nyc votes

2017-2018

VOTER ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2018


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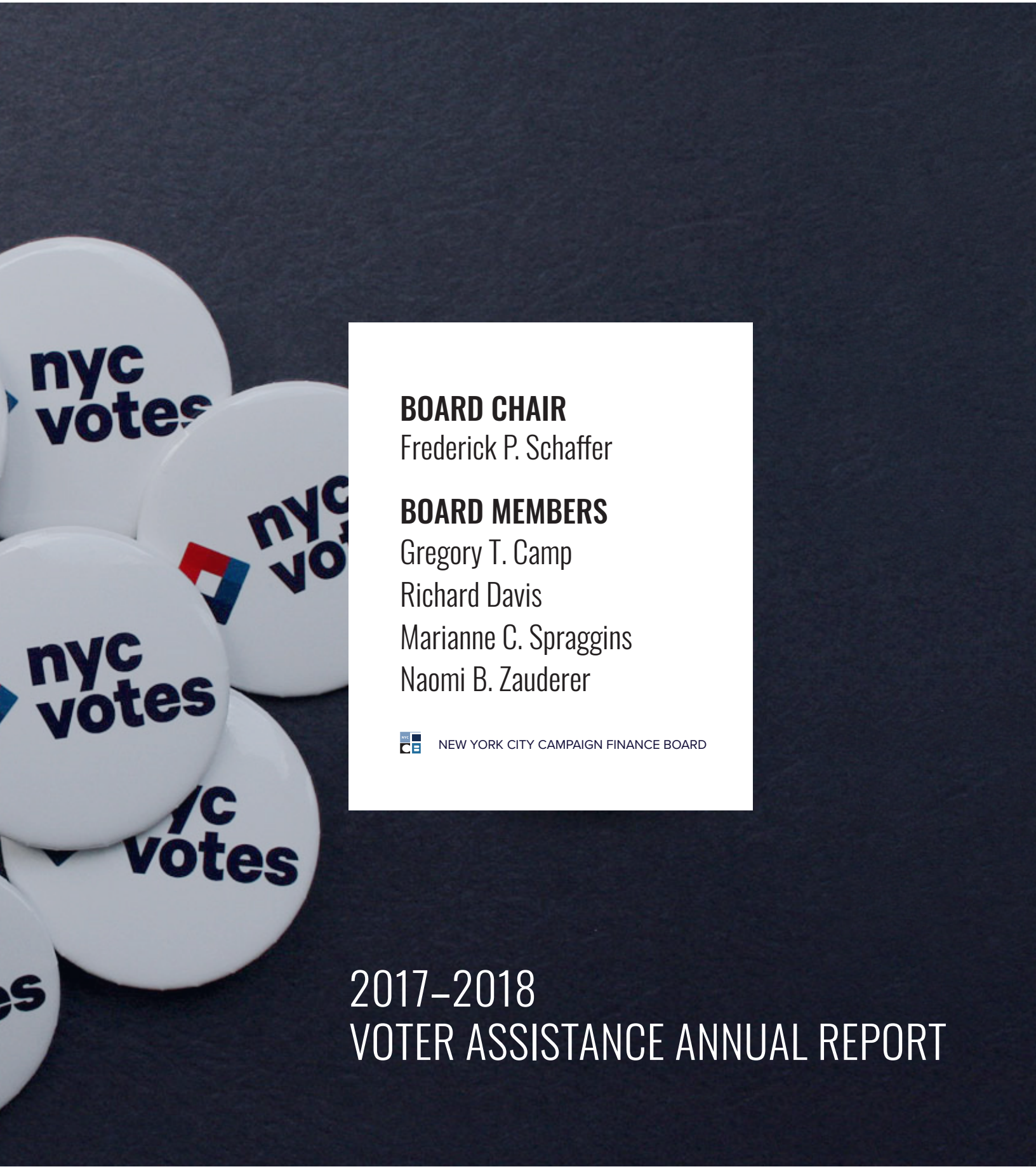

2017–2018
VOTER ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT

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The VAAC advises the CFB on voter engagement and recommends legislative and administrative changes to improve NYC elections.

The VAAC is made up of:

- Two members appointed by the mayor
- Two members appointed by the speaker of the City Council
- One member appointed by the comptroller
- One member appointed by the borough presidents
- The public advocate
- The executive director of the city Board of Elections;
- One member appointed by the mayor in consultation with the speaker to serve as the chair.

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WELCOME
FROM THE VOTER ASSISTANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Getting New Yorkers involved in our local elections is a persistent challenge. Voter interest and turnout traditionally peak during a presidential election year, and turnout plummets when we are asked to vote for our local leaders.

In this year's Annual Report, we take a look back at our year-long effort to engage more New Yorkers in city elections. As New Yorkers, our daily lives are filled with concerns we expect our local government to address, from the safety of our streets and neighborhoods, to the quality of our public schools, to the cost of living and access to good jobs.

With the guidance of the VAAC, the Campaign Finance Board set out to help city voters better understand what's at stake in their local elections through its voter engagement initiative—NYC Votes. The CFB has long been NYC's authoritative, go-to source of nonpartisan information about civics, candidates, and government, through familiar resources like the Debate Program and the Voter Guide in print, video, and online. To draw more voters to these important election resources, the CFB conducted a broad nonpartisan, multimedia voter engagement campaign. Those efforts supplemented a robust calendar of programming and voter registration activities.

Reviewing the results of the 2017 elections, there is some good news: for the first time in decades, voter turnout *didn't decrease* from the previous mayoral election. There is also bad news: voter turnout didn't *increase* significantly, either. Only one in five eligible voters cast a ballot for mayor. That's not a reason to celebrate—that's a reason for all of us who care about the health of our democracy to buckle down and work even harder.

The start of this year saw a renewed energy and attention to democracy issues across the city, starting with Mayor Bill de Blasio's commitment to increased civic education and youth engagement. As we prepare this report, CFB staff are working with City Hall to expand Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) into a citywide program that will reach seniors in every city high school in May.

It's clearer than ever that our voting laws need to be changed. Unfortunately, decades of partisan gridlock in Albany have sustained a long-outdated election system that depresses participation rather than encourages it. New York's long-standing barriers to the ballot must come down for good. If we want elections that put the needs of voters first, we need to make ourselves heard.

It's time for the Legislature to follow the example of 37 other states and recognize that it no longer makes sense to limit elections to a single, high-stakes, 15-hour day. Early voting will help ensure more New Yorkers can cast votes that count. We need to fix our voter registration system and remove the obstacles that keep hundreds of thousands of eligible New Yorkers off the voter rolls. And we need to ensure no voter can have his or her essential rights undermined or violated.

We urge you to join in this effort. Lend your voice to our call for reform. Take some time to talk with your neighbors about community issues. Make sure your family members are registered to vote. Go see your government at work—attend a Community Board meeting, a Council hearing, or a participatory budgeting event. You can create the city you want with your voice and your vote. It's up to you.

Onida Coward Mayers
NYC Voter Coordinator/
Director of Voter Assistance

INTRODUCTION

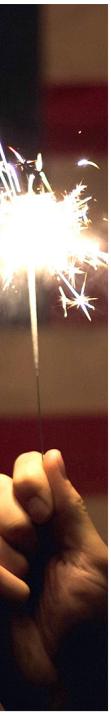
THE NYC VOTER COORDINATOR & DIRECTOR OF VOTER ASSISTANCE

On behalf of NYC Votes, the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB), and the Voter Assistance Advisory Committee (VAAC), I am thrilled to present the eighth annual Voter Assistance Report for 2017–2018. The VAAC is mandated by the New York City Charter to advise the CFB on its nonpartisan voter engagement efforts by making legislative and administrative recommendations on how we can improve voter registration and participation in our city's elections. As the voter engagement initiative of the CFB, NYC Votes works to empower voters and provide them with the tools they need to cast an informed vote through voter registration and education, Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activities, and election reform advocacy. We are committed to working with the VAAC and with voters throughout the city to gather and provide feedback about our elections.

New Yorkers care deeply about their city and are passionate about the issues that matter to them. By illustrating the connection between voting and impacting these day-to-day issues, NYC Votes acts as a resource for voters and a springboard for all New Yorkers to become more civically engaged and active in their lives and communities. We are proud to present, in this year's report, the nonpartisan voter engagement programs and outreach strategies that we developed in conjunction with our community partners to reach New Yorkers throughout our city.

This report also presents our analysis of how voter turnout and registration looked throughout the city in 2017, especially in comparison to the 2016 presidential election cycle. As our analysis demonstrates, New York City experienced one of the highest rates of voter registration yet. But increased voter registration did not necessarily lead to higher voter turnout. These findings make a strong case for the election reform bills currently under consideration at the state level. This May, we will be in Albany urging state lawmakers to take down barriers to voting and encourage voter participation by supporting these reforms, which we discuss in this report.

Our democracy depends on voters having a say at the polls and participating in all elections, not just presidential or mayoral ones. Voters need registration opportunities and up-to-date election information in order to fully take ownership of their voting rights, but our restrictive voting laws make it difficult for far too many New Yorkers to exercise those rights. This report sheds light on these important findings, and we hope it will encourage you to stand with us as we work to build better elections and encourage voter participation in New York City.



VOTER REGISTRATION

Registering to vote is one of the first ways that the average New York City voter might interact directly with NYC Votes, the voter engagement initiative of the CFB. As part of our City Charter mandate,[1] we provide New Yorkers with the tools and guidance needed to register and cast an informed vote. Because our voting laws place the burden of registering on voters and make the registration process more cumbersome than it needs to be, part of our mission is to go out and provide registration opportunities to New Yorkers throughout the city. While registration is typically one of our first points of engagement with a new voter, we hope that it will be just the first step of many on the path to lifelong civic engagement.

The 2017 NYC Votes Street Team, from left to right: Sharon Bardales, Adeena Naqvi, Katherina Opazo, Grant Gordon, Allen Lloyd.

1 New York City Charter Section 1054(b).

Through our internship program, the **NYC Votes Street Team**, we provide high school and college students with the opportunity to lead our community outreach efforts and help us establish and maintain partnerships with other organizations. Street Team members are trained on how to lead voter workshops and register new voters. They are a consistent presence at community fairs, block parties, festivals, and other local events throughout the city, providing information about upcoming elections and helping citizens register to vote. In 2017, the Street Team attended 31 community events in all five boroughs from June through mid-October, in advance of the deadline to register to vote in the general election, registering a total of 260 new voters.

Another important avenue for registering new voters is **naturalization ceremonies**. These events are the perfect opportunity for new citizens to take advantage of their civic rights and register to vote. From March 2017 through the end of the year, NYC Votes staff and the Street Team attended ten naturalizations and registered 1,340 new citizens.

Our voter registration efforts are also powered by our dedicated volunteers and organizational partners. In August, we worked with Win (formerly known as Women in Need), a nonprofit dedicated to serving homeless women and

their children, to hold voter registration drives in 12 shelters in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. We registered 62 new voters over the course of three days. We also spread our voter registration reach by conducting **"Train the Trainer" workshops** for organizations interested in helping eligible New Yorkers register to vote. We conducted this workshop for community organizations like Community Board 11 in Manhattan, Generation Citizen, and the NAACP of Staten Island in the months leading up to the primary and general citywide elections.

> **"VOTING IS THE ONE TIME WHEN EVERYONE CAN MAKE THEIR VOICE HEARD. IT IS A CRITICAL WAY FOR NEW YORKERS TO CONNECT WITH AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES."**
>
> Sharon Greenberger, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York

NYC Votes is also committed to providing voter education and registration opportunities to communities that are underrepresented at the polls. Through our **Days of Action** initiative, we work with partners and individual volunteers to conduct face-to-face outreach, knock on doors, and host community events. Our first Day of Action for the citywide election was held in partnership with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) on Saturday, September 23rd. With the help of 25 volunteers (13 volunteers came from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Delta Rho Omega, and 12 were individuals from the general public), we conducted voter registrations at five shelters in City Council districts with open seat races (City Council Districts 2, 4, 8, and 41), in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. 98 new voters were successfully registered to vote as a result of our work.

In total, NYC Votes registered 2,258 new voters[2] throughout 2017.

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2 This number includes registrations from community events attended by the Street Team; naturalizations; Win shelter drives; our youth civic engagement workshops, which we discuss on page 32; and all of our Days of Action.

> **"NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO CELEBRATE DEMOCRACY, AND MOTIVATE OUR FELLOW CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE BY REGISTERING, VOTING, AND MAKING THEIR VOICES HEARD."**
>
> Eddie Cuesta,
> Executive Director,
> Dominicanos USA

Additionally, we enlisted a group of partners with broad reach across the city to work with us for **National Voter Registration Day (NVRD),** on Tuesday, September 26. Held every fourth Tuesday of September, NVRD is a coordinated nationwide effort to register voters and create awareness about voter registration opportunities. Most importantly, it is also a celebration of our voting rights, and a time when we work to empower new voters by reminding them of the importance of their votes. NYC Votes is consistently one of the top organizations throughout the country for the number of new voters registered on NVRD. This year, we worked with our partners[3] to hold 180 registration events across the city, registering a total of 2,666 voters.

By creating more opportunities for voter registration and raising awareness of the need for citizens to register to vote, NYC Votes aims to, in the words of Eddie Cuesta, Executive Director of longtime NYC Votes partner Dominicanos USA, "motivate our fellow citizens to

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3 Our partners for NVRD included: A Better Jamaica, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Pi Kappa Omega, Tau Omega, and Delta Rho Omega Chapters), the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), the Brooklyn Public Library, Care for the Homeless, Children's Aid, the City University of New York (CUNY), Coalition Z, Common Cause, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Youth and Community Development, Dominicanos USA, Generation Citizen, the Human Resource Administration (HRA), the League of Women Voters, LiveOn NY, the NAACP (NYCHA Branch), the National Women's Political Caucus (NYC Chapter), the New York Urban League Young Professionals (NYULYP), the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), the YMCA of Greater New York, and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (Delta Mu Zeta Chapter).

participate by registering, voting, and making their voices heard."

While we are proud of our work from this past year, especially our outreach to underserved communities in NYC, our efforts and the efforts of our partner organizations would be significantly bolstered by meaningful legislative action. These numbers reflect the reality that registration, because it is often a one-on-one process that involves filling out paperwork, is still far more time-consuming than it needs to be. Furthermore, in a city like New York, where moving every few years (or even more frequently) is common, a more streamlined voter registration system would make it easier for voters to keep their registration information up-to-date when they move. Modernizing our systems and making registration more seamless will make it easier for voters to take this important first step towards participating in our democracy and allow us to focus our efforts on civic education. Our analysis of new registrations from 2017 provides important context for why these registration reforms are necessary.

> **"NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY CELEBRATES THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL TENET OF OUR DEMOCRACY: THAT POWER IS DERIVED FROM THE PEOPLE. WHEN WE VOTE, WE DON'T JUST SELECT A CANDIDATE, WE EXPRESS OUR DESIRE FOR A BETTER FUTURE. STUDENTS ACROSS THE CITY, STATE, AND NATION CELEBRATE THIS DAY OF EMPOWERMENT, WHEN WE REMIND PEOPLE HOW VITAL THEY ARE TO THE FUNCTIONING OF OUR DEMOCRACY."**
>
> Tousif Ahsan,
> Issue Coordinator,
> New York
> Public Interest
> Research Group

ANALYSIS OF VOTER REGISTRATIONS IN 2016 AND 2017

In 2017, the New York City voter rolls grew to over 4.6 million active registered voters. Of these, 134,194 were new registrants, with nearly all registering in time to vote in the November election. New registrations in 2017 reduced the percentage of eligible citizens who are unregistered from 14.3% to 13.4%. This still leaves over 715,000 New York City residents who were eligible to vote but did not register in time for the 2017 citywide election. In two of the five boroughs, the proportion of eligible, unregistered citizens was above the citywide level. In Queens, 223,217 (16.1%) and in Manhattan, 158,529 (13.6%) eligible citizens were not registered to vote in time for the 2017 election. In the other three boroughs, the proportion of eligible, unregistered citizens was below the citywide level. In the Bronx, 108,357 (13.0%) and in Staten Island, 43,868 (13.1%) eligible citizens were not registered to vote in time for the 2017 election. Brooklyn had the lowest rate of unregistered eligible citizens, with 181,638 (11.2%) eligible citizens unregistered by the end of 2017. Additionally, there were just over 450,000 eligible voters in New York City that remained on the inactive voter rolls[4] in 2017.

The Board of Elections processed new registrations year-round at an average rate of about 2,580 new registrations per week. However, as might be expected, spikes occurred at the major registration deadlines: over 6,361 people registered the week of August 14th before the August 18th deadline for the citywide primary, and 7,160 registered the week of October 9th before the October 13th deadline for the citywide general election. Even so, these numbers pale in comparison to the surge of voter registrations that occurred in 2016 during the presidential election cycle. In October 2016 alone, 124,000 new registrations were processed, almost as many as the total number of registrations in 2017. In the single week of the October 14th registration deadline for the presidential election, over 70,000 voters registered, which is more than half of the total registrations the city saw in 2017.

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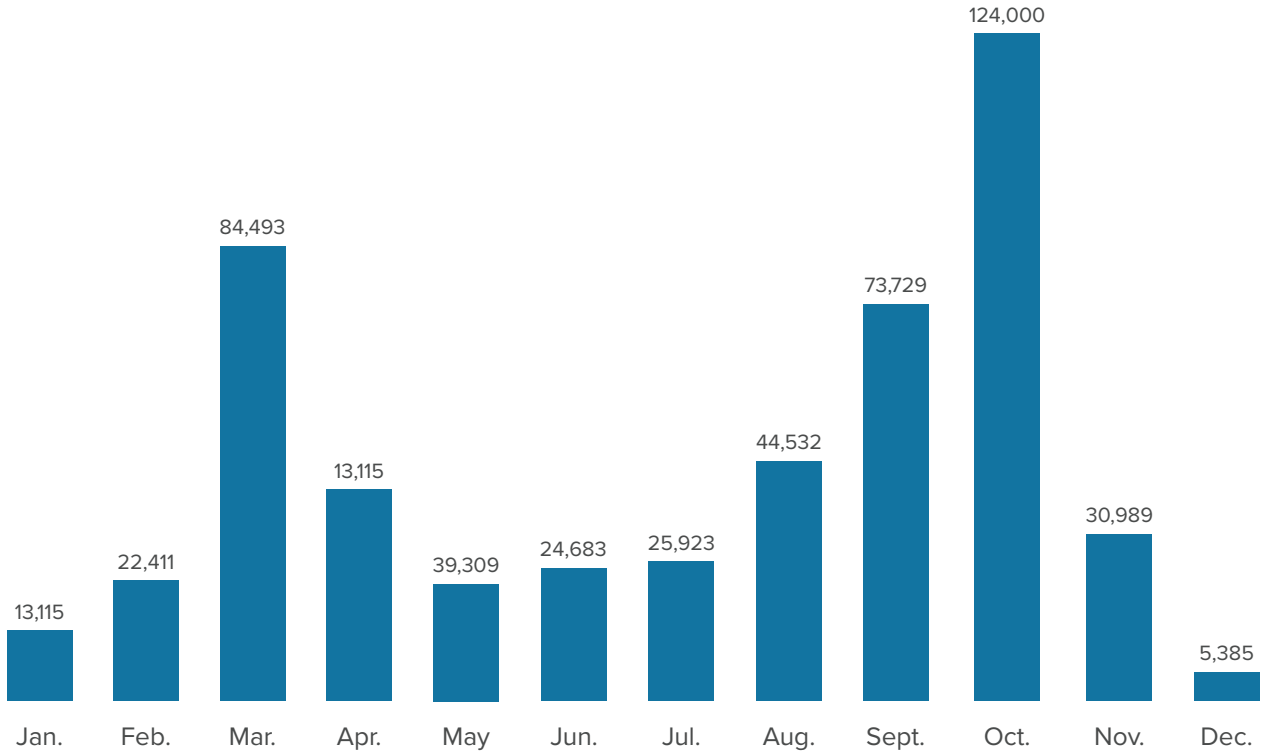
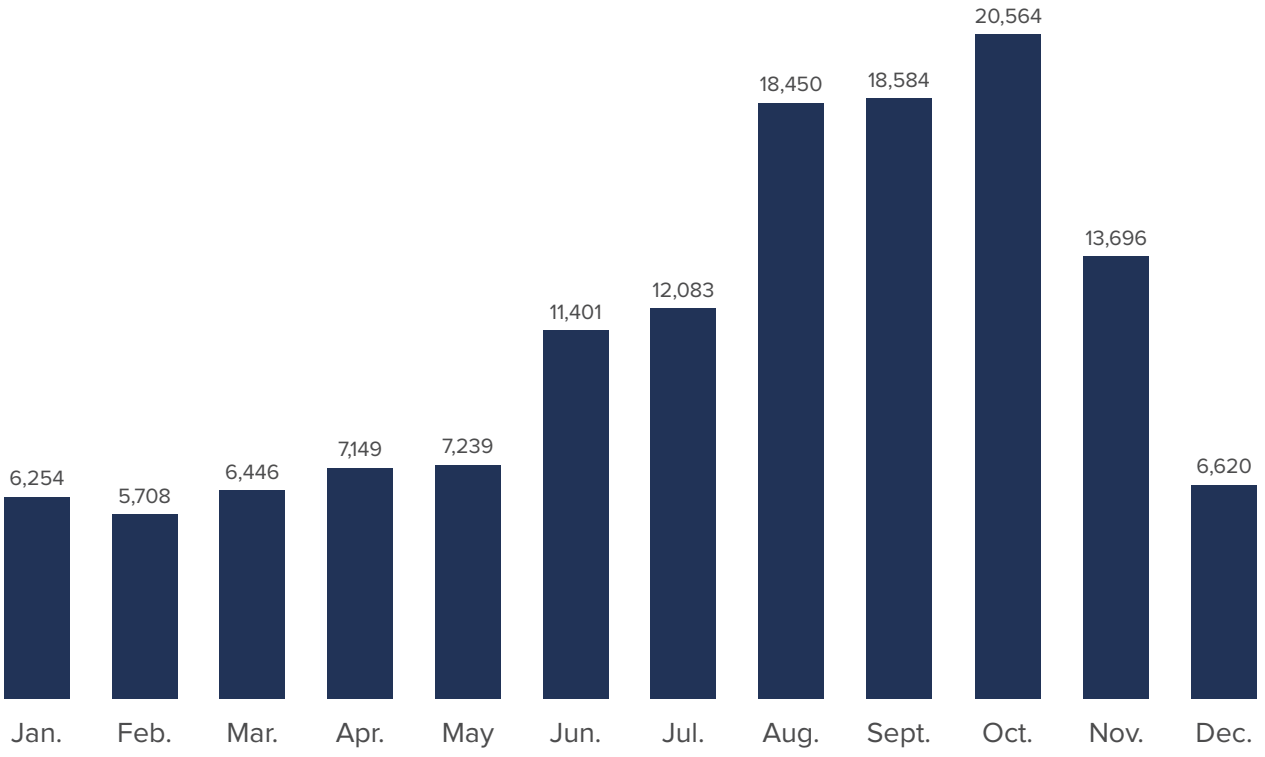
4 The term “inactive status” is defined in Section 5–712 of State Election Law as “a category of registered voters who have failed to respond to a residence confirmation notice.”

NEW REGISTRATIONS BY MONTH IN 2016



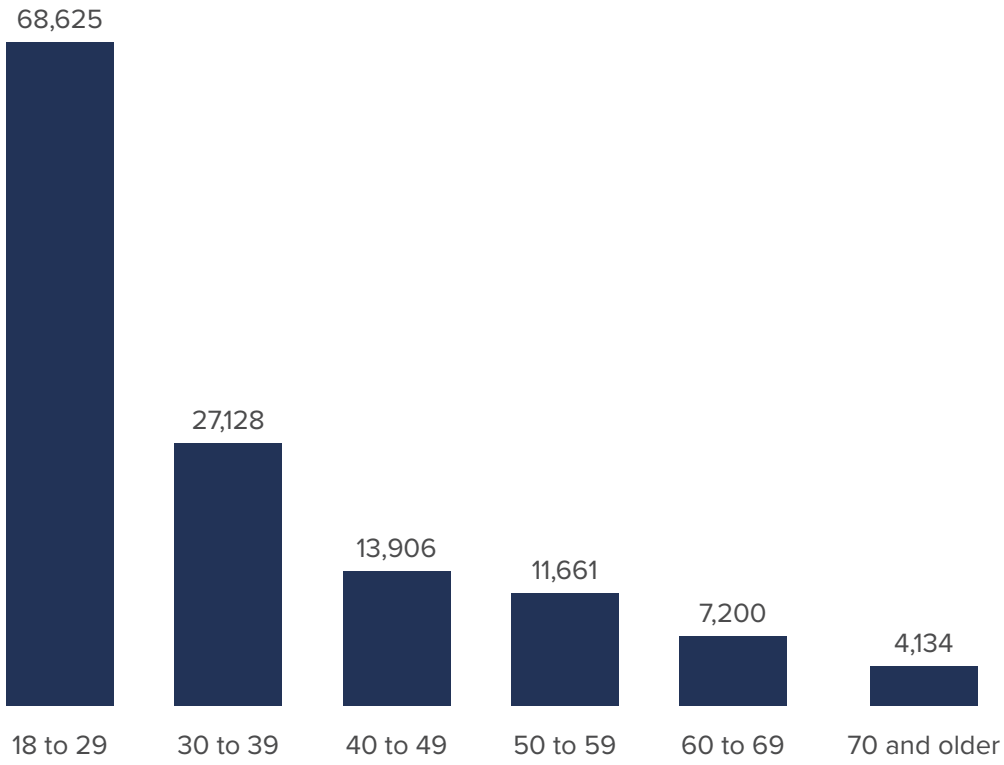
NEW REGISTRATIONS BY MONTH IN 2017



As is typical, newly registered voters in 2017 skewed young, as youth voters came of age and registered to vote for the first time. Over half of new registrants were under the age of 30, with over 68,000 (51.1%) between the ages of 18 and 29.[5] Additionally, 27,128 (20.2%) new registrants were between the ages of 30 and 39; 13,906 (10.4%) new registrants were between the ages of 40 and 49; 11,661 (8.7%) new registrants were between the ages of 50 and 59; 7,200 (5.4%) new registrants were between the ages of 60 and 69; and 4,134 (3.1%) new registrants were 70 years or older.

In the 18-29 age group, over 25% of new registrations came from 18-year-olds alone, with 19,438 new registrants in 2017. For every other age within this group, the number of new registrants hovered between about 4,000 and 5,000. Additionally, 1,540 17year-olds who would not turn 18 by Election Day registered in 2017.

REGISTRATIONS BY AGE GROUP AS OF NOVEMBER 7, 2017



5 1,540 (1.1%) new registrants were 17 years old. Including 17-year-old registrants, 52.2% of new registrants were under the age of 30 in 2017.

Throughout 2017, new voter registrations came from all around the city, with every neighborhood seeing an uptick in registered voters ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand. The top neighborhoods[6] for new voter registrations were the Upper West Side (2,550 registrations), Crown Heights North (2,024), Yorkville (1,907), Hudson Yards-Chelsea-Flatiron-Union Square (1,889), and Flatbush (1,759). Of the top 25 neighborhoods for new voter registrations below, 10 were in Manhattan, 10 were in Brooklyn, and five were in Queens.

New registrations also accounted for proportional growth[7] in voter registration, with some neighborhood registration rates growing as much as 5.0% in 2017. The neighborhoods with the highest proportional increase in the voter registration rate were Battery Park City-Lower Manhattan (5.0%), Hunters Point-Sunnyside-West Maspeth (4.0%), Queensbridge-Ravenswood-Long Island City (3.8%), Elmhurst-Maspeth (3.8%), Sunset Park East (3.8%), Clinton (3.8%), Old Astoria (3.8%), Jamaica (3.8%), and Midtown-Midtown South (3.8%). Of the top 25 neighborhoods for proportional growth in the voter registration rate, six were in Brooklyn, one was in the Bronx, eight were in Manhattan, and 10 were in Queens.

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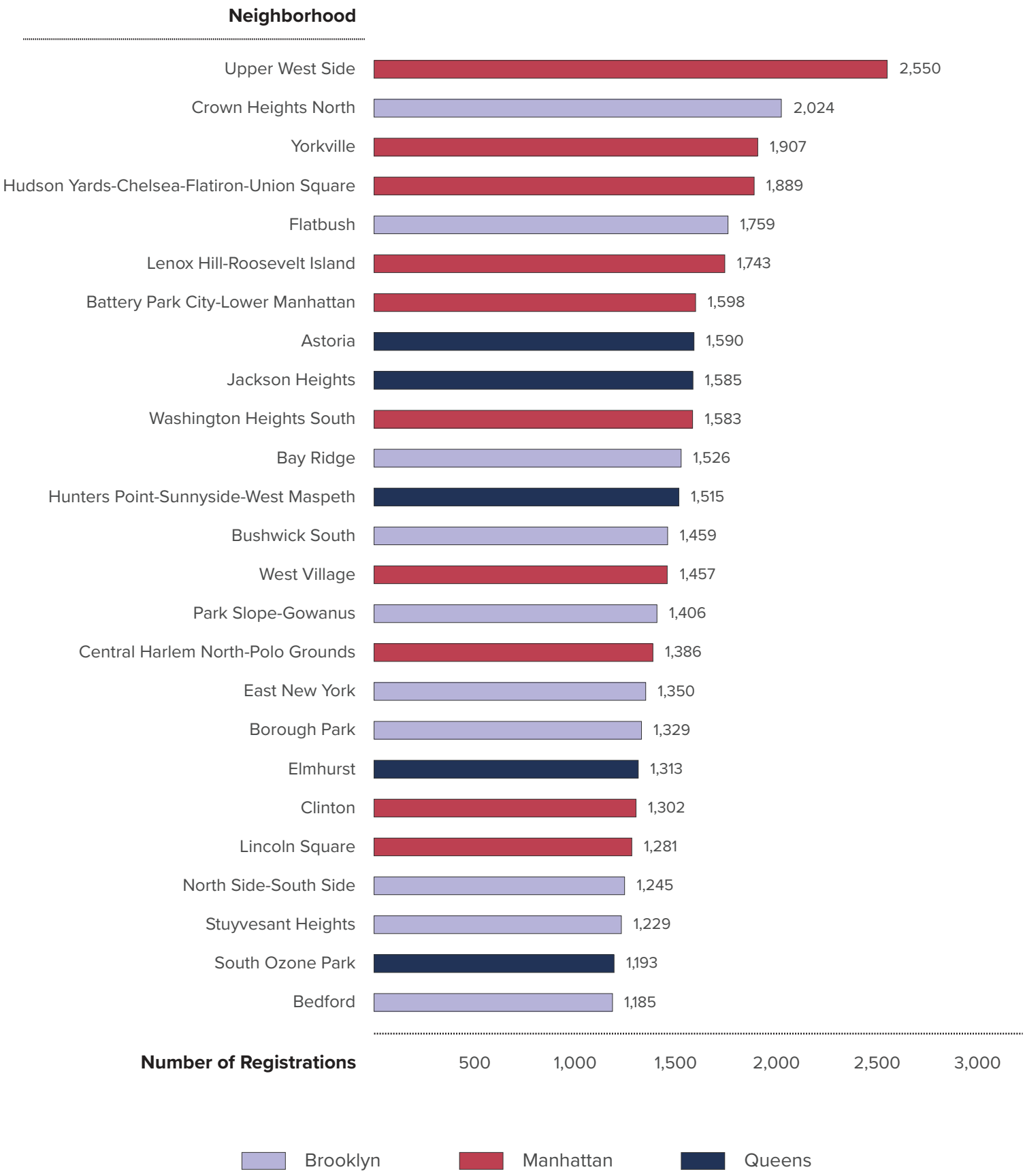
6 To analyze participation patterns at the neighborhood level, we use the Neighborhood Tabulation Areas (NTAs) created by the Department of City Planning. These boundaries are aggregated using Census tracts to areas that have a minimum population of 15,000. While NTAs do not perfectly overlay with historical neighborhood boundaries, they are a useful approximation to capture local dynamics. More information on NTAs is available at **https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/dwn-nyntapage**.

7 "Top 25 Neighborhoods for New Voter Registrations" shows raw growth. This is simply the number of new registrations coming from each NTA. Proportional growth, as we have defined it for this section, is equal to the number of new registrants per NTA in 2017 divided by the citizen voting age population (CVAP) of that NTA in 2017.

TOP 25 NEIGHBORHOODS FOR NEW VOTER REGISTRATIONS



71 out of the 188 neighborhoods[8] we examined had registration rates[9] of 90.0% or more, including six neighborhoods with registration rates higher than 100.0%.[10] Of those neighborhoods, three were in the Bronx and three were in Brooklyn. Of the top 25 neighborhoods for voter registration, 12 were in Brooklyn, seven were in the Bronx, two were in Manhattan, and four were in Queens. On the other end of the spectrum, three neighborhoods had registration rates lower than 70.0%. Of those, one was in the Bronx, one was in Brooklyn, and one was in Manhattan. There were many neighborhoods throughout the city in which the voter registration rate fell well below the citywide average. 92 out of 188 neighborhoods had registrations rates below the citywide average of 86.6%. The neighborhoods with the lowest registration rates were Belmont (61.9%), Bath Beach (67.5%), Gramercy (69.6%), Bensonhurst West (71.1%), and Murray Hill-Kips Bay (72.1%). Of the bottom 25 neighborhoods for voter registration, six were in Brooklyn, five were in the Bronx, four were in Manhattan, and 10 were in Queens (see pages 40–43 for the top and bottom 25 neighborhoods for voter registrations).

Of the 134,000 new registrants in 2017, about 120,000 were eligible to vote on November 7.[11] The average turnout for these newly registered voters was 17.9%—several points lower than the 25.2% turnout among active registered voters overall. There was a wide range in turnout, with newly registered voters in the 18-29 age group turning out at a lower rate of 13.4%, compared with the highest turnout rate of 30.3% for voters age 70 and older. In 2016, new registrants turned out for the presidential election at a similar rate as overall registrants,

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8 By taking the total number of NTAs in the city and subtracting the NTAs that are designated as parks, cemeteries, and airports, we arrived at 188 NTAs, which we looked at for this report.

9 When we discuss registration rates, we are referring to the total number of voters in the active registered list of voters for a given neighborhood, divided by the CVAP for that neighborhood.

10 These registration rates likely reflect a combination of the state and federal laws governing voter roll maintenance, which outline procedures for removal of voters and institute safeguards to prevent voters from being erroneously removed from the voter list, as well as imperfect data collection for population estimates that occurs outside the decennial Census.

11 The registration was active by November 7, 2017, and the registrant was 18 years of age on Election Day.

with 66.0% of newly registered voters and 60.6% of all active registered voters casting a ballot in the November 2016 election (+5.4%). In 2017, the turnout rate for all active registered voters was 7.3 points higher than for newly registered voters. Additionally, while the 18-29 age group turned out at the lowest rate in 2016 (63.3%), there was only a 7.5% difference in turnout between this group and the age group with the highest turnout, 30-39, in which 70.8% of new registrants cast a ballot. In 2017, however, the oldest group of voters turned out at over double the rate of the youngest group. These statistics illustrate what we already know, which is that turnout tends to be lower for city elections than it does for presidential elections, due to a lack of understanding among most voters, particularly younger voters, about the importance of local elections. As mentioned above, the onus is on eligible citizens to register to vote, and because registering can be a time-consuming process, we spend much of our time and resources just helping New Yorkers register to vote and answering questions about the registration process. Streamlining or automating the registration process would remove the barriers created by our current registration systems and allow us to focus on turnout in a more concerted way, allocating even more resources to providing information about why these local races matter.

NEW REGISTRANT TURNOUT BY AGE GROUP IN 2017 AND 2016

TURNOUT OF NEWLY REGISTERED VOTERS BY AGE GROUP 2017	
18 to 29	13.4%
30 to 39	19.4%
40 to 49	22.8%
50 to 59	24.6%
60 to 69	27.7%
70 and older	30.3%

TURNOUT OF NEWLY REGISTERED VOTERS BY AGE GROUP 2016	
18 to 29	63.3%
30 to 39	70.8%
40 to 49	68.2%
50 to 59	67.8%
60 to 69	67.5%
70 and older	64.4%

THE CASE FOR COMPREHENSIVE VOTER REGISTRATION REFORM

While New York has moved forward with some registration reforms, including online registration through the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), we still rely too much on a paper-based voter registration system, which is cumbersome for voters and prone to human error. This leads to hundreds of thousands of people who are eligible to vote but are not registered, and others whose registrations are out-of-date. As we can see from our registrations comparison in 2016 vs. 2017, there is always a crush of new registrations during the presidential election year, when election administrators need to focus on smooth Election Day operations. Furthermore, our current system leads to tremendous waste. The Board of Elections prints hundreds of thousands of registration forms every year, but receives only a fraction of these back.[12] Updating our voter registration systems would mitigate many of these issues.

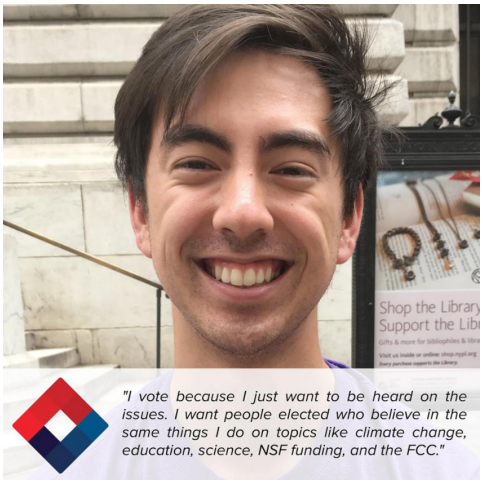
NEW YORK NEEDS COMPREHENSIVE VOTER REGISTRATION REFORMS THAT WILL ENSURE THAT ALL ELIGIBLE CITIZENS ARE REGISTERED TO VOTE, KEEP THEIR REGISTRATION INFORMATION UP-TO-DATE, AND REDUCE STRAIN ON ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS.

Expanding and modernizing our voter registration systems would also make them more inclusive. New York needs comprehensive voter registration reforms that will ensure that all eligible citizens are registered to vote, keep their registration information up-to-date, and reduce strain on election administrators. In order to do this, New York should join the 12 states and the District of Columbia that

12 According to the most recent data available, in 2016 the Board of Elections printed 380,000 Code 9 forms to be used at agencies covered by Local Law 29, yet only received 19,013 completed forms—or 5% of what was printed. **http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/documents/boe/AnnualReports/BOEAnnualReport16.pdf**, page 27.

now offer **automatic registration.**[13] In states with this form of registration, voters who interact with a designated government agency—typically the DMV—are automatically registered to vote, unless they decide to opt out. New York should introduce automatic registration at the DMV and **expand voter registration to other government agencies**, so that New Yorkers have even more opportunities to easily register.

This is particularly important in New York City, where many voters rely on public transit and do not need to interact with the DMV. This also disproportionately impacts already underrepresented populations like lower-income communities and people of color, who are less likely to have drivers' licenses, permits, or DMV identification cards for non-drivers. Nationally, the departments of motor vehicles accounted for 32.7% of all new voter registrations during the last presidential election,[14] whereas, in New York, according to the most recently available report from the New York State Board of Elections, the DMV accounted for 83.3% of all registrations received directly by the state from agencies covered under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).[15] However, according to the most recent data available from the New York City Board of Elections, the DMV only accounted for 10.4% of forms they received during the presidential election year.[16] Other agencies, including agencies covered by the NVRA and city agencies covered by Local Law 29 (for a full list of these agencies, see



13 Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. have enacted automatic registration. **http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/automatic-voter-registration.aspx,** February 16, 2018.

14 **https://www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/2016_EAVS_Comprehensive_Report.pdf**, page 41.

15 **https://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/AnnualReport2016.pdf.**

16 **http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/documents/boe/AnnualReports/BOEAnnualReport16.pdf.**

pages 66–67 in the Appendix),[17] and the City University of New York (CUNY) accounted for 19.0% of forms that the Board of Elections received.[18]

To supplement automatic voter registration at government agencies, New York must also enact an **online voter registration system** that any eligible voter can use in order to get registered and update their information as needed. Almost 90% of the forms received by the city Board of Elections[19] are paper registration forms. With hand-written paper forms, the city Board of Elections must manually enter each registrant's information into the system, which can lead to mistakes, such as misspelling of names and errors in addresses or party registrations. With an updated system, many of these voters could easily shift to registering online, thereby eliminating the need for paper and the possibility of such errors. As more states have enacted online registration, the number of voters registering online has increased—after the 2016 presidential election, online registration accounted for 17.4% of all new registrations nationally.[20]

In New York, online voter registration is only available through the DMV's website, meaning voters must have a driver's license or a DMV-issued ID in order to register online. This prevents New Yorkers who are not DMV customers from being able to easily register to vote online, and as mentioned above, this specifically impacts residents in New York City, who are less likely to drive regularly in comparison to the rest of the state. Online registration should be available to all eligible citizens, who would be able to provide the last four digits of their Social Security number in order to register, just as they can on a paper registration form.

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17 Local Law 29 (LL29) of 2000 and Local Law 63 (LL63) of 2014 require public-facing city agencies to provide nonpartisan voter registration opportunities for New York City residents. There are currently 27 agencies covered under these laws. The CFB provides guidance and trainings to these agencies on how to register voters, working with them to provide information and resources about upcoming elections and registration deadlines to the public.

18 **http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/documents/boe/AnnualReports/BOEAnnualReport16.pdf.**

19 In addition to the 19% of forms that came from CUNY and agencies covered by the NVRA and LL29, 70.6% of these forms were received directly by the BOE.

20 **https://www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/2016_EAVS_Comprehensive_Report.pdf**, page 41.

Along with making online registration available to all, state lawmakers should clarify that voters can register using **an electronic signature** when they register online. In 2016, the New York State Attorney General's Office released an Advisory Opinion stating that electronic signatures may be affixed to online voter registrations, so long as they are of a similar quality and likeness to a handwritten signature submitted for registration purposes.[21] A handful of jurisdictions in Delaware, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. now accept electronic signatures other than those on file at the DMV for the purposes of voter registration. New York should be in the vanguard of this trend by passing state legislation to allow electronic signatures. In 2017, the New York City Council enacted Local Law 238, sponsored by City Council Member Ben Kallos, which amended the City Charter to require the creation of an online voter registration portal that accepts electronic signatures. The CFB will oversee the creation of the portal and be responsible for printing and delivering voter registration forms collected through this system to the Board of Elections. We look forward to being part of this important step towards modernizing our city's elections.

BY EXTENDING PRE-REGISTRATION, WE CAN DO FAR MORE TO ENCOURAGE CIVIC PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUNG VOTERS.

Additionally, the state legislature should enact **pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds**, given the influx of young voters who register as soon as they turn 18, which is shown in our data analysis above. Currently, New Yorkers can register to vote at age 17 as long as they are turning 18 in the year that they register to vote, and their registration then becomes active on their 18th birthday. This demonstrates that we already have the technology in place to allow voters as young as 16

21 **https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/opinion/2016-1_pw.pdf.**

to register even further in advance of their 18th birthday. 13 states[22] and the District of Columbia allow 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister. By extending pre-registration, we can do far more to encourage civic participation among young voters, and allowing high school students to register in advance provides more opportunities to introduce them to the democratic process while they are still in school.

NO VOTER SHOULD BE PREVENTED FROM EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO VOTE SIMPLY BECAUSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR.

Finally, the New York State Constitution should be amended to allow for **same-day or Election Day registration**. Every election season, we receive feedback from, and see news stories about, voters who believed they had followed the correct steps to register to vote, only to arrive at their poll site to find that their names are not in the poll books. Often the impulse in these situations is to assign blame for registration failures—whether it falls on the Board of Elections, the government agencies that collect voter registration forms, the online registration system, or the voters themselves for failing to meet deadlines. But the reality is that in any system, particularly one with so many players and checkpoints where registrations can fall through the cracks, mistakes will happen. But no voter should be prevented from exercising the right to vote simply because of administrative error, and allowing voters to register on Election Day would prevent this from occurring. Currently, 14 states[23] and the District of Columbia have implemented Election Day registration, with an additional two states allowing same-day registration during the early voting period prior to Election Day.[24] New York should join these states in making sure that registration issues do not create barriers to participation.

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22 California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, and Washington according to the National Council of State Legislatures, **http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/preregistration-for-young-voters.aspx**, February 28, 2018.

23 California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming, according to the National Council of State Legislatures, **http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/same-day-registration.aspx**, February 12, 2018.

24 Maryland and North Carolina, according to NCSL (see footnote above).

VOTER EDUCATION & GET OUT THE VOTE EFFORTS

As mentioned, driving turnout to local elections can be challenging, especially in the year following a presidential election. To determine how to appeal to voters who participate in presidential elections but typically sit out the local elections in the following year, we conducted two focus groups in November 2016. These groups were made up of "drop-off voters," who had voted in the 2012 presidential election but not in the 2013 mayoral election. We used our findings from these focus group discussions to develop a survey that we circulated to 500 drop-off voters in January 2017.

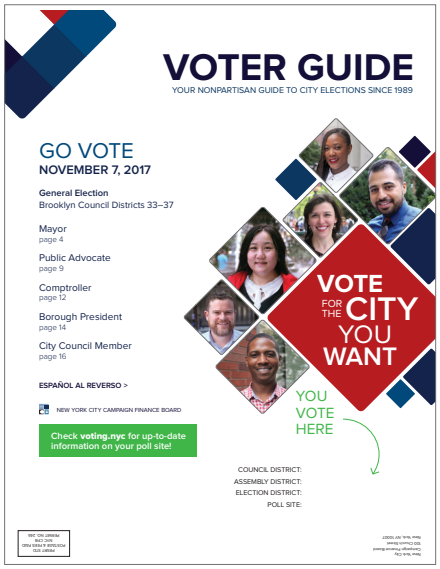
VOTERS FROM BOTH ENDS OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO MESSAGES HIGHLIGHTING THE DIVERSITY OF NEW YORK CITY.

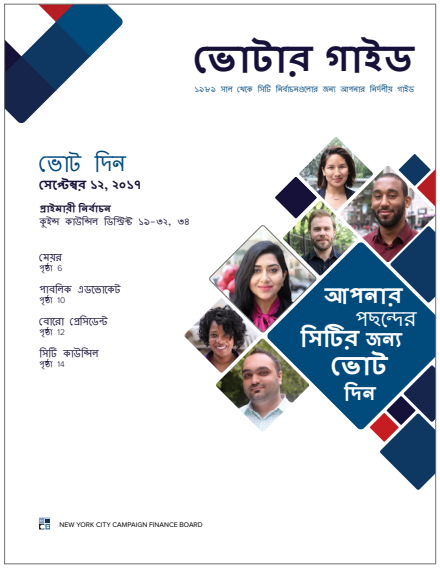
We found that New York City voters who do not participate in local elections are far from politically apathetic, but that most of the time, they did not vote because they felt they did not have enough information about the candidates, the races, and even the offices on the ballot and how they impact their lives. Our focus group participants responded particularly well to the idea of receiving information that was tailored to their needs and neighborhoods. Our research also found that the most effective way to appeal to voters was to connect voting with being able to impact the issues that they care about. Voters from both ends of the political spectrum responded positively to messages highlighting the diversity of New York City or looking to a brighter future for their city and communities—although New Yorkers, ever practical, responded more positively to the idea of "making a difference," rather than "creating change." The communications strategy that we developed from these findings was used for all of our voter education products throughout the election.

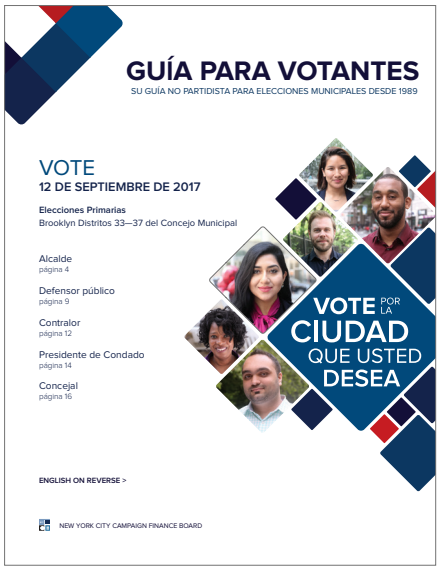
THE VOTER GUIDE

With this information in mind, we also redesigned the official **New York City Voter Guide**, a nonpartisan print, online, and video resource that provides candidate profiles and comprehensive information about how and where New Yorkers can vote. Candidates running for mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough president, and City Council member are invited to submit a profile and tape a two-minute video statement for inclusion in the online Guide, which is also aired on local stations. The print Voter Guide is sent out before the primary and general elections to every household with an eligible registered voter, and in 2017 over 3 million copies were mailed out for the primary and over 4.5 million copies for the general. Print copies of the Guide were also sent to over 230 pickup locations at libraries, recreation centers, hospitals, and other local community centers before the primary and the general elections. In accordance with the Voting Rights Act (VRA), the Guide is available in English and Spanish throughout the city and is translated into Chinese, Korean, and Bengali for targeted districts.

This year's print Voter Guide was re-conceptualized for a more user-friendly reading experience based on feedback from our voter focus groups and partner organizations. We also added new features and sections to the Guide. To respond to voters' feedback that they wanted to receive more information about the issues, we included a section in the candidate profiles for each candidate to name the top three issues of most importance to them. We visually incorporated the themes that







had resonated with the voters we surveyed, creating a cover design featuring a diverse array of New Yorkers and providing explainers throughout the Voter Guide regarding the NYC matching funds program and how elected officials on the ballot impact our day-to-day lives. Throughout the print Guide, we directed voters to our email mailing list, social media outlets, and the online Guide, which was also redesigned to be consistent with the print version. Further capitalizing on voters' need to learn more about the issues, we developed a citywide GOTV campaign about the impact that voting can have on the issues that everyday New Yorkers care about, directing them to visit the online Guide by going to voting.nyc. From August 21st to September 12th, over 225,000 people visited the primary election online Guide, and from October 12th to November 7th, over 362,000 people visited the general election online Guide.[25] The video edition of the Guide aired on BronxNet, Brooklyn Information and Culture (BRIC), Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN), NYC Gov, and Queens Public Television (QPTV), and before the primary and general elections. Throughout the election cycle, 220 candidates participated in the Video Voter Guide,[26] and 230 candidates participated in the print Voter Guide.

To comply with recent legislation[27] mandating that voters must be able to opt out of receiving printed Voter Guides in the mail if they wish to do so, we developed an application on our website that would fulfill this function. By entering their email addresses and confirming that they wished to opt out of receiving future print Guides, voters were able to "go paperless" and instead receive alerts about important election dates and a link to the online Voter Guide by email. We promoted this option in the print Voter Guide, thereby driving traffic to the online Voter Guide.

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25 For comparison: in 2013, the Guide received over 72,000 visitors in the two weeks leading up to the primary election and over 82,000 visitors in the two weeks leading up to the general election.

26 In 2013, 196 candidates participated in the Video Voter Guide, and 252 candidates participated in the print Voter Guide (with significantly more open seats, there were many more candidates on the ballot overall in 2013).

27 Local Law 170.

In addition to providing candidate profiles, the Voter Guide also includes information about any proposals on the ballot in the city and state elections. In the 2017 general election, voters were asked to weigh in on three ballot proposals.[28] We included plain language descriptions of these measures and reasons to vote yes or no in the general election edition of the Guide. Pro and con statements solicited from the public were published online as well.

ELECTED OFFICES EXPLAINERS

To address voters' lack of understanding about the role that their elected officials play in their day-to-day lives, we created a series of **explainers on the five offices** covered in the Voter Guide—mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough president, and City Council member—and launched them in August before the primary election. Using our findings from the messaging research, we highlighted six different issues that voters had identified as being important to them—housing, jobs and wages, education, public safety and criminal justice, traffic and transportation, and public health—and discussed how each office could impact these areas. To encourage viewers to interact with these explainers, we created an interactive flowchart and recorded a video for each explainer. The videos were uploaded to YouTube, and we created a landing page for the videos and flowcharts on our website, which received 776 unique page views between August and December.

We referred to the explainers frequently throughout the election season, in the Voter Guide, on social media as a way to inform and engage with our followers,

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28 Proposal 1: Calling a State Constitutional Convention in order to revise and amend the State Constitution.

Proposal 2: Amending the State Constitution to allow a court to reduce or revoke the public pension of a public officer who is convicted of a felony that has a direct relationship to the performance of his or her existing duties.

Proposal 3: Amending the State Constitution to create a land account with up to 250 acres of forest preserve land eligible for use by towns, villages, and counties that have no viable alternative to using forest preserve land to address public health and safety concerns; as a substitute for the land removed, another 250 acres of land would be added to the forest preserve.

and in our outgoing emails to voters. We received positive feedback from the public and other good government groups about these videos, and we plan to expand this framework to produce explainers for other elected offices.

THE DEBATE PROGRAM AND CANDIDATE COMMUNITY FORUMS

The Debate Program is another important initiative that allows voters to connect with their candidates for citywide office (mayor, public advocate, and comptroller). Candidates who participate in the Campaign Finance Program are required to participate in the debates in order to be eligible for public funds. This year, the debates were sponsored by two different sponsor groups: WCBS, WLNY 1055, NewsRadio 880, 1010 WINS, Daily News, Common Cause/NY, CUNY, New York Immigration Coalition, and Rock the Vote; and Spectrum News NY1, WNYC, POLITICO, Citizens Union, Civic Hall, Intelligence Squared, and the Latino Leadership Institute.

Candidate debates are an important part of the democratic process, as they allow voters to hear directly from the candidates for mayor, public advocate, and comptroller and compare them side-by-side as they discuss the most important

> **"NEW YORK CITY'S DEBATE PROGRAM ALLOWS VOTERS TO COMPARE CANDIDATES SIDE-BY-SIDE AND TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR VISIONS FOR THE CITY. WE'RE EXCITED TO PARTNER WITH TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES TO MAKE THESE CRITICAL DEBATES ACCESSIBLE, ENGAGING, AND FUN FOR AS MANY NEW YORKERS AS POSSIBLE."**
>
> Amy Loprest,
> Executive Director of
> the NYC Campaign
> Finance Board

issues facing the city. This year we held four debates: two for mayoral candidates before the primary election and two for mayoral candidates before the general election. NY1 also held two separate debates, for public advocate and comptroller respectively, before the general election. In order to encourage New Yorkers to discuss the issues in their communities and participate in the elections, we partnered with Transportation Alternatives to host two watch parties for the general election mayoral debates, at the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Plaza in Brooklyn and at the 78th Street Plaza in Queens.

While only qualifying candidates for citywide office who are in the Campaign Finance Program are required to participate in the debates, City Council races, despite receiving less media attention, are just as important. So in 2017, we launched the **Candidate Community Forums** program in order to provide voters in Council districts with no incumbent on the ballot with the opportunity to meet the candidates and hear them discuss the issues in their communities. After a selective application process, we partnered with local nonpartisan organizations to host forums in the following districts (see the table below). Participating organizations were selected based on their capacity to conduct nonpartisan voter outreach and demonstrated ability to facilitate and host these events, which took place from August through September before the primary election. Overall, the forums were well-attended and incorporated input from members of the community, with some of the partnering organizations soliciting questions from voters in advance or taking them as they came in via social media during the forums.

DISTRICT	PARTNER ORGANIZATION	VENUE
District 2 (Manhattan)	New York City Housing Authority Branch of the NAACP, Inc.	Grand Street Settlement Cafe Room
District 4 (Manhattan)	The League of Women Voters of the City of New York	The Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College
District 8 (Bronx, Manhattan)	Hispanic Federation, Inc.	Julia De Burgos Latino Cultural Center
District 13 (Bronx)	Faith in New York	Throggs Neck Community Church
District 18 (Bronx)	Garifuna Coalition USA, Inc.	P.S. 106 Parkchester School
District 41 (Brooklyn)	Ocean Hill-Brownsville Coalition of Young Professionals	Brooklyn Collegiate Preparatory High School
District 43 (Brooklyn)	East Kings County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	Brooklyn Public Library, Bay Ridge Branch

THE NYC VOTES EMAIL CAMPAIGN

Over the years, we have heard frequently from voters and good government groups, in our public hearings and in the course of our day-to-day work, about the need for regular email communications about elections from a trusted, nonpartisan source. In order to address this growing demand for election information that voters can easily access online and on their phones, we developed a platform for conducting outreach to voters and providing important election information via email and text messaging. After developing a communications plan for the 2017 election cycle and beyond, we launched our email and text message communications in July of 2017.

We began by following up with voters who had registered with us in 2016, thanking them for registering and giving them the opportunity to opt into regular email communications from us. In doing so, we also gave voters the option to decide how often and what types of messages they wanted to receive from us, by creating different message tiers. Election alerts, the first tier, are the most basic level of communication between us and an email recipient, providing information

about upcoming election dates and deadlines. Anyone who opted into receiving communications from us was automatically signed up to receive these alerts, which were also sent out via text message to those who provided their phone numbers and opted into receiving texts from NYC Votes. The second tier, election info, was developed for recipients who wanted more in-depth content about their elections, including information about campaign finance. These recipients also received customized election information, such as reminders about Know Your Vote, a weekly feature on our blog that covered City Council and borough president races, and our contribution maps , which demonstrated how campaign funding looked across the five boroughs. The third tier, volunteer emails, focused on recruiting volunteers to participate in GOTV and voter registration events with us. Lastly, we also began sending out "Fun Friday" emails to people who opted to hear more about our programs and events. We used these messages to draw attention to our social media campaigns and interact with voters in a more creative, engaging way.

Our list grew steadily throughout the course of the election cycle, eventually reaching nearly 3,000 opt-ins for email alerts and nearly 1,300 opt-ins for text message alerts by the end of 2017. In addition to running opt-in campaigns to new registrants from our voter registration activities, we received email opt-ins as a result of the paperless Voter Guide application. We also asked users of NYC Votes Contribute, an online platform developed by the CFB that allows registered campaigns to collect credit card contributions, if they would like to receive emails from us regarding their elections.

To date, we have over 3,300 recipients regularly receiving emails from us (see the table below for a breakdown of how many people have opted into each message tier) and almost 1,500 people signed up to receive election alert texts from us. In 2018, we are working to develop a base of supporters for our voting reform advocacy efforts by creating an additional communications plan for supporters of Vote Better NY, the NYC Votes-led movement for state election reforms. As we gain supporters and grow our mailing lists, we will continue to provide election alerts for the state and federal elections that New Yorkers will be participating in this year, while also developing original content that establishes NYC Votes as a trusted, engaging source of nonpartisan election information for all New Yorkers.

NYC VOTES EMAIL CAMPAIGN MESSAGE TIERS AND RECIPIENTS[29]	
MESSAGE TIER	NUMBER OF PEOPLE SIGNED UP
Election alerts	2,300
Election information	1,400
Volunteer emails	735
Fun Friday emails	1,200

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Social media outreach forms an important component of our communication with voters as well. We experienced significant growth on our primary social media outlets throughout this past year, particularly around the dates of the elections, going from 18,700 Facebook followers to 19,500; 4,800 Twitter followers to 6,000; and 600 Instagram followers to 1,200.

Two of our most notable social media campaigns from this year put New York City voters front and center, conveying a positive, empowering message about the importance of voting in local elections and the image of New York City as a community of civically engaged, passionate citizens. We continued publishing new posts for **#VotersofNewYork**, a social media portrait and interview series that launched in October 2016. NYC Votes asked New Yorkers at registration events and naturalization ceremonies for their thoughts and experiences on voting and civic engagement to create 42 portraits of NYC voters for this series.

Social media also played a major role in our work on the city's official **"I Voted" sticker**, which has become a symbol of city pride and a celebration of our voting rights since it was first introduced in 2013. In March of 2017, NYC Votes hosted a competition to find a new design for the sticker. Our call for new, original designs

29 These numbers do not reflect overlap between message tiers, as people can opt into as many message tiers as they would like.

resulted in over 800 submissions. After internally selecting ten finalists based on their overall aesthetic quality, the strength of their pro-voting message, and how effectively they represented New York City, we invited the public to vote on their favorite sticker design through our website. Nearly 10,000 votes were cast. The winning design, created by Marie Dagata and Scott Heinz, was inspired by the iconic MTA subway map. “All the people of the boroughs meet together, pass each other, [and] need each other in the subway and the voting booth,” said Dagata and Heinz of their design. The new stickers were printed and distributed on Election Day by the Board of Elections in September and November.

We promoted the sticker in our print Voter Guide, in our emails, and on social media, encouraging voters to use the hashtag #NYCVotes to share their “I Voted” sticker selfies with us on Election Day. We reached more than 60,000 people on Facebook during the week we announced the winning design, up 207% over normal engagement levels. We also used the sticker to create a Facebook photo wrap that allowed users to incorporate the “I Voted” sticker into their profile pictures, using engagement on the photo wrap to gain email opt-ins.

"VOTE FOR THE CITY YOU WANT"

In August of 2017, we launched "Vote for the City You Want", one of our most ambitious citywide GOTV campaigns to date. This campaign highlighted how local elections impact voters' daily lives. We developed print and video spots featuring a diverse cast of models, which aired on cable television, on YouTube and other social media outlets, and in newspapers, subways, buses, ferries, and community spaces such as hair salons and neighborhood bodegas. The print versions of the campaign were translated into the four additional languages

covered by the Voting Rights Act (Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Bengali), and video ads were produced in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

Each spot focused on a different issue of importance to New Yorkers—education, healthcare, affordability, mass transit, jobs, and public safety—and connected voting in local elections with being able to make a difference on that issue. The ads then directed viewers to the online Voter Guide at voting.nyc, the NYC Votes landing page for all election resources.

As a result of the campaign, we received about three times as many visitors to the online Guide as we received in the 2013 election during the two weeks prior to each election. Videos for the campaign received over 130,000 views on YouTube. We also found that a good portion of the resulting traffic to voting.nyc was made up of younger visitors, with 29 percent in the 18–24 age group and 32 percent in the 25–35 age group. While this was not surprising, given that younger voters are more likely to use online resources, this was heartening for us, given that younger voters are often less likely to cast a ballot at the polls in comparison to their older counterparts.

DAYS OF ACTION AND PHONE BANKING

As mentioned, our **Days of Action** program addresses our Charter-mandated requirement[30] to register and engage voters in traditionally underserved communities. NYC Votes recruits partners and individual volunteers to coordinate our work in these areas, and we are also able to leverage our status as a government agency to partner with other agencies in conducting outreach to these underrepresented populations, which are usually more difficult to reach. This year, we worked with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to conduct GOTV and voter registration efforts in shelters and NYCHA residences in districts with competitive City Council races.

In addition to the primary and general citywide elections, New Yorkers also had two special elections in 2017—in City Council District 9 on February 14th and in

30 New York City Charter Section 1054(b).

State Senate District 30 on May 23rd. To let New Yorkers in these districts know about these respective elections and encourage them to vote, we conducted GOTV events at the Rangel Houses on February 11th and at the Polo Grounds and Rangel Houses on May 20th. Our fourth and final Day of Action for the year was held on October 28th at the Gompers Houses in Manhattan's City Council District 2. We covered four buildings, knocking on doors and placing door hangers with information about the upcoming general election in November.

Before major elections, NYC Votes also reaches out to voters via **phone banking**, with a nonpartisan message urging people to vote. Our efforts grew significantly in 2017. With the help of over 240 volunteers, we made calls for the primary election from September 9th through 12th and calls for the general election from November 4th through 7th. Our organizational partners for phone banking included the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Delta Rho Omega and Psi Lambda Chapters), the Bronx Science Key Club, the New York Urban League Young Professionals, StreetSquash, the Urban Assembly School for Math and Science, and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. This year, we successfully experimented with allowing a group of volunteers to phone bank offsite. We sent GOTV call packets and instructions to volunteers from Harlem Children's Zone, who made calls remotely before the general election. We plan to continue offering this offsite option to our GOTV phone banking volunteers so that we can expand our reach.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth voter outreach is a major part of our education and engagement efforts. Younger voters are often just as passionate and dedicated as their older counterparts, and part of our work involves communicating to youth that voting is one of the most important ways they can take action and make a difference. Under the leadership of our Youth Voter Coordinator, NYC Votes works with schools and community-based organizations to conduct **civic engagement workshops** for students, raise awareness of the importance of the youth vote, and educate young adults about how elected officials and local government can affect their lives. In 2017, NYC Votes conducted 38 civic engagement workshops for youth, registering 495 young voters in total.

The **Youth Poet Laureate (YPL) program**, now in its ninth year, is one of our most high-profile programs geared toward younger voters. Developed in partnership with Urban Word NYC, the YPL program aims to promote voting and civic engagement through creative self-expression, in the form of a spoken word poetry competition. The winner receives a book deal and a platform to advocate for the issues they are passionate about. This year, the 15 YPL finalists participated in the first-ever **Federal Hall Fellowship**. The paid fellowship, developed in partnership with the U.S. National Park Service and the Dialogue Arts Project, offered the finalists a chance to participate in a three-week incubator workshop series facilitated by a team of nationally acclaimed artists, actors, and musicians at the historic Federal Hall National Memorial in lower Manhattan. Our Youth Voter Coordinator also conducted a civic engagement workshop with the finalists, discussing the importance of voting, and provided information about the role of the YPL and the goals and expectations of the YPL program.

YOUNGER VOTERS ARE OFTEN JUST AS PASSIONATE AND DEDICATED AS THEIR OLDER COUNTERPARTS, AND PART OF OUR WORK INVOLVES COMMUNICATING TO YOUTH THAT VOTING IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WAYS THEY CAN TAKE ACTION AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

The program culminated in a final showcase held in November at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, where each finalist performed their original poetry and the official 2017–2018 Youth Poet Laureate and ambassadors were announced. This year's winner, 15-year-old William Lohier (see page 65 in the

Appendix for the full text of his winning poem, "Voting in a Black Hole"), said, "I am so grateful, not only for this title, but for the platform it provides. It is beyond exciting to help give voice to New York's youth and to explore the change we can effect at the intersection of art and civic engagement." As the 2017–2018 Youth Poet Laureate, Lohier will work with NYC Votes to reach young voters by promoting voting and civic engagement and performing at public events throughout the city.

In addition, we collaborated with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) and students from Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in the Bronx from October 2016 to February 2017 to create a guide titled **"Our Voice, Our Choice: Why Vote in Local Elections"**. Students spoke with community members, NYC Votes staff, and local government officials to create the guide, which took the form of a printed booklet designed to encourage other New Yorkers to participate in local elections. We also incorporated information from the elected offices explainers into a section titled "Who am I voting for in local elections?"

Another important youth outreach effort is **Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD),** an annual one-day program designed to help New York City students register to vote and educate them about the importance of civic engagement and participation. NYC Votes supported 2017's SVRD by providing instructional materials and support based on our previous work on SVRD. 2017's SVRD took place in March and was led by a partnership of the City Council, the Department of Education, and the New York Immigration Coalition in more than 60 public high schools across the city, resulting in over 2,000 students becoming registered.

TURNOUT IN THE 2017 CITYWIDE ELECTIONS

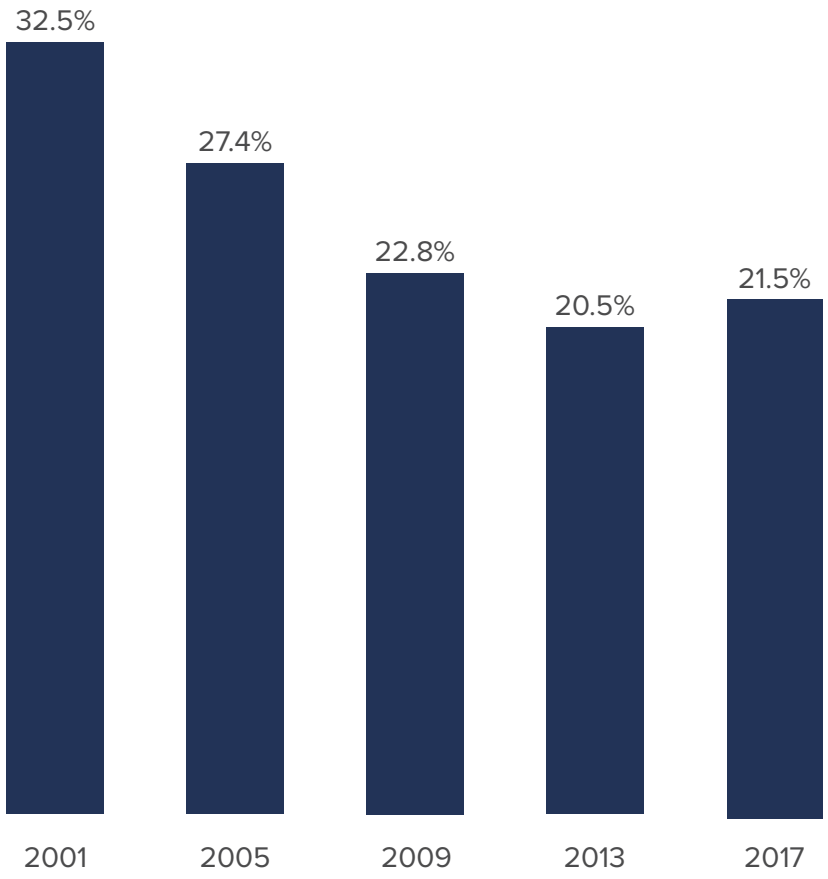
While we plan to continue developing our voter engagement and education programs in order to bridge the voter information gap, there is still much work to be done in order to drive turnout in NYC. We now turn to our analysis of voter turnout during the 2017 citywide elections, comparing it with turnout in previous election cycles. In doing so, we will demonstrate the need for reforms that will encourage voters to participate in all elections and bring New York's voting laws up to speed with laws in other states. As mentioned previously in this report, we have identified several areas for improvement in our current registration and

voting processes, and the following data points provide a strong basis for these legislative recommendations.

TURNOUT TRENDS

To identify turnout patterns across the past few election cycles, we calculated percent turnout among citizens of voting age for citywide election years from 2001 to 2017. From 2001 to 2013, there was a steady decrease in voter turnout in citywide general elections among citizens of voting age. However, this decline in turnout did not occur in the 2017 election.[31]

VOTER TURNOUT AMONG CITIZENS OF VOTING AGE BY ELECTION YEAR



31 The difference in turnout among citizens of voting age was not statistically significant (non-zero) between the 2013 and 2017 election cycles. However, the difference in turnout is statistically significant between 2001 and 2005, 2005 and 2009, and 2009 and 2013.

We also found that participants in local elections skewed older than voters who turn out in presidential elections. The median age for voters in the 2017 citywide election was 54, six years older than the median age of 48 for voters in the 2016 presidential election. For comparison, the median age for all registered active voters as of November 7, 2017 was 47.

VOTERS WHO LEARN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR VOTE AT A YOUNG AGE ARE MORE LIKELY TO CONTINUE SHOWING UP AT THE POLLS, WHICH IS WHY REACHING OUT TO YOUTH IS KEY TO INFLUENCING FUTURE GENERATIONS OF VOTERS.

It follows that the number of younger voters who participated experienced a steeper drop-off between the presidential election and local elections, as compared to voters in other age groups. Turnout among the 18 to 29-year-old age group in the 2016 presidential was 55.4% and fell to just 13.5% in 2017, a 41.9 point difference. This turnout gap shrinks in subsequent age groups, with the smallest gap in turnout appearing among voters 70 years of age and older. In this age group, turnout among all eligible voters was 56% in 2016 and 31.6% in 2017, a 24.4 point difference. Overall, the gap in turnout between the 2016 presidential and the 2017 citywide election was 35.1%. These numbers demonstrate the continued need to drive turnout among younger voters, particularly in our local elections. Voters who learn about the importance of their vote at a young age are more likely to continue showing up at the polls, which is why reaching out to youth is key to influencing future generations of voters. For this reason, youth engagement is one of the most important aspects of our work. Our youth programs focus on empowering young voters through education, emphasizing their ability to make a difference in their communities by voting and taking civic action.

TURNOUT IN THE 2016 AND 2017 GENERAL ELECTIONS, BY AGE GROUP			
AGE GROUP	TURNOUT IN THE 2016 ELECTION	TURNOUT IN THE 2017 ELECTION	DIFFERENCE IN TURNOUT
Overall	60.3%	25.2%	35.1%
18 to 29	55.4%	13.5%	41.%
30 to 39	58.3%	19.6%	38.7%
40 to 49	61.1%	24.3%	36.8%
50 to 59	65.3%	29.9%	35.3%
60 to 69	67.4%	35.9%	31.6%
70 and older	56.0%	31.6%	24.4%

NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS

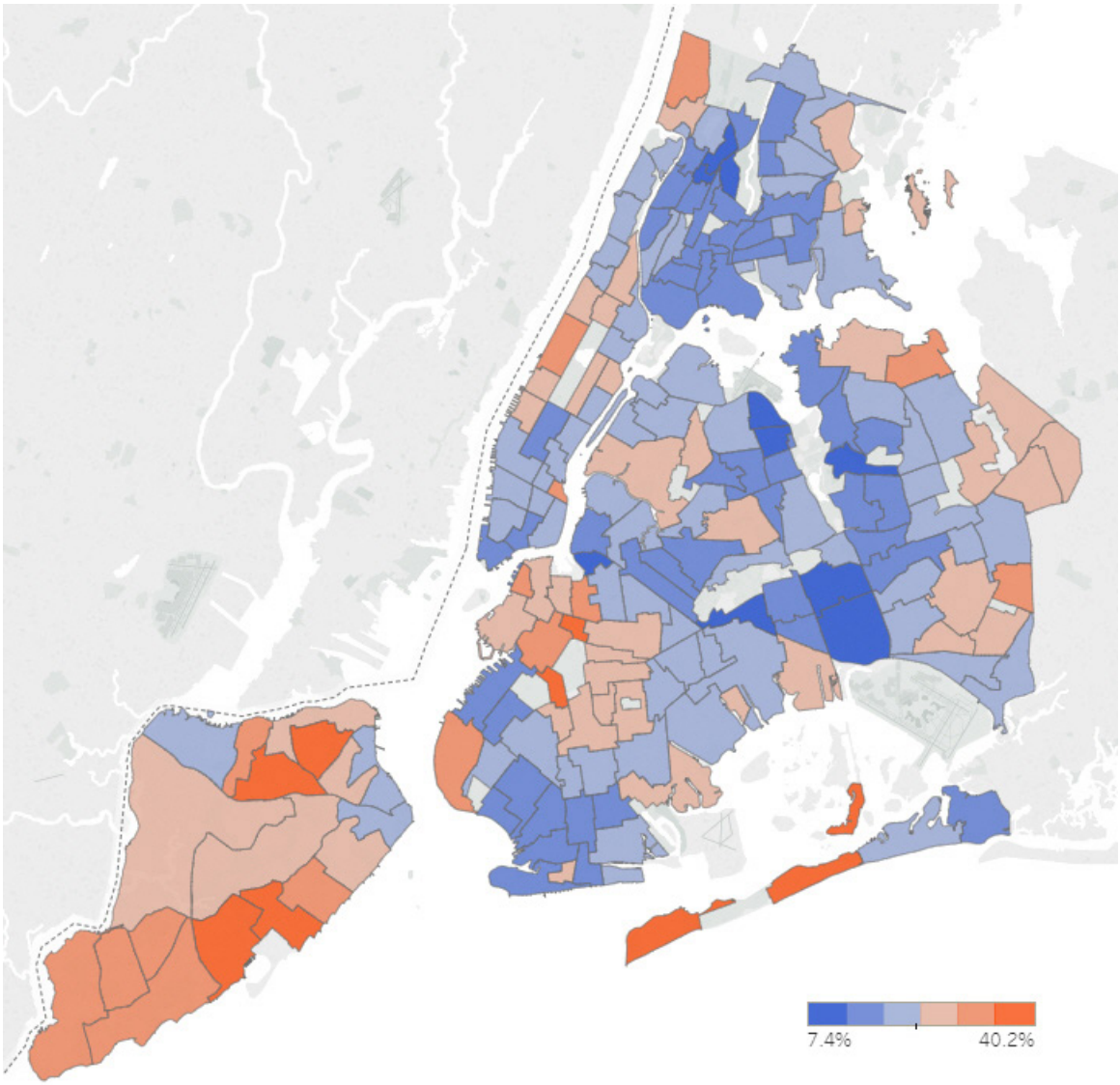
At the neighborhood level, there were wide disparities in both voter registration rates and voter turnout. For example, seven of the top 25 neighborhoods for voter registration were in the Bronx, yet none of these neighborhoods were among the top 25 for voter turnout. In fact, only two of the 25 top neighborhoods for voter registration were also top neighborhoods for voter turnout in the 2017 general election. On the other end of the spectrum, six of the 25 neighborhoods with the lowest registration rates were also among the 25 lowest neighborhoods for voter turnout. Overall, neighborhood registration rate has a moderate relationship with neighborhood turnout rate, though this relationship is weaker in 2017 than it was in the 2016 presidential election. So, while a high rate of registered citizens did not guarantee a similarly high turnout rate, low registration rates could be predictive of low voter turnout.

LOW REGISTRATION RATES COULD BE PREDICTIVE OF LOW VOTER TURNOUT.

A handful of neighborhoods had turnout rates[32] higher than 30.0% of the citizen voting age population. Of the 19 neighborhoods with turnout higher than 30%, eight of these (42.1%) were in Staten Island, only two of which (Westerleigh and New Brighton-Silver Lake) were also in the top 25 neighborhoods for turnout in the 2016 elections. High turnout in Staten Island may be attributed to the Republican mayoral candidate, Nicole Malliotakis, who is the Assemblywoman from Staten Island's 64th district. Among the other neighborhoods with turnout higher than 30%, five were in Brooklyn, three were in Queens, two were in Manhattan, and one was in the Bronx. 12 of the top 25 neighborhoods for voter turnout in 2016 were also among the top 25 in 2017. Of these 12 neighborhoods, five were in Brooklyn, three were in Manhattan, two were in Staten Island, and one was in both the Bronx and in Queens.

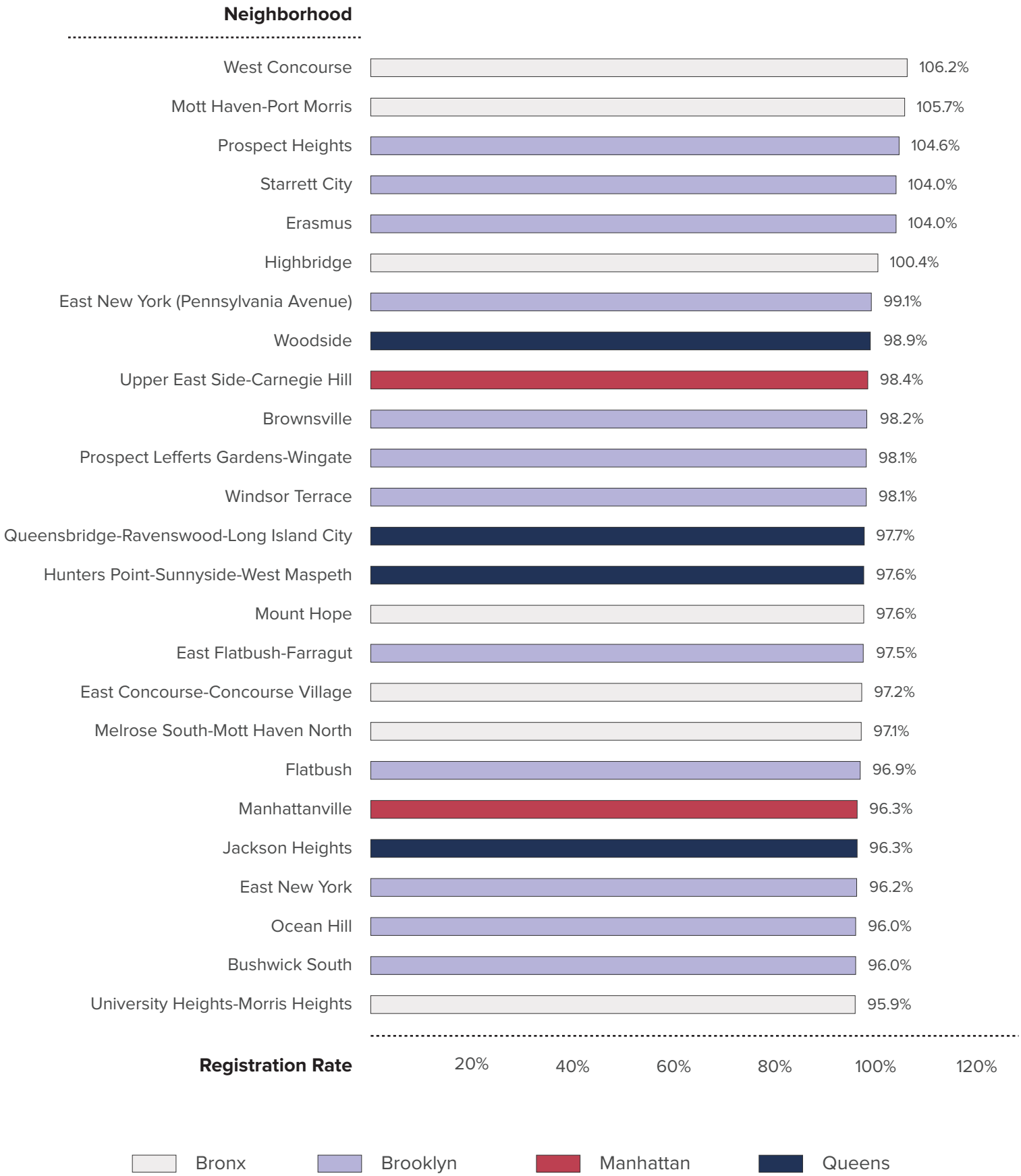
A number of neighborhoods also had turnout rates lower than 15.0% of citizens of voting age. This included 10 neighborhoods in the Bronx; eight in Queens; and seven in Brooklyn. 10 of the bottom 25 neighborhoods for voter turnout in 2016 were also among the bottom 25 in 2017. Of these 10 neighborhoods, six were in Brooklyn, three were in Queens, and one was in the Bronx. Five of the neighborhoods with the lowest turnout were concentrated in South Brooklyn, which also occurred in 2016. These neighborhoods include Sunset Park East, Bensonhurst East and West, Brighton Beach, and Homecrest.

32 Here we calculate turnout by taking the number of voters who participated in the 2016 general election and dividing it by CVAP.

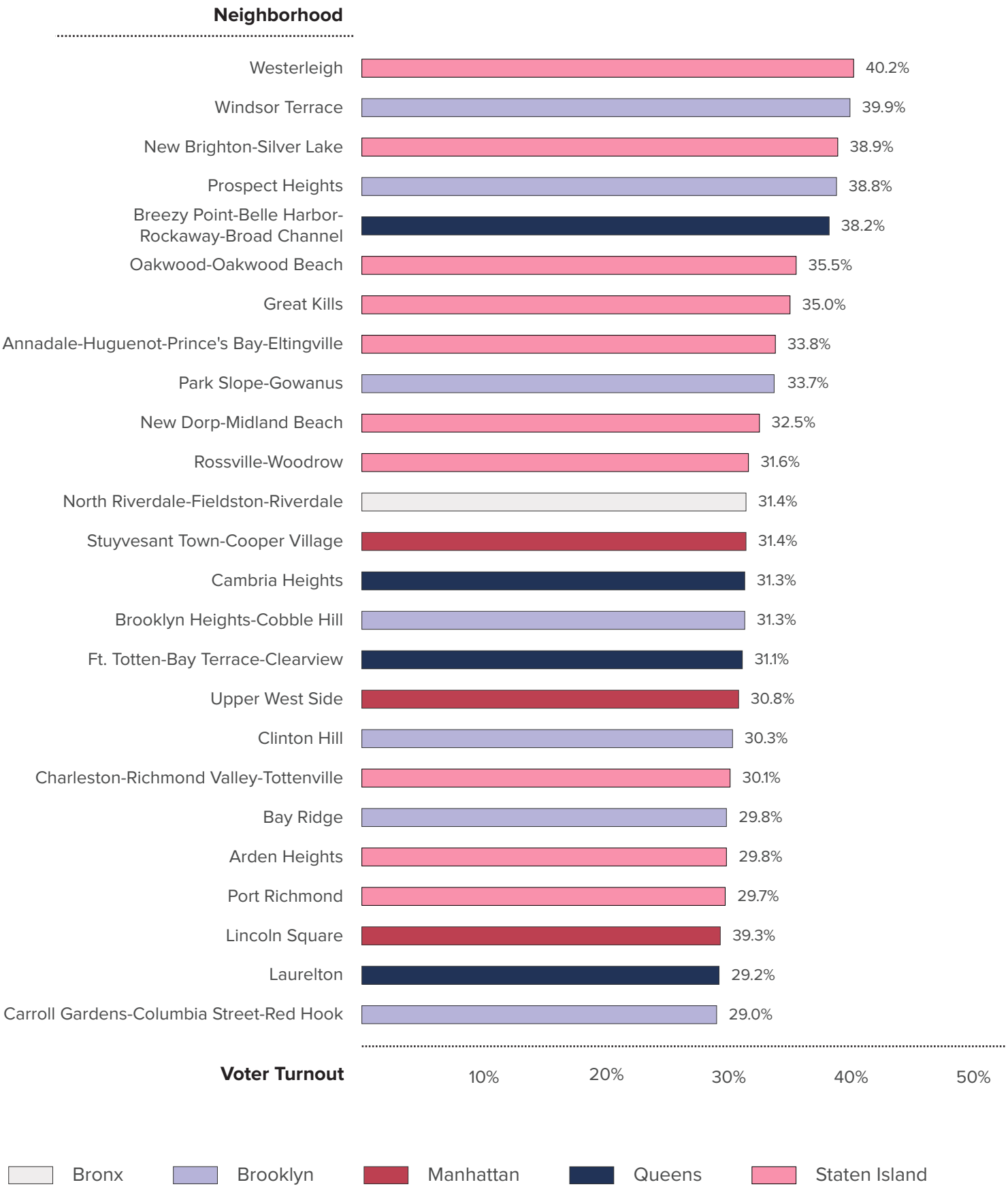


VOTER TURNOUT AMONG CITIZENS OF VOTING AGE
BY NEIGHBORHOOD, GENERAL ELECTION

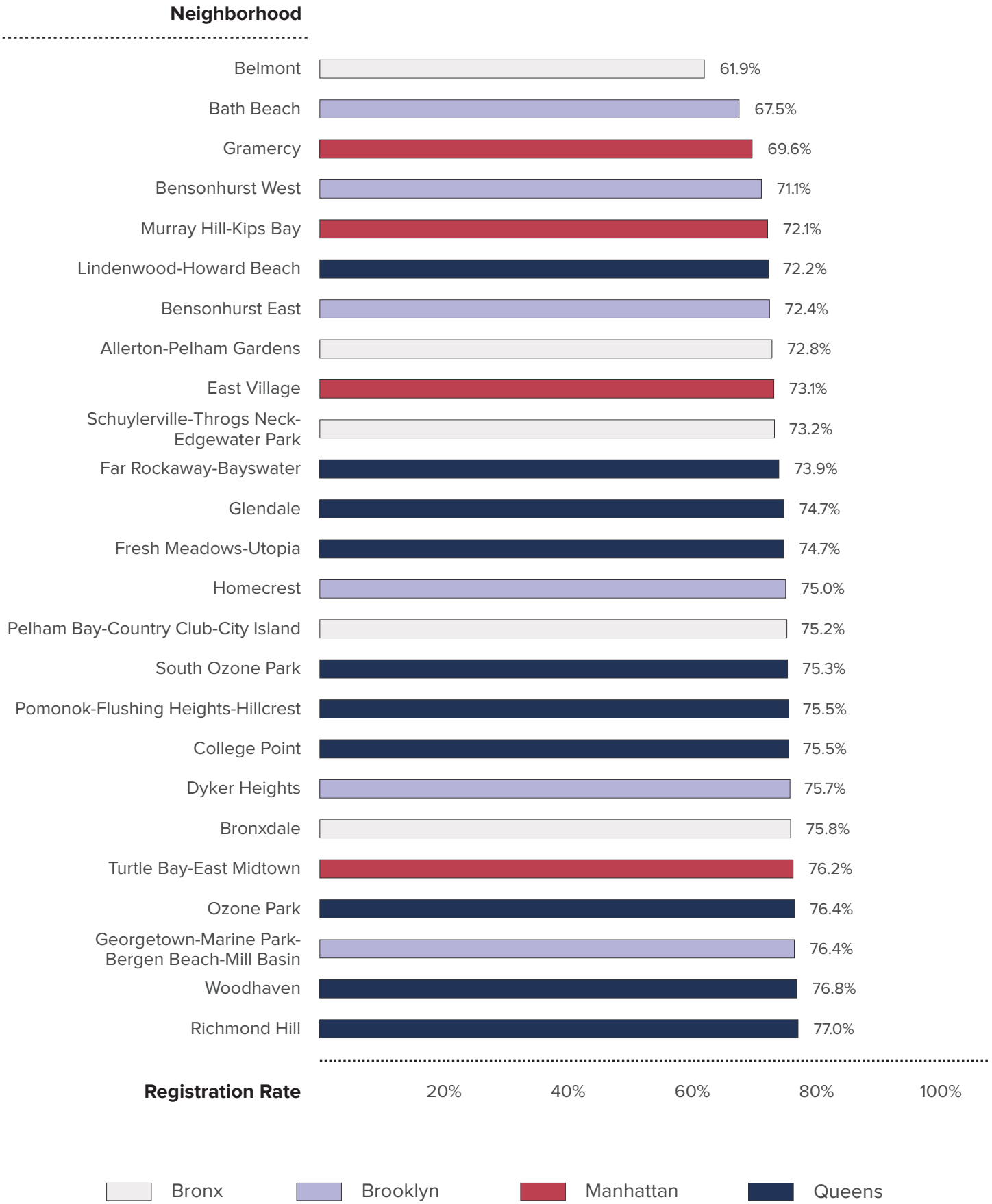
TOP 25 NEIGHBORHOODS FOR VOTER REGISTRATION



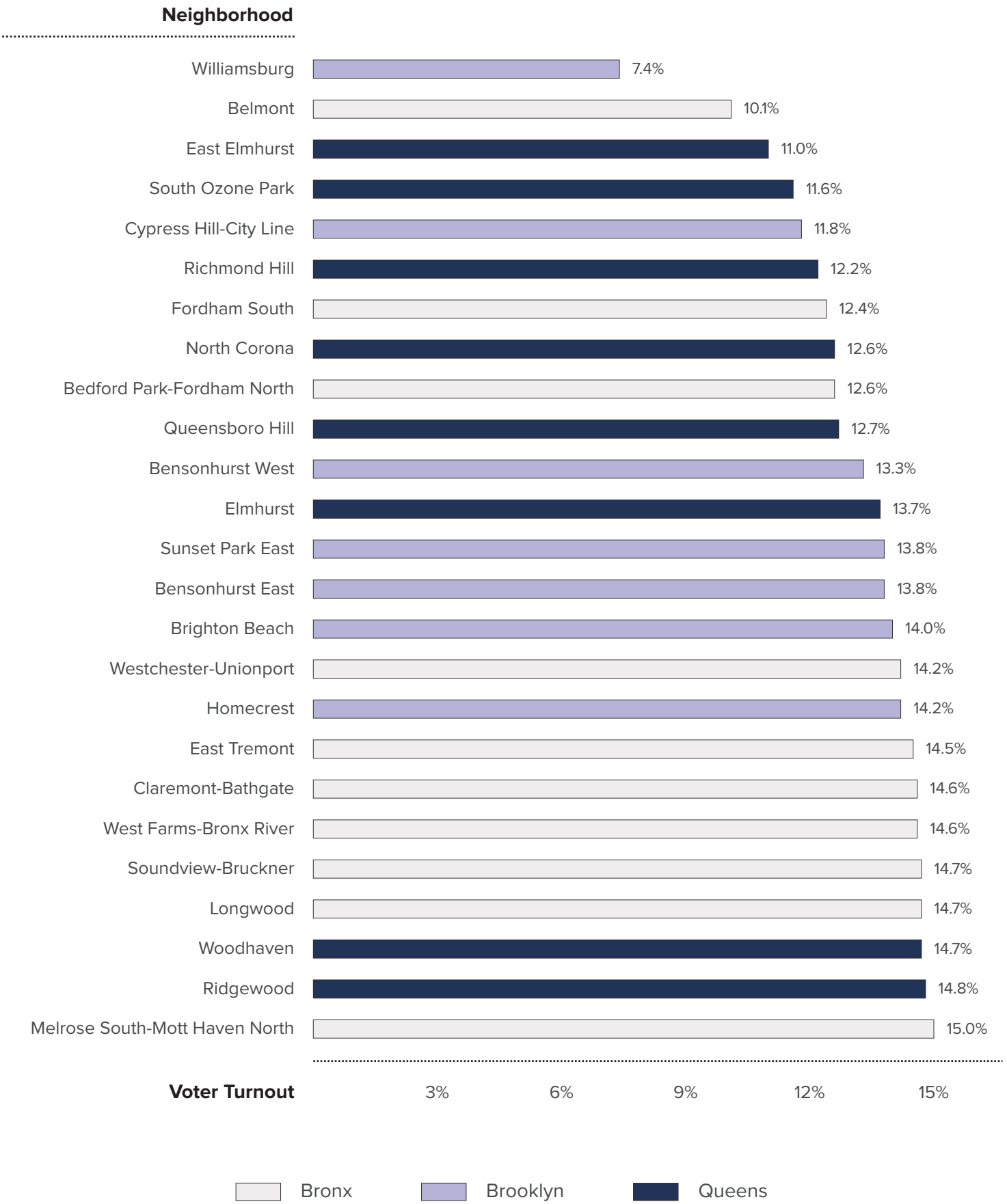
TOP 25 NEIGHBORHOODS FOR VOTER TURNOUT



BOTTOM 25 NEIGHBORHOODS FOR VOTER REGISTRATION



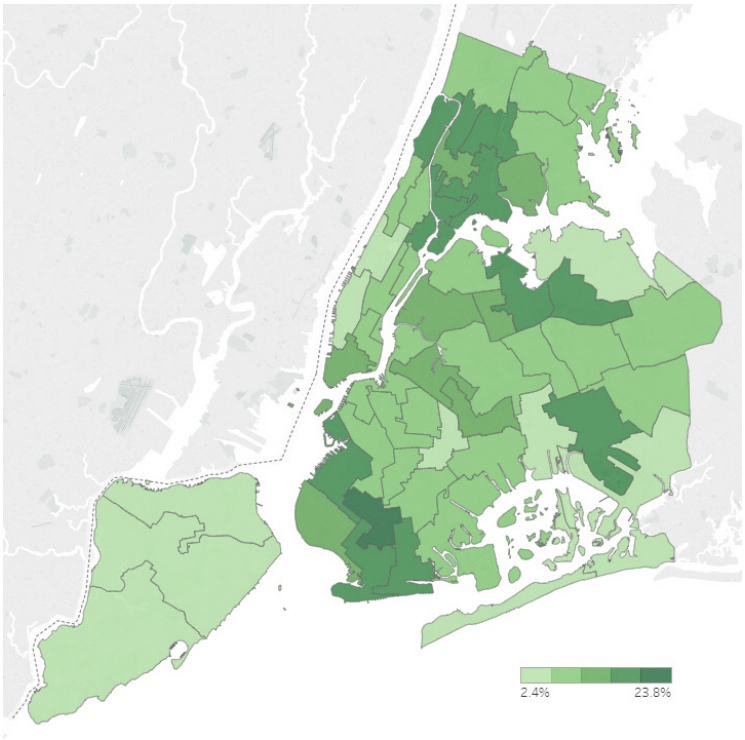
BOTTOM 25 NEIGHBORHOODS FOR VOTER TURNOUT



DROP-OFF IN VOTER PARTICIPATION FOR BALLOT PROPOSALS

In addition to voting for citywide and City Council offices in the 2017 general election, voters were also asked to vote on three ballot proposals. A number of voters cast a vote for citywide and City Council offices but left their ballots blank for the ballot proposals. Here, we calculate the "drop-off" percentage at the City Council district level.[33]

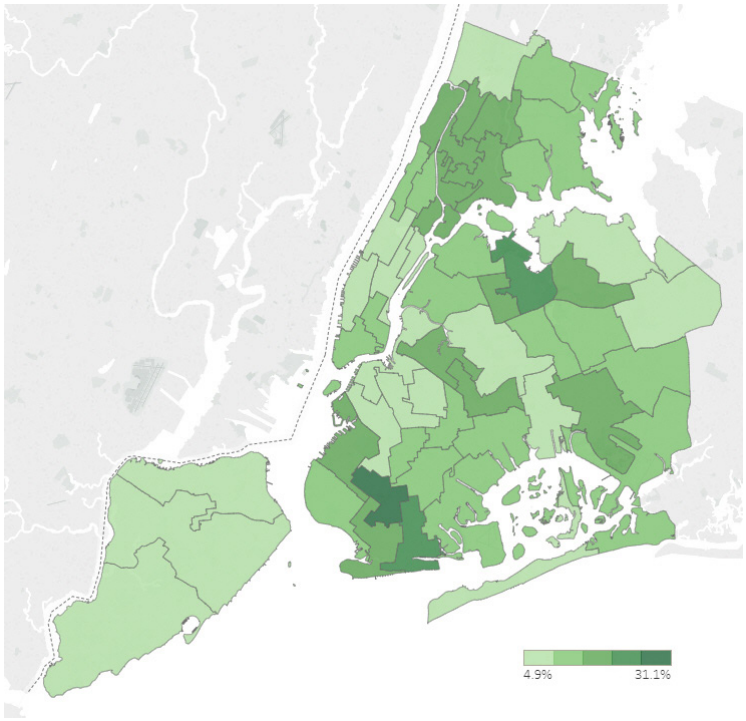
DROP-OFF IN VOTER PARTICIPATION FOR
BALLOT PROPOSAL 1, 2017 GENERAL ELECTION



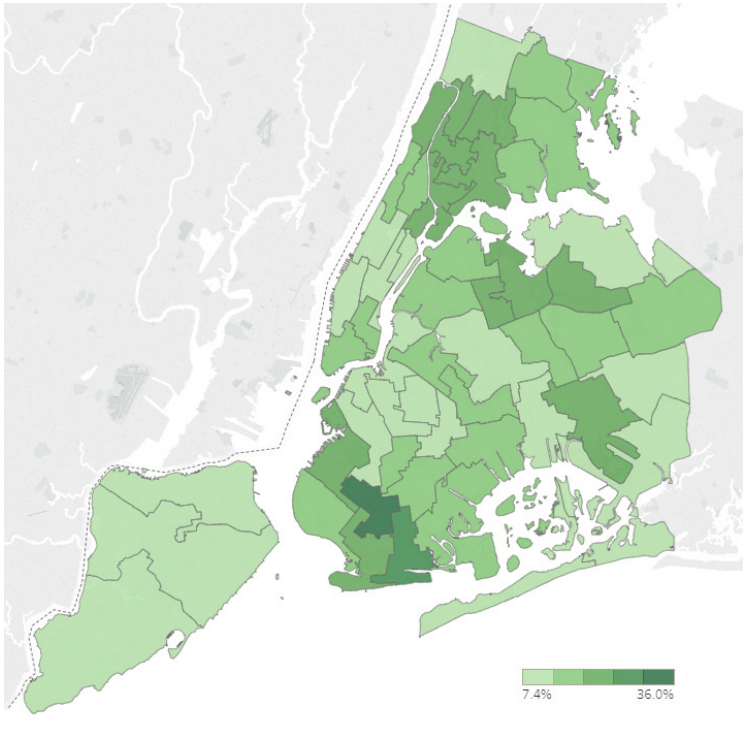
Overall, Ballot Proposal 1 (the constitutional convention question) saw an average drop-off of 10.7%, Ballot Proposal 2 (the pension forfeiture question) saw an average drop-off of 13.3%, and Ballot Proposal 3 (the forest preserve land bank question) saw an average drop-off of 16.3%. This was expected, as Ballot Proposal 1 received the most widespread attention in the media and from advocacy groups and organizations at the local and state levels. Throughout the election, several of these organizations lobbied for and against the proposal.

33 To do this, we took the number of ballots cast in each City Council race during the general election and used the number of blank ballots in the race, comparing it to the number of voters who were recorded in the voter file as having participated in the general election.

DROP-OFF IN VOTER PARTICIPATION FOR BALLOT PROPOSAL 2, 2017 GENERAL ELECTION



DROP-OFF IN VOTER PARTICIPATION FOR BALLOT PROPOSAL 3, 2017 GENERAL ELECTION



In some Council districts, drop-off was minor, with as few as 2.4% of voters casting a vote for citywide and City Council offices without voting for Ballot Proposal 1. However, in 12 Council districts, at least 15% of voters who cast a ballot did not cast a vote for or against Ballot Proposal 1. Drop-off was higher for Ballot Proposals 2 and 3 respectively. District 51 in Staten Island boasted the lowest drop-off rate for each of the three proposals, though the lowest drop-off rate was 4.9% for Proposal 2 and 7.4% for Proposal 3. In 16 of the 51 Council districts, at least 15% of voters who cast a ballot for citywide or City Council offices did not cast a vote for or against Ballot Proposal 2. In 26 Council districts, at least 15% of voters who cast a ballot did not cast a vote for or against Ballot Proposal 3. Across the three ballot proposals, Council districts in Staten Island had the lowest average rate of drop-off at 6.5%. In Manhattan Council districts, the average rate of drop-off across all three proposals was 12%; in Queens Council districts, 13.4%; in Brooklyn Council districts, 14.6%; and in Bronx Council districts, 16.2%.

TURNOUT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTIONS

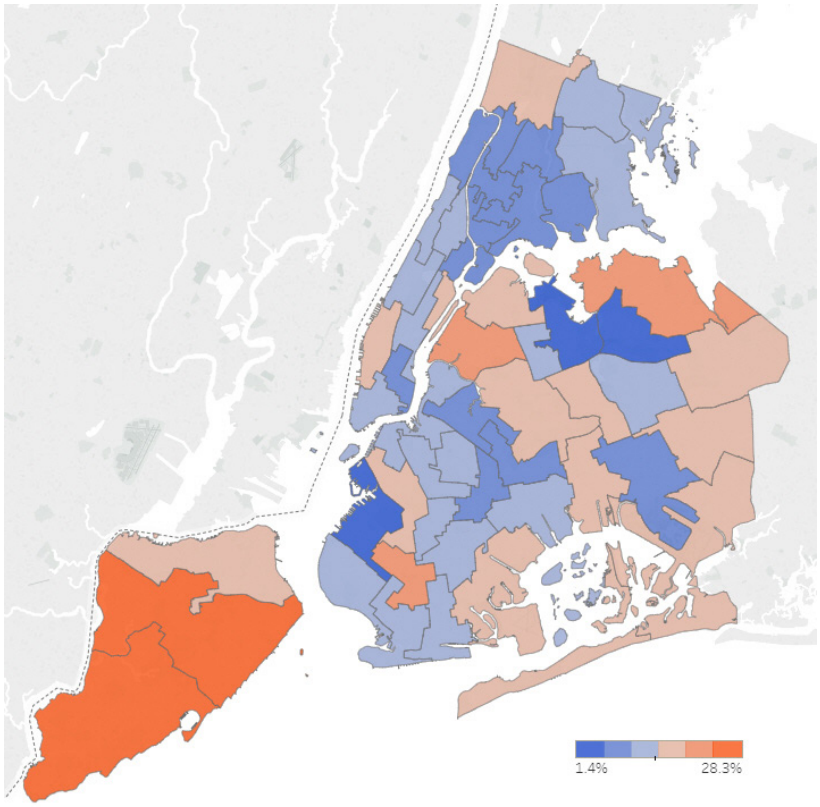
In 2017, there were 18 Council districts in which the incumbent candidate did not face a primary challenge,[34] 23 Council districts in which an incumbent candidate had a primary challenge, nine contested open seat races, and one open seat race with only one candidate. Here, we calculate the percent increase in voter participation from the primary to the general election in 2017 among voters who were eligible to participate in both elections.[35] While not unexpected, the turnout differences here emphasize that competitive races drive voter turnout and encourage voters to participate in the democratic process.

COMPETITIVE RACES DRIVE VOTER TURNOUT AND ENCOURAGE VOTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

34 Included in this number is Council District 32, in which the incumbent, Eric Ulrich (R), did not face a primary challenge. However, there was a Democratic primary race in that district.

35 Eligible voters in the primary included registered Democrats in all 51 Council districts, registered Republicans in Council District 43, and members of the Green Party in Council District 35.

PERCENT INCREASE IN TURNOUT FROM PRIMARY TO GENERAL



In City Council districts with no primary Council race, turnout increased, on average, 15.7% between the primary and general elections. In districts where the incumbent had a primary challenger, turnout increased, on average, 12.3% between the primary and general elections. In competitive open seat districts, turnout increased, on average, 9.2% between the primary and general elections. In District 44, an open seat race with only one candidate, turnout increased 22.4% between the primary and general elections. In District 32, in which the Republican incumbent did not face a primary challenge, but there was a Democratic primary, turnout increased 16.2% between the primary and general elections.

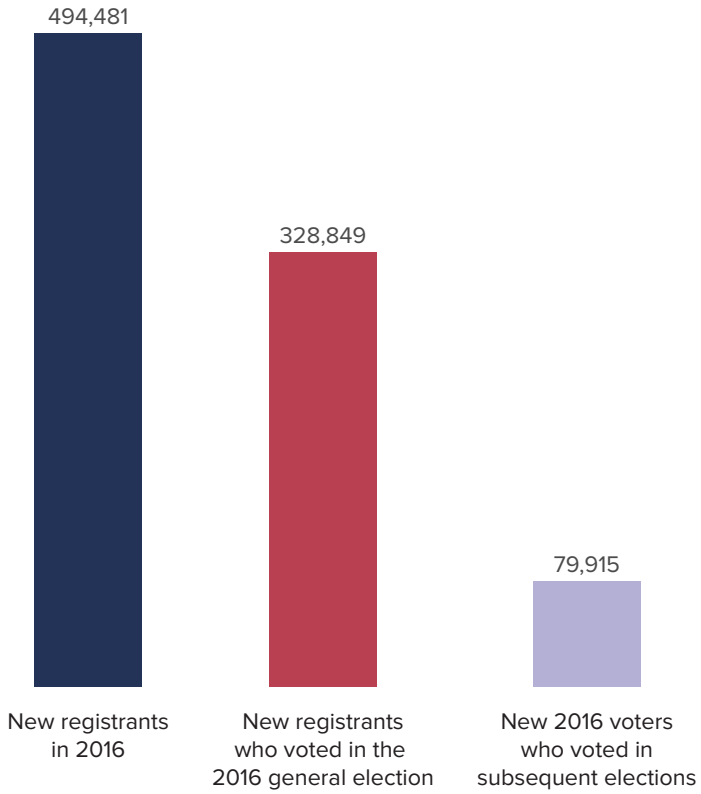
There were also wide variances in turnout increases by borough. Among Council districts in Staten Island, turnout, on average, increased 23.1% between the primary and general elections; an average of 13.9% in Queens Council districts;

an average of 12.4% in Manhattan Council districts, an average of 12.1% in Brooklyn Council districts; and an average of 11% in Bronx Council districts.[36]

COMPARING 2016 VOTERS AND NONVOTERS

In 2016, nearly 500,000 new voters registered in time to cast a ballot in the presidential election. Of those voters, 66.5%, or about 329,000, voted in the presidential election. But most of those new voters did not return to the polls in 2017. Only 80,000, or 24.3%, of 2016 new registrants who voted in the presidential election came back to vote in any subsequent election, including specials, primaries, or general elections in 2017. Those 80,000 voters represent only 16.2% of all new 2016 registrants, which tells us that most new voters are dropping out of the democratic process after their initial engagement.

ENGAGEMENT DROP-OFF IN THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AMONG 2016 NEW REGISTRANTS



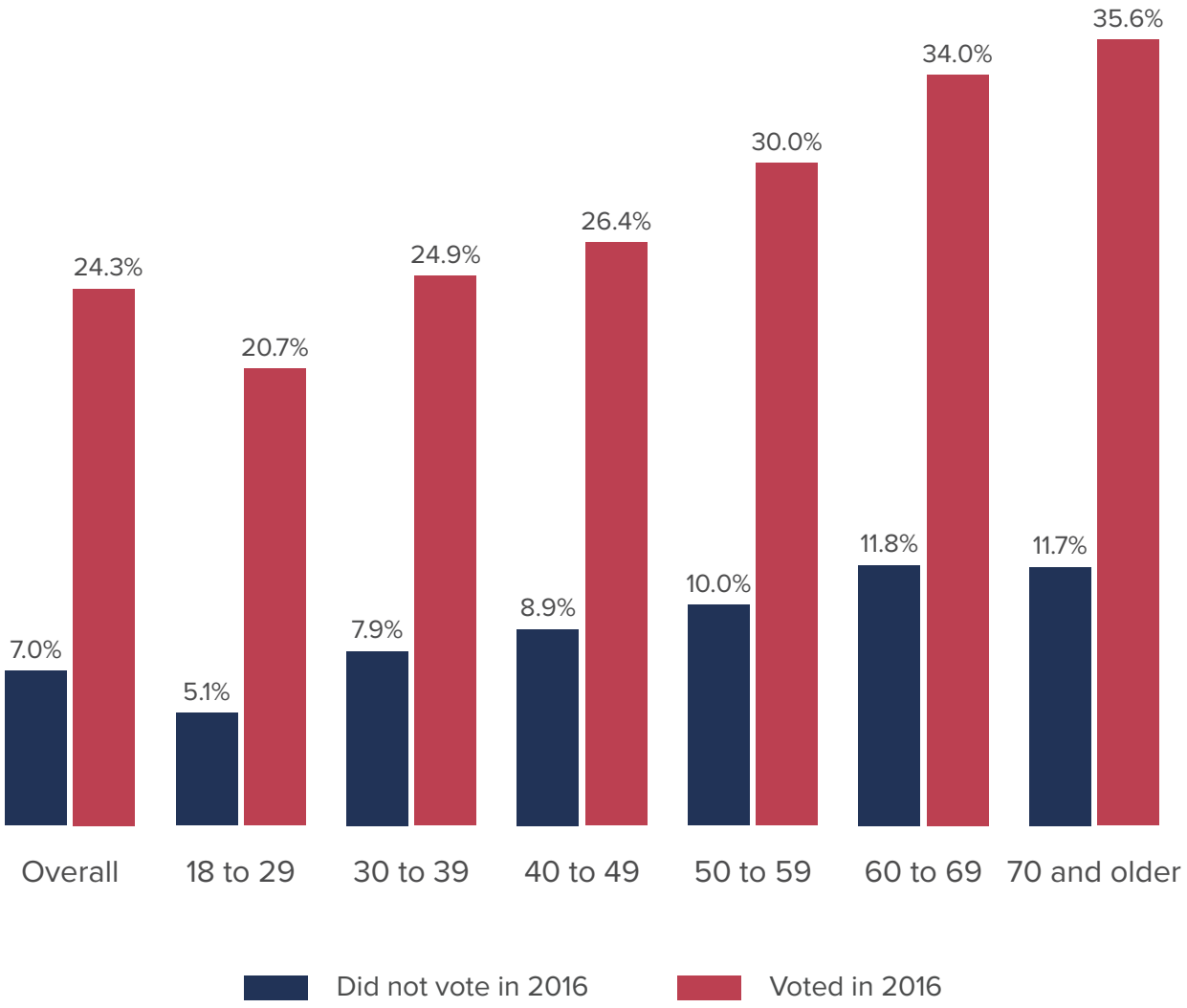
36 Council Districts 8, 22, and 34 span multiple boroughs. These districts were included in calculations for both boroughs they cover. For example, CD8 was used in the calculation for both Manhattan and the Bronx.

Drop-off rates for the 329,000 new voters who cast ballots in the presidential election were even worse than they were for other voters. Among new 2016 voters, 75.7% of them did not come back to the polls in 2017. For voters who registered before 2016 and cast a ballot in the presidential election, about 55.2% of them did not come back. Among all 2016 voters, 57.6% did not come back to vote in any election during 2017. Among registered active voters who cast a ballot in the 2016 presidential, drop-off for the 2017 citywide election was highest in the Bronx and eastern Queens. Additionally, drop-off for the 2017 general was lowest in the Far Rockaways, Staten Island, and southwest Brooklyn among voters who participated in the 2016 presidential.

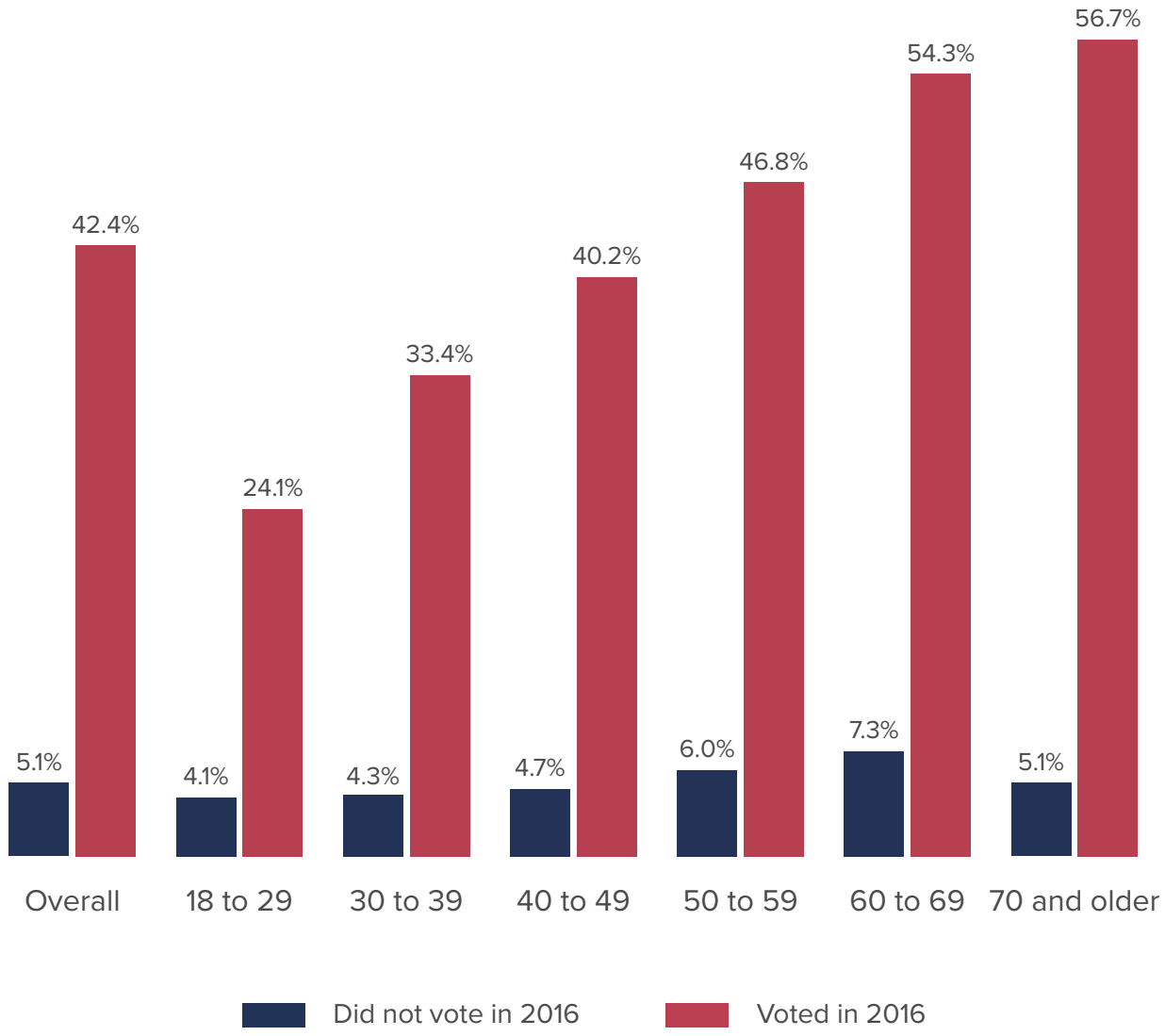
If voters did not participate in the presidential election, they were highly unlikely to participate in local elections. Overall, only 7% of 2016 new registrants who didn't cast ballots in 2016 came out to vote in 2017, compared to 24.3% of those who voted in 2016. This turnout gap increases with each age group. Among 18 to 24-year-olds, only 5.1% of those who didn't vote in 2016 voted in 2017, compared to 20.7% of those who voted in 2016 and voted in 2017, a 15.6 point difference between the two groups. This gap continues to increase up to 23.9% for those 70 and up, while it was 17.3 points for voters overall. For all eligible voters in 2016, the trend is even more exaggerated. Only 5.1% of all eligible voters who did not vote in 2016 voted in 2017, compared to 42.4% who voted in 2016, leaving a 37.3% gap overall. While these statistics illustrate the challenges of driving turnout, especially among voters who are already not engaged even in the most high-profile elections, they also point to the need for the dedicated nonpartisan GOTV and education outreach that we provide from year to year.

IF VOTERS DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, THEY WERE HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS.

2017 TURNOUT BY AGE GROUP AMONG 2016 NEW REGISTRANTS



2017 TURNOUT BY AGE GROUP AMONG ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS



THE CASE FOR VOTING AND REGISTRATION REFORMS

REGISTRATION CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPROVE TURNOUT

Turnout in primary elections is typically low, whether it is for the presidential primary or the mayoral primary. One reason for this may be New York's closed primary system, as well as our change of party enrollment deadline, which is nearly a year in advance of the primary date. Under state election law, voters must change their political party enrollment by the registration deadline the year before they want to participate—a full 193 days before the presidential primary, and even longer before a June or September primary. New York is the only state that requires a voter to change their party enrollment so far in advance. **This date should be harmonized with the regular voter registration deadline**, so that it does not continue to act as a barrier to voters who want to participate in a party primary.

NEW YORK IS THE ONLY STATE THAT REQUIRES A VOTER TO CHANGE THEIR PARTY ENROLLMENT SO FAR IN ADVANCE.

Legislators should also streamline **voting rights restoration** for people with felony convictions. Currently, people who are serving parole cannot register to vote, but those on probation can.[37] This leads to a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding about who can and can't vote. In order to eliminate confusion and encourage reintegration through civic participation, people should have their voting rights restored as soon as they are released from prison to community supervision.

37 On April 18, 2018, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that he would be restoring voting rights to parolees via an executive order. While this order would restore voting rights to more than 35,000 people across New York, this does not change the above-mentioned state laws barring parolees from voting. **https:// www.nytimes.com/2018/04/18/nyregion/felons-pardon-voting-rights-cuomo.html.**

CHANGES NEEDED TO IMPROVE TURNOUT AND THE VOTING EXPERIENCE

In order to provide voters with more opportunities to cast a ballot and a better experience at the polls, New York must join the 37 other states that offer **early voting**. For too long, we have lagged behind the rest of the country; as other states have taken steps to make their voting process better, New York still allows voters to go to the polls only on Election Day. This only gives New York City's 4.6 million voters one day to get to the polls. While state election law requires that a voter's wait time at the polls should not exceed 30 minutes,[38] the reality is that even when all goes smoothly on Election Day, a single day is simply not enough time to process all of New York City's voters, especially in an election that is likely to get higher turnout than usual, such as the presidential election. Early voting would allow more voters to participate by providing flexibility. Providing early voting would give voters more opportunities to get to the polls and could encourage turnout, especially in elections that tend to receive less participation, such as municipal elections.

FOR TOO LONG, WE HAVE LAGGED BEHIND THE REST OF THE COUNTRY.

Proposals before the state legislature have ranged from providing 8 to 12 days of early voting. Early voting must take place over at least one week, including the Saturday and Sunday before Election Day, to ensure that voters have the opportunity to cast their ballots outside of regular business hours. Recent legislation also stipulates that each county must provide one poll site per 50,000 registered voters, to a maximum of seven required locations. However, this requirement would provide a floor rather than a ceiling; Boards of Elections would be able to, at their discretion, implement more poll sites as needed to provide sufficient service to voters. It is likely more poll sites would be needed in most boroughs—Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens each have more than 1 million registered voters, and seven sites per borough may be insufficient to meet their

38 Section 6210.19 of State Election Law states that "County boards shall deploy sufficient voting equipment, election workers and other resources so that voter waiting time at a poll site does not exceed 30 minutes."

needs. Therefore, implementation of early voting would need to take into account how many voters might choose to vote early, how many sites are necessary, and how sites should be placed, with preference given to highly trafficked areas, such as transit hubs, that would be convenient for as many voters as possible.

In order to implement early voting, the state would also need to allow local Boards of Elections to implement **electronic poll books**. Right now, voters go to the polls on a single day, and sign in using a paper poll book. This system would be cumbersome and insufficient for processing voters at fewer poll sites during a designated early voting period. Electronic poll books would further safeguard against the remote possibility of voters casting a ballot more than once during an election. They also provide a number of other Election Day benefits that would make for a smoother voting process. For example, the check-in process would be much faster overall, allowing voters to be processed more quickly; electronic poll books would also give poll workers the ability to look up voters and direct them to the correct location if they are at the wrong poll site, which they cannot do with the paper system we now use.

PROVIDING EARLY VOTING WOULD GIVE VOTERS MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO GET TO THE POLLS AND COULD ENCOURAGE TURNOUT.

As our data shows, there are currently far too many obstacles to voters registering and maintaining their registration information. Electronic poll books would help resolve some of the errors that can be introduced during the registration process, as poll workers would be able to check if a voter's status is inactive. Currently, inactive voters do not get printed in the poll books, and a voter must vote using an affidavit ballot if their name does not appear in the book. Board of Elections staff must then verify that a voter was eligible in order for their vote to be counted and reactivate their status after the fact. This not only creates an unnecessary burden at the polls, but also presents additional barriers to voting, as affidavit ballots can be rejected if the affidavit envelope has any deficiencies. Electronic poll books could include inactive voters, whose status could be reactivated on site before they cast a regular ballot. There are currently

1,146 jurisdictions[39] in 20 states[40] using electronic poll books, and the Board of Elections already has tablets that were purchased for use as poll site finders and for election night results processing, which could also be used as electronic poll books with off-the-shelf software.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY FAR TOO MANY OBSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS REGISTERING AND MAINTAINING THEIR REGISTRATION INFORMATION.

Electronic poll books are the first step in eventually shifting to **a vote center model**, in which voters would be able to choose which poll site to vote at depending on what location works best for them. 13 states already use vote centers,[41] and New York should join these states in looking beyond tying a poll site to a voter's residential address.

Voters need more opportunities for casting their ballots. To expand options for voters, legislators should amend the State Constitution to allow **no-excuse absentee voting**, so that voters can weigh in on this question via a ballot proposal. New York is one of 20 states that require voters to provide a valid excuse if they want to cast their ballot by mail;[42] most states have made it easier to vote by mail by either allowing voters to apply for an absentee ballot as they see fit, or relying on vote by mail as an entirely separate option. New Yorkers should have this same option, as well as the ability to track their ballot online to confirm that it has been received by the Board of Elections and counted.

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39 The Election Administration and Voting Survey 2016. **https://www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/2016_EAVS_Comprehensive_Report.pdf.**

40 "New Interactive Tool Tracks Use of Electronic Poll Books Nationwide." **http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/analysis/2017/03/29/new-interactive-tool-tracks-use-of-electronic-poll-books-nationwide.**

41 **http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vote-centers.aspx.**

42 **http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx.**

To further improve voters' experience at the polls and encourage more New Yorkers to get involved in their elections, the Board of Elections should allow poll workers to serve **split shifts**. Poll workers are required to man the polls from the time they are open until the time they close—from 6:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m.—and must also arrive early to set up equipment and stay late to close the poll site. This leads to poll workers being on site for 16 hours or more, a time commitment that can be daunting or discouraging to many people who might otherwise want to volunteer if the work day were shorter. Allowing split shifts would help the BOE increase their recruitment numbers, particularly among students and voters who work on Election Day; it would also secure coverage for peak voting hours, which occur in the morning and at the end of the work day.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR NEW YORK TO LEAD THE COUNTRY IN PROTECTING THE VOTING RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS BY TAKING DOWN ALL BARRIERS TO VOTING.

Additionally, in order to make the voting process accessible to all, **translation services should be available in languages beyond what is required by the Voting Rights Act**.[43] New York City is one of the most diverse cities in the country, and our electorate includes a number of voters of limited English proficiency who speak a language that is not covered by the VRA. Other cities go above and beyond what is federally required to provide voters with additional language assistance. For example, Los Angeles, the next largest city after New York, is required to provide translation services in six languages; beyond this, the county clerk for Los Angeles County provides additional language support in six languages beyond the VRA requirements[44] as well. One

43 Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Bengali.

44 While New York City has more voters, Los Angeles County is technically the largest election jurisdiction in the country, as they serve over 4 million voters (the NYC BOE serves five jurisdictions). Los Angeles must provide translation services in Chinese, Cambodian, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese under the VRA, but provides additional support in Hindi, Japanese, Thai, Farsi, Armenian, and Russian. Services include a translated sample ballot booklet for voters who request it, and poll site assistance at most polling locations in the county.

proposal that is currently before our state legislature as part of the New York Votes Act would require more translation services in election districts where at least 3% of the population has limited English proficiency.

Finally, our state legislature should enact **preclearance** at the state level to restore the protections of the Voting Rights Act. Congress has failed to restore the protections of Section 5 of the VRA after a 2013 Supreme Court ruling gutted the federal preclearance mechanism, which required jurisdictions—including three of the five boroughs—to get approval from the Department of Justice before making any changes to the voting process. The state legislature should act to create preclearance at the state level in order to protect voters from changes—anything from moving poll sites to removing voters from the voter rolls—that could be discriminatory. It is important for New York to lead the country in protecting the voting rights of its citizens by taking down all barriers to voting.

> **“AS THE BASIS FOR A FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY, WE MUST ENSURE THAT EVERY ELIGIBLE VOTER CAN CAST A BALLOT WITH EASE AND EFFICIENCY.”**
>
> Zoe Davidson,
> Co-founder of Coalition Z

VOTER ADVOCACY

In addition to encouraging New Yorkers to vote and making sure that voters have the information and tools they need in order to participate in our elections, NYC Votes is committed to advocating for the election reforms discussed above. Our state election laws do not support the needs of our voters, especially in comparison to legislation in other states. The state of New York is often looked to as a model for inclusive public policies throughout the country, but our outdated election laws, which are among the most restrictive in the country, prevent many New Yorkers from exercising their fundamental right to vote, leading to consistently low turnout rates. NYC Votes works with organizational partners to lead the Vote Better NY initiative, a movement that was created to advocate for voters' rights. For a full list of Vote Better NY partners from 2017 and 2018, consult pages 68–69 in the Appendix.

Vote Better NY's work culminates annually in May with **Voter Day**, a designated day of advocacy during which we bring volunteers and partner organizations to Albany to meet with state lawmakers. Voter Day is an opportunity for us to engage New Yorkers beyond our elections, as we introduce voters to the legislative process and train them in how to advocate for change.

OUR STATE ELECTION LAWS DO NOT SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF OUR VOTERS.

The fourth annual Voter Day took place on May 2, 2017, with NYC Votes bringing three buses with 150 people total up to Albany. Organized into groups led by NYC Votes and CFB staff, volunteers met with legislators and staff in 35 offices, sharing their personal voting experiences in order to make the case for reforming New York's election laws. We asked legislators to support early voting (A2064 and S2950), the Voter Empowerment Act (A2278 and S3304), the New York Votes Act (A5312), and preclearance (A5925). As a result, six legislators signed onto one or more of these bills.

> **“THE ASSAULT ON VOTING RIGHTS HAS DAMAGED OUR DEMOCRACY AND DISENFRANCHISED MILLIONS OF AMERICANS. NEW YORK CAN AND SHOULD BE DOING MORE TO EMPOWER VOTERS.”**
>
> State Senator Michael Gianaris, sponsor of the Voter Empowerment Act

This year’s Voter Day will take place on May 8, 2018, and we hope to build on the work we have done in Albany over the past five years. We will be gathering signatures in support of our legislative platform on our petition, which is available at votebetterny.org. While our platform remains similar to last year’s, we are prioritizing early voting, in an effort to bring New York’s laws up to speed with laws in the 37 other states that have already instituted this reform. We urge our lawmakers to support the following legislation:

- Early voting, S7400 and A9608, so New Yorkers have more than one day to cast their ballots, and to reduce long lines on Election Day.
- Voter Empowerment Act, S3304 and A2278, to modernize our voter registration system so that every eligible New Yorker is registered.
- New York Votes Act, A5312, which provides automatic and same-day voter registration, early voting, and no-excuse absentee voting in addition to other protections.
- Preclearance, S6164 and A5925, which ensures that citizens’ voting rights are protected by requiring approval from the New York State Attorney General before any changes to the voting process can be made.

As our analysis of registration and turnout rates from this past year demonstrates, we need wide-ranging election reforms that will streamline registration and improve turnout. As we continue to build out our programs and voter engagement initiatives, we call on our state lawmakers to prioritize the needs and rights of the people who matter most to our electoral process—the voters.

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APPENDIX

RELEVANT LINKS AND RESOURCES

FROM **VOTER REGISTRATION**

New York City Charter Section 1054(b)
https://www.nyccfb.info/law/charter/voter-assistance-advisory-committee/

FROM **ANALYSIS OF VOTER REGISTRATIONS IN 2017 AND 2016**

Section 5–712 – State of New York 2017 Election Law (page 184)
https://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/law/2017NYElectionLaw.pdf

Neighborhood Tabulation Areas (Department of City Planning)
https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/dwn-nynta.page

FROM **THE CASE FOR COMPREHENSIVE VOTER REGISTRATION REFORM** AND **THE CASE FOR VOTING AND REGISTRATION REFORMS**

Board of Elections in the City of New York – Annual Report 2016
http://vote.nyc.ny.us/downloads/pdf/documents/boe/AnnualReports/BOEAnnualReport16.pdf

"Automatic Voter Registration"– National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/automatic-voter-registration.aspx

The Election Administration and Voting Survey – 2016 Comprehensive Report
https://www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/2016_EAVS_Comprehensive_Report.pdf

New York State Board of Elections – Annual Report 2016
https://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/AnnualReport2016.pdf

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) –
The United States Department of Justice
https://www.justice.gov/crt/national-voter-registration-act-1993-nvra

Local Law 29 of 2000
http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=431931&GUID=EA0DF147-EDB3-4471-B258-9535E00B480C&Options=ID|Text|&Search=29

Local Law 63 of 2014
http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=1937617&GUID=12025688-10DA-4EB4-A73C-B5C5724299F4&Options=ID|Text|&Search=63

New York State Attorney General's Office – Advisory Opinion, April 25, 2016
https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/opinion/2016-1_pw.pdf

Local Law 238 of 2017
http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=1946650&GUID=6045AF54-D2A4-4432-8561-8657E969D5F5&Options=ID|Text|&Search=238

"Preregistration for Young Voters" – NCSL
http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/preregistration-for-young-voters.aspx

"Same Day Voter Registration" – NCSL
http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/same-day-registration.aspx

"Cuomo Plans to Restore Voting Rights to Paroled Felons" – The New York Times
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/18/nyregion/felons-pardon-voting-rights-cuomo.html

Section 6210.19 – State of New York 2017 Election Law (page 621)
https://www.elections.ny.gov/NYSBOE/download/law/2017NYElectionLaw.pdf

"New Interactive Tool Tracks Use of Electronic Poll Books Nationwide" – The Pew Charitable Trusts
http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/analysis/2017/03/29/new-interactive-tool-tracks-use-of-electronic-poll-books-nationwide

"Vote Centers" – NCSL
http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vote-centers.aspx

"Absentee and Early Voting" – NCSL
http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx

FROM **THE VOTER GUIDE**

Voting.nyc
http://voting.nyc

2017 Primary Election Voter Guide
http://www.nyccfb.info/nyc-votes/vgwelcome/primary-election-2017

2017 General Election Voter Guide
http://www.nyccfb.info/nyc-votes/vgwelcome/general-election-2017

Local Law 170 of 2016
http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2513781&GUID=88A790CC-4FD7-407E-A414-315C20D8963F&Options=ID|Text|&Search=170

FROM **ELECTED OFFICES EXPLAINERS**

"What Can My Elected Officials Do?" – New York City Campaign Finance Board
http://www.nyccfb.info/nyc-votes/elected-officials

FROM **THE DEBATE PROGRAM AND CANDIDATE COMMUNITY FORUMS**

"2017 Debate Program Moderators and Panelists" –
New York City Campaign Finance Board
http://www.nyccfb.info/nyc-votes/2017-debate-program-moderators-and-panelists

FROM **THE NYC VOTES EMAIL CAMPAIGN**

"Know Your Vote: A District-by-District Archive of Election News" –
New York City Campaign Finance Board
http://www.nyccfb.info/nyc-votes/know-your-vote-archive

"Individual Contributions to Participating 2017 Candidates" –
New York City Campaign Finance Board
http://maps.nyccfb.info

FROM **"VOTE FOR THE CITY YOU WANT"**

"Vote for the City You Want!" – NYC Votes and NYC Campaign Finance Board
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0B0b34dC_h8N3Dvj8F9dZRAKQemSyr-C

FROM **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

"Our Voice, Our Choice" – The Center for Urban Pedagogy
http://welcometocup.org/file_columns/0000/0996/our_voice_our_choice_print.pdf

"VOTING IN A BLACK HOLE"

BY 2018 YOUTH POET LAUREATE WILLIAM LOHIER

Question: If a black hole opened up just below SoHo, but it was a reverse-racist black hole that only swallowed up white people, would we be better off for it?

Question: Did you know there are already black holes in New York? Except these aren't on some reverse-racist bullshit, they're called Brownsville, Jamaica, East New York, The Bronx. You can think of our city as a carnivore.

1965 Malcolm X is shot in Washington Heights

2006 Sean Bell is shot in Queens

2014 Eric Garner is choked to death in Staten Island

And yet. On Tuesday, only one in five people voted.

Question. How many of you voted. Because our city grows arms at night. Because yesterday, I saw hands knocking at my window trying to snatch my brother away, Because yesterday, eyes opened up on my wall, looked at me like I was dinner.

There are black holes in our city.

And what is a vote to a black hole.

But when have New Yorkers ever backed down from a challenge

When have black men and women ever been tamed. Vote.

Because our voices can break the laws of physics,

Because our songs can outweigh the gravity of any black hole.

Because our votes can look this city in the eye and tame it.

And say, you have looked at me as prey, but I am a carnivore. And I refuse to be swallowed today.

FROM **VOTER ADVOCACY**

VoteBetterNY.org – **http://www.votebetterny.org**

NYC AGENCIES COVERED BY LOCAL LAW 29 OF 2000 AND LOCAL LAW 63 OF 2014

These agencies are required to distribute voter registration forms to the public.

Administration for Children's Services

Business Integrity Commission

Civilian Complaint Review Board

Commission on Human Rights

Community Boards

Department for the Aging

Department of City Planning

Department of Citywide Administrative Services

Department of Consumer Affairs

Department of Correction

Department of Cultural Affairs

Department of Environmental Protection

Department of Finance

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Department of Homeless Services

Department of Housing Preservation and Development

Department of Parks and Recreation

Department of Probation

Department of Records and Information Services

Department of Small Business Services

Department of Transportation

Department of Youth and Community Developemnt

Fire Department of the City of New York

Human Resources Administration

Office of the City Clerk

Taxi and Limousine Commission

NYC VOTES PARTNERS

2017 NVRD PARTNERS

A Better Jamaica

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

- Pi Kappa Omega Chapter
- Tau Omega Chapter
- Delta Rho Omega Chapter

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

The Brooklyn Public Library

Care for the Homeless

Children's Aid

CUNY

Coalition Z

Common Cause

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Department of Parks and Recreation

Department of Youth and Community Development

Dominicanos USA

Generation Citizen

Human Resources Administration (HRA)

League of Women Voters

LiveOn NY

The NAACP – NYCHA Branch

The National Women's Political Caucus – NYC Chapter

The New York Urban League Young Professionals (NYULYP)

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)

The YMCA of Greater New York

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. – Delta Mu Zeta Chapter

2017 VOTE BETTER NY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Bronx Community College

Bronx Progressives

Brooklyn Advocates for Growth

Citizen Soldier

Citizens Union

CUNY

CUNY Student Senate

Coalition Z

Dominicanos USA

Get Organized BK!

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

LiveOn NY

Manhattan Community Board 11

NAACP Syracuse

National Council of Negro Women

North Manhattan Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

NYC Voters

NYCD16-Indivisible

NYPIRG

NYPIRG (Queens College Chapter)

SAFEST

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. – Eta Nu Zeta Chapter

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. – Sigma Nu Zeta Chapter

2018 VOTE BETTER NY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority Inc. – North Atlantic Region

CUNY

CUNY University Student Senate

Coalition Z

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

- Brooklyn Alumnae Chapter
- New York Alumnae Chapter
- North Manhattan Alumnae Chapter
- Westchester Alumnae Chapter

Democracy Prep Endurance High School

Dominicanos USA

Educated Voter

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

LiveOn NY

Manhattan Community Board 11

MinKwon Center for Community Action

NAACP – Mid-Manhattan Branch

NAACP of Syracuse and Onondaga County

NAACP – NYCHA Chapter

New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)

NYC Veterans Alliance

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. – Eta Nu Zeta Chapter

VoteHamptonNY