tool ERIC: A Four-Part E-Course.](#)" 03 Jan 2024.

Overall, ERIC’s contributions to improving voter registration and ensuring electoral integrity highlight its immense value to participating states. ERIC remains the national standard for list maintenance. The opposition to strengthening voter registration access and fair elections highlights the urgent need for nonpartisan election efforts like ERIC to expand across the country.

## Joining ERIC

By joining ERIC, New York would gain access to ERIC’s data-sharing network, which would automate voter list maintenance and help ensure voter rolls are up-to-date and accurate. New York, through joining ERIC, could enhance election security, reduce administrative costs,<sup>148</sup> and bolster public trust in the integrity of its elections. Given the scale and complexity of voter registration in New York, participating in ERIC would represent a significant step toward modernizing voter roll maintenance and making it easier to identify changes to a voter’s address or potential voters who are not registered.

As the fourth most populous state in the nation, New York could lead other populous states in implementing this model. And joining ERIC would be mutually beneficial for other member states because they would gain access to New York State voter data that otherwise would not be shared.

New York will require a legislative mandate to join ERIC, and fortunately there is a pathway to accomplish this urgently needed change. S1356A, a bill authorizing the State BOE to join “multistate voter list maintenance organizations,” was introduced by State Senator James Skoufis as part of a broader voting rights package and passed unanimously in the State Senate on January 13, 2025.<sup>149</sup> The State Assembly must now vote on A3649B before it can be signed into law by the Governor.<sup>150</sup> The unanimous and swift passage of this bill in the State Senate indicates legislative interest in improving voter roll accuracy and increasing voter registration. New York State legislators should seriously consider advancing this

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148 The funding structure for ERIC members includes a one-time membership fee of \$25,000 and annual dues reflective of the total voting age population in the state. For the 2024–2025 fiscal year, dues ranged from approximately \$37,000 to \$117,000. The State BOE was allocated over \$98 million in fiscal year 2025, which covers the cost of maintaining the statewide voter registration database, though the exact portion of the budget dedicated to this is not specified. However, if New York paid the highest average dues of current ERIC member states, this would total less than 0.01% of the total budget and would still likely total significantly less than building a comparable national system from scratch.

149 New York State Senate. S1356 (2025–26): “[Relates to Joining Multistate Voter List Maintenance Organizations.](#)”

150 New York State Assembly. A3649B (2025–26): “[Relates to Joining Multistate Voter List Maintenance Organizations.](#)”

bill—the advantages of joining ERIC far surpass the cost of joining, and doing so would establish New York as a leader in nonpartisan voting infrastructure nationwide.

## **Recommendation 2: Prioritize voters when choosing election dates to reduce voter fatigue and increase participation.**

In 2024, New Yorkers cast ballots in five elections—two primary elections, one general election, and two special elections. New Yorkers are consistently, in most years, asked to vote multiple times a year. This recommendation is grounded in research on voter fatigue, the concept that holding frequent elections leads to lower turnout among voters. This recommendation identifies three examples of ways that New York’s election scheduling yields too many elections and explores systemic changes that could reduce voter fatigue and increase voter participation.

### **Research on voter fatigue**

Voter fatigue is defined by increased disengagement or apathy, often experienced when voters are asked to vote too frequently, either within one election cycle or across many years.<sup>151</sup> New York’s electoral system creates an incubator for choice fatigue. In 2024, New York State held two primary elections less than three months apart. New Yorkers eligible to participate in the February 2024 special elections had three elections, each less than three months apart, from February through June.

The current election calendar is dictated primarily by state and municipal legislative schedules to ensure incumbents don’t have to campaign too early in the legislative session and challengers have more time to fundraise. Special elections, on the other hand, prioritize shorter vacancies in elected offices and the ability of political parties to choose their preferred candidates. Both considerations have led to frequent elections, often with little prioritization of voter experience.

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151 Garmann, Sebastian. “[Election Frequency, Choice Fatigue, and Voter Turnout.](#)” *European Journal of Political Economy*, 47, 19–35. March 2017.

One study of United States elections found that holding more than one election in a three-month period can lead to long-term choice fatigue and lower voter turnout.<sup>152</sup> Additional research applies the psychological concept of choice fatigue to the election space. Researchers found that in the context of elections, too many elections means that instead of voters deciding which candidates to vote for, voters end up questioning whether they should go to the polls at all, ultimately lowering participation rates.<sup>153</sup>

Voter fatigue has especially dire consequences for the CFB’s priority communities, such as young voters, who already experience voter access issues and low voter turnout. The “[Research on Young Voters](#)” section of this report explores various conditions that make young voters less likely to turn out to vote. Some researchers argue that holding elections more frequently helps to build habitual voters, which over time leads to higher turnout in all elections, not only high-profile ones.<sup>154</sup> This same research argues that frequent elections familiarize voters with election processes, which may decrease the overall burden of voting.<sup>155</sup> Each election helps current voters become more comfortable with the electoral process. However, this does not help to convert non-voters into voters, nor does this research address non-voters.<sup>156</sup> In New York, this is the problem we need to focus on.

Terms such as “super voters” and “triple prime voters” refer to voters who are most likely to vote in upcoming elections based on their voting history. Campaigns and political parties target these frequent voters, since they are more likely to vote in future elections. However, this leaves out the large population of individuals who are registered but have never voted or who vote infrequently. This creates a vicious cycle in which campaigns are less likely to contact newer and infrequent voters because they do not reliably turn out, and newer and infrequent voters are less likely to turn out because they are not contacted and receive less voter education and outreach. Furthermore, as demonstrated in previous sections of this report, newer and infrequent voters are disproportionately younger.<sup>157</sup> The CFB takes the opposite approach in its targeting of voter education and outreach, identifying priority communities that typically receive the least communication and engagement to interrupt this cycle.

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152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid.

156 2022–23 Voter Analysis Report. “[NYC Votes in 2022.](#)”

157 Medina, Alberto, Peter de Guzman, Kelly Siegel-Stechler, and Kelly Beadle. “[Youth in 2022: Concerned About Issues but Neglected by Campaigns.](#)” *Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University.* 19 Dec 2022.

This recommendation outlines three election scheduling issues that increase voter fatigue among New Yorkers. The three issues are:

1. Too many elections across years
2. Too many elections within an election year
3. Additional last-minute special elections

The rest of this recommendation explores these three issue areas and suggests ways to reduce voter fatigue and increase voter participation.

## 1. Too many elections across years

In the 2022 and 2023 versions of this report, the CFB recommended aligning odd-year city elections with even-year state and federal elections, which is a proven way to reduce the number of elections across years and increase voter turnout.<sup>158</sup>

As discussed in the “[On the Ballot](#)” section of this report, New York City had an impressive voter registration rate of 85.5% in 2024 but low voter participation.<sup>159</sup> Turnout is even lower in municipal elections; average turnout in the city for mayoral elections from 2001 to the present is 29.5%, while turnout for gubernatorial and presidential elections in the same time period is 35.6% and 60.8% respectively.<sup>160</sup> Consolidating elections would therefore ensure more New Yorkers vote for who will represent them at every level of government, while also reducing unnecessary systemic barriers to equal participation in our local democracy, such as voter fatigue.

The trend toward aligning local elections with state or federal contests is gaining momentum, with New York Governor Hochul setting the precedent in 2023 when she signed legislation that shifted most county and local elections.<sup>161</sup> A comparable change that would cover New York City requires a constitutional amendment set in motion by legislation introduced at the state level.

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158 Kaminsky, Dan and Ben Weinberg. “[Moving Municipal Elections to Even-Numbered Years.](#)” *Citizens Union*. Dec 2022.

159 2022–23 Voter Analysis Report. “[Policy & Legislative Recommendations.](#)”

160 Ibid.

161 New York State Senate. S3505B (2023–24): “[Provides that Certain Local Elections Held Outside of New York City Shall be in an Even-Numbered Year.](#)”

At the end of the 2023–2024 legislative session, two bills were introduced that would amend the State Constitution to align elections to even years, one that excluded New York City and one that included New York City.<sup>162</sup> Neither was signed into law, meaning new legislation must be reintroduced in the 2025–2026 session. Notably, the New York City Council introduced a resolution in 2024 that supports an amendment to the New York State Constitution to move New York City elections to even-numbered years.<sup>163</sup> The last step of the multi-year process would be to amend the City Charter, with yet another question posed to voters, either through a bill passed by the Council or a Charter Revision Commission.

Although the process is complicated and long, cities that moved their local elections from odd to even years show a stark boost in voter turnout. In a study conducted in December 2024, researchers analyzed data from the 50 largest cities in the U.S. and found cities that held local elections during the same cycle as presidential elections had far higher turnout compared to cities that held these elections in separate years.<sup>164</sup> On average, cities that aligned their federal and local elections had a voter turnout of 61.3%, compared to an average turnout of 26.2% for cities that held municipal elections in odd years.<sup>165</sup> This report provides examples of cities that aligned their elections and saw tremendous jumps in voter turnout.

Even-year local elections have also been shown to increase representation among people who vote, particularly younger voters and voters of color, and reduce the influence of special interests whose independent expenditures have more power to sway low-turnout elections.<sup>166</sup> Consolidating local elections with state and federal elections would therefore ensure more New Yorkers who are more representative of the population are voting on who will represent them at every level of government.

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162 New York State Senate. S9826 (2023–24): “[Requires Elections and Terms of Certain Officials Occur on Even-numbered Years Except in the City of New York.](#)”; and New York State Senate. S9126 (2023–24): “[Requires Elections and Terms of Certain Officials Occur on Even-Numbered Years.](#)”

163 New York City Council. Resolution 0189-2024 (2024–25): “[Amendment to the New York State Constitution to Move New York City Elections to Even-Numbered Years.](#)”

164 Hajnal, Zoltan and Avi Green. “[Big Cities—Tiny Votes? America’s Urban Voter Turnout.](#)” *Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research, UC San Diego*. Dec 2024.

165 Ibid.

166 Ibid.; 2023 Voter Analysis Report. “[Policy and Program Recommendations.](#)”

## 2. Too many elections within an election year

In addition to holding elections in even and odd years, New York sometimes holds multiple primary elections in the same year. Specifically, during presidential election years, New York holds a presidential primary election (on April 2 in 2024) and a state and congressional primary election a few months later (on June 25 in 2024). Sometimes there are valid reasons to hold separate elections, such as differences in the timing of legislative sessions and the national campaigning calendar. In this case, moving the state and congressional primary earlier in the year would pose logistical and political challenges. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that asking voters to show up to the polls multiple times in a few months contributes to voter fatigue and likely discourages voters from showing up at all.

There is a historical precedent for New York combining multiple primaries in the same year. Prior to 2020, New York held congressional primaries in June of even years and state primaries in September. The New York State Legislature consolidated these primaries in 2020, both of which are now held on the same day in June.<sup>167</sup>

While election calendars are designed with incumbents in mind, multiple primaries held in a short timeframe can also decrease the capacity of political parties and candidates to mobilize voters.<sup>168</sup> Because mobilization and canvassing for candidates usually relies heavily on the time and labor of volunteers, higher frequency of elections is more likely to deplete the availability of motivated volunteers.<sup>169</sup>

Furthermore, holding multiple elections dramatically increases administrative costs that could be reduced if the elections were consolidated. In 2024, it cost the City Board of Elections \$34.4 million to administer the April primary and another \$35.5 million to

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167 Foderaro, M. Lisa. "[Only in New York: Where Primary Day Comes Twice a Year.](#)" *The New York Times*, 25 Jun 2018.; Platsky, Jeff. "[New York Primaries, Local and Federal, Will be Held in June.](#)" *Press Connect*, 22 Feb 2019. In addition to this example, there is another more recent example of the legislative change of primary dates. In 2022, primaries were moved from their original June date to August because the New York State Court of Appeals ruled the new district map drawn by the Independent Redistricting Committee to be unconstitutional. See Mahoney, Bill. "[New York's Top Court Throws Out District Lines and Delays Primary.](#)" *Politico*, 27 Apr 2022.

Prior to 2012, New York State held state and congressional primaries in September. In 2012, the federal government sued the State of New York, arguing that the September primary election date for congressional races did not leave enough time for absentee ballots from overseas to be received and processed. As a result, the congressional primary was moved to June and the state primary was held in September.

168 Ibid.

169 Boyd, Richard W. "[The Effects of Primaries and Statewide Races on Voter Turnout.](#)" *The Journal of Politics*, 51(3), 730–739. Aug 1989.

administer the June primary.<sup>170</sup> While high-salience elections and presidential elections often see higher turnout, voter fatigue from multiple primary elections almost certainly contributed to voter fatigue and led to depressed participation among voters.

### 3. Additional last-minute special elections

In addition to the regularly scheduled and widely publicized primary and general elections, smaller subsets of New Yorkers are regularly asked to participate in last-minute scheduled special elections throughout the year that further contribute to a lack of awareness and voter fatigue. A special election occurs to fill a vacancy in an elected office that arises between regularly scheduled elections. These elections are typically conducted when a representative or official has resigned, been removed from office, or passed away.

Much like general elections, special elections are open to all voters regardless of party affiliation. However, the nominating process differs depending on the government level of the office. For local offices, candidates go through the petitioning process to appear on the ballot. As of 2021, special elections for municipal offices utilize ranked choice voting. For state and federal offices, party officials select their nominees to appear on the ballot.<sup>171</sup>

From 2020 to 2024, New York City held 12 special elections to elect 16 representatives.<sup>172</sup> Ten of the 12 elections were held in addition to the regularly scheduled primary and general elections. Figure 8.1 outlines all elections held in New York City between 2020 and 2024. In 2022, there were four special elections held in the span of just four months. Including the previously scheduled primary and general elections, the City BOE administered seven elections. In 2020, New York City held a special election on December 22, just three days before Christmas, underscoring the fact that special election timing does not prioritize voters.

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170 New York City Board of Elections. "[Annual Report 2024.](#)"

171 Eckman, Sarah J. "[House of Representatives Vacancies: How Are They Filled?](#)" *Congressional Research Service*. 16 Dec 2024.

172 Compiled using the [NYC Board of Elections Annual Reports](#), 2020 through 2024.

**Figure 8.1: Elections in New York City, by type and date, 2020 through 2024**

Year	Election type	Election date	Number of special election races
2020	Primary*	June 23	—
	General**	November 3	1
	Special	December 22	1
2021	Special	February 2	1
	Special	February 2	1
	Special	March 23	2
	Primary	June 22	—
	General**	November 2	2
2022	Special	January 18	1
	Special	February 15	2
	Special	March 22	1
	Special	May 24	1
	Primary	June 28	—
	Primary***	August 23	—
	General	November 8	—

Year	Election type	Election date	Number of special election races
2023	Primary	June 27	—
	Special	September 12	1
	General	November 7	—
2024	Special	February 13	2
	Primary	April 2	—
	Primary	June 25	—
	General	November 5	—

\* In 2020, the presidential primary election was consolidated with the state and congressional primary because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

\*\* Indicates scheduled election dates that also included special elections.

\*\*\* In 2022, the congressional primary was held in August due to delays from redistricting.

A consistent characteristic of special elections is the historically low voter turnout compared to regularly scheduled primary and general elections. In presidential elections, voter turnout is around 60% for general elections, while presidential primaries, citywide elections, and midterm elections see turnout rates between 20% and 40%. In contrast, from 2020 to 2024, voter turnout for special elections typically ranged from 2% to 8%. In 2024, there were two special elections held on February 13. In one highly competitive and expensive race that garnered national media attention, turnout among New York City voters was 27.9%. In the other special election race, turnout was more reflective of average special election turnout, at just 3.4%.

Low turnout in special elections raises concerns about the representativeness of the voters who decide these one-off races, and also the representativeness of those elected through special elections. Educating voters and encouraging turnout on set election dates is challenging enough. Adding last-minute elections each year likely exacerbates voter fatigue, leading to lower participation and a lack of representation in choosing elected officials.

Furthermore, special elections create an added financial cost to taxpayers. In 2024, the February special elections cost the city nearly \$4.5 million dollars.<sup>173</sup> Since 2020, the City BOE has spent more than \$40 million to administer special elections.

Legal requirements for the timing of special elections differ by level of government. For local offices in New York City, as outlined in the New York City Charter, the Mayor must call a special election within three days of a vacancy for the offices of City Council, Borough President, Comptroller, and Public Advocate, and hold a special election within 75 to 90 days.<sup>174</sup> In the case of a Mayoral vacancy, a special election must be called within three days and held within 60 and 90 days.<sup>175</sup> For State Senate and Assembly, as outlined in New York State Public Officers Law, the governor has ten days to call a special election, to be held within 40 to 50 days.<sup>176</sup> For the U.S. House of Representatives, the governor must call a special election within ten days of a vacancy, and the election must occur between 70 and 80 days after the vacancy is announced.<sup>177</sup> In the case of a U.S. Senate seat vacancy, the governor has the authority to appoint replacements.<sup>178</sup>

The New York City Charter indicates that date ranges for scheduling vacancies are included “to facilitate maximum voter participation,” demonstrating some level of consideration for turning out more voters.<sup>179</sup> In February 2025, a bill was introduced in the State Assembly that would set procedures for when special elections can be consolidated with general elections.<sup>180</sup> Although some state representatives supported the bill, others had political concerns, and the bill ultimately stalled. At the time, supporters of the legislation emphasized the low voter turnout and high cost of special elections, which could be reduced by combining special elections with regularly scheduled elections. Recent discussions around

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173 New York City Board of Elections. “[Annual Report 2024](#).”

174 New York City Charter §§ [24\(c\)](#), [25\(b\)](#), [81\(e\)](#), and [94\(c\)](#).

175 New York City Charter § [10\(c\)](#).

176 New York Public Officers Law § [42](#).

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid.

179 New York City Charter §§ [10](#), [24](#), [25](#), and [81](#), and [94](#).

180 New York State Assembly. A4881 (2025–26): “[Relates to Filling Vacancies in Elective Offices](#).”

the timing of special elections demonstrate the acknowledgement of this issue and the desire that many lawmakers have to improve New York’s current scheduling of special elections.

One common concern is that waiting to hold special elections until a regularly scheduled primary or general election would result in some positions remaining vacant for longer periods of time, leaving constituents without representation. Many states have accounted for this issue, outlining timelines for how close a vacancy must be to a regularly scheduled election date to permit combining elections.<sup>181</sup>

The unpredictable, last-minute occurrence of special elections further adds to the voter fatigue that New Yorkers already face because of frequent elections. For this reason, we recommend holding special elections on already established election dates whenever possible. Doing so will center voters, reduce voter fatigue, and increase voter participation and representation. While there may be specific instances in which a special election should be called to fill vacancies (for example, during congressional budget season), the already-frequent scheduling of primary and general elections provides ample opportunities to align special elections with existing election dates in most cases.

## Conclusion

Whether through holding elections in even and odd years, holding multiple primaries in the same election year, or holding many one-off special elections throughout the year, New Yorkers are asked to show up to the polls too many times. Research on voter fatigue suggests that New York’s overscheduling of elections likely plays a large role in low voter turnout and engagement. New York should make voters their priority when scheduling elections by reducing election frequency and consolidating elections whenever possible. Doing so would reduce voter fatigue, increase voter participation, and increase representativeness of the electorate.

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181 Eckman, Sarah J. “[House of Representatives Vacancies: How Are They Filled?](#)” *Congressional Research Service*. 16 Dec 2024.

# Explainer: Why was New York’s presidential primary held so late?

Every four years, members of political parties vote to nominate candidates for the presidential general election. However, because states hold their primaries on different dates, some voters face a significant disadvantage to making their voices heard by national party leaders. By the time New York voters cast their primary ballots in 2024, several candidates had already dropped out, and both presidential nominees had secured enough votes to clinch their nominations. Given these facts, it is unsurprising that only 6.6% of registered Democrats and Republicans turned out to vote in New York’s presidential primary.

In the lead-up to New York’s presidential primary election on April 2, many voters reached out to the CFB expressing confusion and frustration — sentiments also reflected in the media. At best, people questioned the usefulness of New York’s presidential primary at such a late stage.<sup>182</sup> At worst, people called the presidential primaries unnecessary and a waste of valuable resources.<sup>183</sup> The morning of the presidential primary, *City & State* projected low voter turnout, tying it to what they called a “predetermined outcome.”<sup>184</sup> Other major news outlets consistently echoed this sentiment.

New York has one of the largest voting blocs in the country. Despite such strong representation — with 28 electoral college votes, 307 delegates in the Democratic National Committee, and 91 delegates in the Republican National Convention — the late presidential primary left many New Yorkers feeling like their vote was meaningless.

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182 Kruly, Ken. [“The 2024 Presidential Primaries in New York – Were They Really Necessary?”](#) *Buffalo Rising*, 02 Apr 2024.

183 Campanile, Carl. [“NY Taxpayers Footing \\$25M Bill for 2024 Primary Election – Despite Trump and Biden Already Being the Nominees.”](#) *New York Post*, 21 Mar 2024.

184 Lewis, C. Rebecca. [“Low Turnout Expected for Today’s Presidential Primary.”](#) *City & State*, 02 Apr 2024.

The timing of the presidential primary plays a crucial role in voter enthusiasm and turnout.<sup>185</sup> Presidential primaries in states that are early in the voting schedule see higher voter turnout compared to states that are scheduled after Super Tuesday, when the party nominees are often effectively already decided.<sup>186</sup> The timing of a state’s presidential primary also determines voter enthusiasm, as campaigning and news coverage are exaggerated in states that hold their primaries early in the voting schedule.<sup>187</sup> Once Super Tuesday passes and nominations are all but decided, campaigning and media attention around the presidential primary elections diminishes, and with it voter enthusiasm and turnout.

And yet, there is little transparency around who determines the primary schedule and how this process works. Why are presidential primary elections held on different days in each state? Who decides which states go first? And why does it seem like New York is always last in the calendar? This brief explainer answers these questions and explores how these decisions impact New Yorkers and their voting behavior.

## **Why are presidential primary elections held on different days in each state? And who decides?**

To become a party’s nominee for president, a candidate must secure a majority of the party’s delegates. The results of presidential primaries—and, in some states, caucuses—determine which candidates the delegates will support at their party’s National Convention, where the party’s presidential nominee is officially selected. As such, leaders at the state and national levels determine the primary schedule for each state. Presidential primary elections are scheduled across the span of roughly six months. However, states that hold earlier primaries benefit from increased media attention, more focused candidate and party attention and spending. Early primaries may translate into a larger influence on the nominating process because they signal candidate viability and therefore have the potential to decide the primary race before all states have held their primaries.<sup>188</sup>

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185 Patterson, Thomas E. “[Voter Participation in Presidential Primaries and Caucuses.](#)” *Harvard Kennedy School*. 2011.

186 Shah, Seema. “[The Primacy of Primaries: How Super Tuesday Shapes Democracy.](#)” *International IDEA*. 06 Mar 2024.

187 Macomber, Carlo. “[The Presidential Primary System, Explained.](#)” *Unite America*. 03 Jan 2024.

188 Ibid.

The timing of when New York holds its presidential primary is determined by the state and national political party organizations, in a process that engages a limited group of party leaders and insiders. Once a date has been selected, the State Legislature writes the presidential primary election date in New York State Election Law. Changing the election date requires an amendment by the State Legislature. To make their opinions known, New Yorkers can contact their elected party delegates directly, and these delegates can advocate on behalf of their constituents.

## What is Super Tuesday?

Super Tuesday is the day on which the largest group of states hold their presidential primary elections. In 1984, Super Tuesday began taking on its modern form when nine states held their primary on the same day in March to exert their influence early in the primary cycle. By 1988, 21 states, mostly southern, had joined Super Tuesday in a show of the strength of their collective vote.

Since then, Super Tuesday has become a decisive moment in the election cycle. Much like the general election, where all states vote on the same day, Super Tuesday is a form of collective action in which candidates, party leaders, and voters alike unite in a national call.

From 1996 to 2008, New York held its presidential primaries either on or before Super Tuesday. In 2008, when both the Republican and Democratic parties had contentious primary races, 24 states held their primaries on Super Tuesday. These states opted into Super Tuesday to maintain their influence on the nominations process.<sup>189</sup> States that tried to move their primaries earlier than Super Tuesday to be more competitive were penalized heavily by the national party committees (one example was states not having their delegates heard at the national conventions).<sup>190</sup> After 2008, several states moved their presidential primaries to later party dates after states saw that the earlier primary date did not give them a strategic advantage in the 2008 cycle and earlier scheduling led to penalties for some states.<sup>191</sup> New York moved its primary later in the year and beginning in 2012, established its cadence of holding presidential primaries in April.

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189 National Constitution Center. "[A Brief History of the Super Tuesday Primaries.](#)" 29 Feb 2016.

190 Barber, Rachel. "[Super Tuesday 2008 was the Largest Primary Election Day in U.S. History.](#)" *USA Today*, 05 Mar 2024.

191 Goodman, Josh. "[States Weigh Later Dates for 2012 Presidential Primary.](#)" *Stateline*, 24 Jan 2011.

In 2024, 33 states held their presidential primaries or caucuses before New York State held its primary on April 2. Sixteen states held their primaries on Super Tuesday, on March 5, 2024.<sup>192</sup> Well before New York’s presidential primary rolled around, the two presidential candidates had already secured the necessary delegates to become the presumptive party nominees.

## What can New Yorkers do about it?

As a response to New York’s late presidential primary and lack of relevance in the national conversation and nominating process, New Yorkers and the media asked why the presidential primary election was still being held.<sup>193</sup> At the heart of this question is a desire for New York voters to meaningfully engage in the process to determine the presidential nominees. A solution would be to move the primary earlier in the calendar, or to advocate for holding presidential primary elections on the same date for all states, similar to general elections. All these options ensure New Yorkers, who represent one of the largest voting blocs, can contribute to the democratic process to select their president.

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192 Bustillo, Ximena. [“Super Tuesday has Arrived. Here’s What to Expect.”](#) *NPR*, 04 Mar 2024.

193 Kruly, Ken. [“The 2024 Presidential Primaries in New York – Were They Really Necessary?”](#) *Buffalo Rising*, 02 Apr 2024.; and Campanile, Carl. [“NY Taxpayers Footing \\$25M Bill for 2024 Primary Election – Despite Trump and Biden Already Being the Nominees.”](#) *New York Post*, 21 Mar 2024.



# Appendices

# Appendix A: Number of newly registered voters in CFB priority community districts

CFB priority community district	Number of newly registered voters
Queens CD 7 (Flushing-Murray Hill-Whitestone)	6,537
Brooklyn CD 18 (Canarsie-Flatlands)	5,230
Brooklyn CD 11 (Bensonhurst-Bath Beach)	5,056
Brooklyn CD 5 (East New York-Cypress Hills)	4,620
Queens CD 4 (Elmhurst-Corona)	4,382
Queens CD 3 (Jackson Heights-East Elmhurst)	4,211
Brooklyn CD 15 (Sheepshead Bay-Gravesend)	4,085
Bronx CD 4 (Highbridge-Concourse)	3,975
Bronx CD 7 (Fordham-Bedford Park-Norwood)	3,694
Bronx CD 5 (Morris Heights-Mount Hope)	3,386
Brooklyn CD 7 (Sunset Park-Windsor Terrace)	3,199
Brooklyn CD 13 (Coney Island-Brighton Beach)	2,883
Bronx CD 1 (Melrose-Mott Haven-Port Morris)	2,479
Bronx CD 3 (Morrisania-Crotona Park East)	2,249
Bronx CD 6 (Tremont-Belmont-West Farms)	2,083
Bronx CD 2 (Longwood-Hunts Point)	1,197

## Appendix B: Ballot proposal votes and drop-off rates by borough, general election

Borough	Total ballots	Drop-off					
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Manhattan	666,599	-8.6%	-10.6%	-13.1%	-13.3%	-13.8%	-13.8%
Bronx	367,346	-12.6%	-13.8%	-16.0%	-15.3%	-16.0%	-16.2%
Brooklyn	861,910	-16.4%	-18.9%	-21.1%	-20.9%	-21.5%	-21.4%
Queens	721,937	-12.7%	-13.6%	-15.1%	-15.5%	-16.1%	-16.4%
Staten Island	201,584	-9.2%	-11.0%	-12.6%	-12.5%	-13.2%	-13.1%