

policy recommendations

2025

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**NYC
VOTES**

Executive Summary

Overview

Each year, the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB) publishes a Voter Analysis Report examining how New Yorkers registered, engaged with, and participated in the previous year's elections. This report covers 2025—a year that defied expectations for a municipal election cycle. Voters turned out at the highest level in a city election in more than 50 years. More than twice as many people registered to vote compared to 2021. Young voters turned out at record-breaking rates. And a grassroots candidate, powered by small-dollar donations and the city's matching funds program, won the mayoral race despite more than \$54 million against him in outside spending from corporations and wealthy individuals.

Context

2025 began with special elections in Brooklyn and Staten Island, and built to a mayoral race that drew national attention. Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani, polling at 1% at the start of the year, ran a mayoral campaign focused on affordability, mobilizing young voters and first-time participants through social media. He won the Democratic primary with 56.4% of the final vote share after eleven rounds of ranked choice voting tabulations, supported by cross-endorsements from fellow progressive candidates.

In the general election, Mamdani defeated Andrew Cuomo, among others, winning 50.8% of the vote. He became the city's first Muslim and first South Asian mayor, and the youngest mayor elected in more than a century. His campaign was fueled by small donations, illustrating how the CFB's matching funds program can make it so New Yorkers don't need to be independently wealthy to run for office and get elected.

In addition to the mayor, voters cast ballots for comptroller, public advocate, borough presidents, city council members, and others. Further down the ballot, five of six ballot proposals passed, including three on affordable housing. A proposal from the CFB's 2024 Voter Analysis Report to align local elections with federal elections was narrowly rejected.

By the numbers

Voter engagement

The CFB reaches voters through its NYC Votes initiative, including the Voter Guide, community partnerships, multilingual materials, paid advertisements, youth programs, and the debates program. In 2025, New Yorkers' engagement with NYC Votes' digital content surged: Website visits more than doubled to 2.4 million, social media impressions grew nearly fivefold to 72.3 million, and email subscribers rose from 75,000 to 117,000, compared to 2024. Throughout 2025, the CFB distributed nearly 20 million pieces of printed material (including 8.3 million Voter Guides to registered voters), ran 325 outreach events, worked with 116 community partners, and reached an estimated 200 million views through advertisements. The official debates program drew more than double the number of viewers compared to 2021, helping propel the mayoral election to a national audience.

Voter registration

More than 5.3 million New Yorkers were registered to vote in 2025. This represents a registration rate of 94.3%, up nearly 9 percentage points from 2024 and the first time it has surpassed 90% since 2021. New registrations more than doubled compared to 2021, with more than 260,000 people registering for the first time, approaching the number of new voters typically seen in a presidential election year.¹ Registrations spiked sharply before eligibility deadlines: 16,505 people registered on the day before the primary cutoff, more than five times the 2021 single-day record. Young voters (under 30) drove nearly two-thirds of new registrations, though their overall registration rate (84.4%) still lagged behind voters over 30 (96.9%) by more than 12 percentage points.

Voter turnout

Primary turnout rose to 29.9%, up from 26.5% in 2021. General election turnout reached 41.6% (2.2 million voters), the highest in a New York City election in over 50 years and nearly double the 23.3% recorded in 2021. Every borough saw double-digit turnout gains in the general election, with Manhattan leading overall turnout at 48.5% and the Bronx recording the lowest at 30.3%. The biggest story was youth engagement, with voters aged 18–29 turning out at 41.9% in the general election, more than triple their 11.1% rate in 2021, reducing the average voter age from 55 to 50.

¹ In this report, “new voters” refers to those who are newly registered in New York City. This includes voters who are registering for the first time, but also voters who may have existed on voter rolls but have updated registration, for example, those who have recently moved to New York City.

Figure 1: Voter turnout by age group, general elections, 2021 and 2025

Age group	2021	2025	Percentage point difference
18–29	11.1%	41.9%	30.8
30–39	16.3%	37.2%	20.9
40–49	22.1%	39.2%	17.1
50–59	28.7%	44.7%	16.0
60–69	35.4%	47.9%	12.5
70–79	37.9%	48.7%	10.8
80+	23.2%	30.2%	7.0

Voting method

New Yorkers have the option to vote in person on election day, in person during early voting, by mail, and by other methods for special circumstances, such as military ballot. During the 2025 general election, voting in person remained the most popular voting method by far, with 58.0% of New Yorkers voting in person on election day and 33.1% voting in person during early voting.

On the ballot

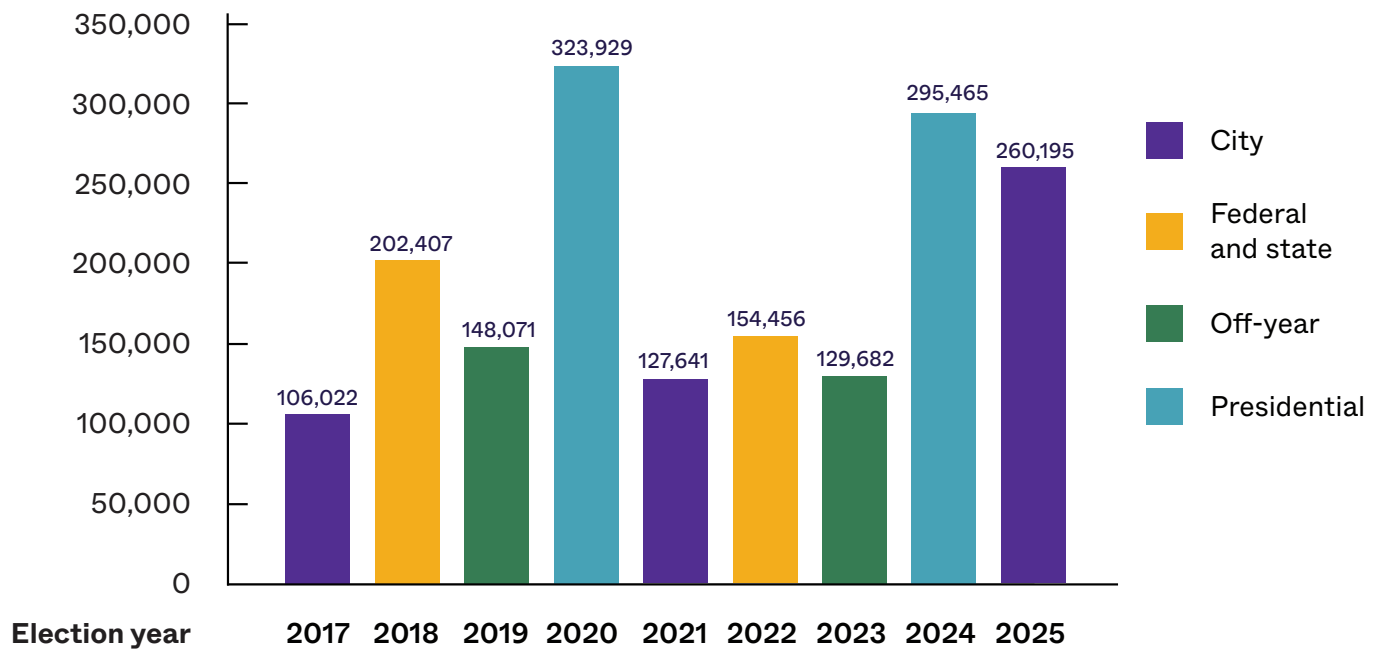
The 2025 general election ballot included races for mayor, comptroller, public advocate, all five borough presidents, and all 51 city council seats, plus six ballot proposals. The one statewide proposal and five of the six citywide proposals passed, including three measures to streamline affordable housing review and one to create a digital city map (which received the highest support at 73.6%). The one rejected proposal would have moved city elections to align with presidential election years. Notably, drop-off rates (the share of voters who skip a race or proposal on their ballots) followed an unusual pattern in 2025: Ballot Proposals 2 and 3 received more votes than Proposal 1, reversing the typical trend of declining engagement as the ballot progresses.

In focus

New voters

New registrations in 2025 more than doubled compared to 2021, reaching 260,195, a number much closer to what’s typically seen in presidential election years.

Figure 2: Number of newly registered voters by year, 2017 to 2025



Newly registered voters turned out at high rates: 59.6% in the primary and 61.8% in the general (triple the 2021 figure), reversing the historical pattern of low participation among new registrants. Nearly two-thirds of new registrants were under 30, and among new voters, younger age groups turned out at the highest rates.

Ranked choice voting

2025 marked the third time New York City used ranked choice voting (RCV) in primary elections. 79.0% of voters ranked more than one candidate in at least one race, down from 88.3% in 2021. In the Democratic mayoral race, the most common ballot sequence—Cuomo in the first rank followed by four blanks—appeared on 15.3% of valid ballots. The ranking sequence Mamdani–Lander–Adrienne Adams–Myrie–Blake appeared on 74,185 ballots, or 14.2% of all ballots that used all five ranks. This was a stark increase compared to 2021, when the most common sequence that used all five ranks was used on just 0.1% of ballots, demonstrating how voters and organizations are using RCV more strategically. Ballot errors continued to decline: fatal overvote rates, or the rate of errors that invalidate ballots, decreased from 1.2% in 2021 to 0.9% in 2025.

Recommendations

Update on previous recommendations

Each year, the CFB makes recommendations in the Voter Analysis Report to improve voter engagement and participation. Two key recommendations progressed in the past year, while the recommendation to align city and federal election was rejected on the ballot in 2025.

- **Implemented:** Civic Engagement Fellowship (recommended 2023)
 - » Launched August 2025 in partnership with CUNY. The two-year pilot, which runs through August 2027, matched 14 CUNY students with 14 Bronx-based community organizations.
- **Enacted:** Join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) (recommended 2024)
 - » Governor Hochul signed legislation in December 2025 requiring New York to join ERIC by July 31, 2026, modernizing voter roll management across the state's 62 county boards.
- **Not passed:** Align city elections with presidential years (recommended 2024)
 - » Placed on the November 2025 ballot but rejected by 52.8% of voters. Voters could return to this topic via a future Charter Revision Commission, City Council legislation, or State action.

Recommendation to align registration dates

New York is one of ten states with closed primaries, meaning voters must be registered with a political party to vote in that party's primary. New York's party enrollment deadline is February 14, more than four months before the June primary, requiring voters to make enrollment decisions long before candidates or party primaries are even confirmed. These two policies taken together create one of the most restrictive primary systems in the country, a system that many voters experienced for the first time in 2025.

To allow more voters to participate in primary elections, the state legislature should amend the election law to move the party enrollment deadline to ten days before an election, to line up with the voter registration deadline.

While doing this, the state legislature should also amend the election law to move the change of name and/or address deadline to this same day.

This would address the asymmetry in how New York election law treats those who seek to register versus those who seek to make changes to their registration. Under this change, already-registered voters would have the same window to choose their party enrollment and correctly record their name and/or address ahead of the mayoral primary as first-time registrants.

Recommendations to strengthen CFB governance

The Voter Assistance Advisory Committee (VAAC), a nine-member body that advises the CFB on voter engagement, has long been non-functional: it has had no chair since May 2023 and no appointed members since December 2024. The CFB has largely absorbed its work. The CFB recommends consolidating the VAAC into a reformed Board structure through three changes:

1. Integrate the VAAC's responsibilities directly into the Board, formalizing voter engagement as a core Board mandate and requiring two public hearings per year.
2. Expand the Board from five to seven members, with the mayor and speaker each appointing three members (up from two), and the mayor continuing to appoint the chair after consultation with the speaker.
3. Align Board member compensation with comparable City boards; current pay is \$100 per day, which may limit who can serve.

Strengthening the CFB's governance aligns with broader democracy and good government priorities: increasing public trust, centering voter experience, and ensuring that oversight bodies reflect the communities they serve.

Conclusion

The 2025 election cycle showed that New York City’s local democracy is healthy and capable of engaging voters at levels more commonly associated with federal elections. The CFB’s matching funds program worked as intended, amplifying grassroots support against outside spending. Voter turnout and registration hit historic highs. Young voters participated at rates never seen before in a city election.

Despite this, gaps remain. CFB priority community districts in the South Bronx, East Brooklyn, and parts of Queens still lag well behind citywide averages in voter registration and turnout. Young voters, despite their surge in participation, remain registered at lower rates than older New Yorkers. The CFB’s work—outreach, language access, youth programming, and the recommendations in this report—is aimed squarely at closing those gaps.

Read the full [2025 Voter Analysis Report](#) to find out more.

