



The Power of Participation

Women's Voting and Civic Engagement in New York City



Lina Moe
April 2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Women Creating Change (WCC) celebrates 110 years of advancing women’s civic and political participation, this report examines the state of women’s democratic engagement in New York City, the barriers they face, and the policies needed to expand participation.

Civic engagement extends beyond voting to include grassroots organizing, mutual aid, advocacy, and leadership in local communities. This report comes at a pivotal moment—when issues of gender equity, economic security, and democratic participation are at the forefront of policymaking.

KEY FINDINGS

Women's Voting Trends

- + Women in New York City consistently outvote men, with a 69%-to-64% turnout gap in 2022 and a 2-to-5-percentage-point gap every election year since 1994. (These voting data refer to a pooled three-year average of 2018, 2020, and 2022. See Appendix 1: Methods and Data Sources for the full description.)
- + Among women, Black women have the highest voter turnout (77%), followed by white women (76%), Latinas (58%), and Asian women (50%).
- + Voting rates increase consistently in higher-income households, though the largest gap separates women in households earning less than \$50,000 from those in households earning more than this threshold, suggesting that the lowest earners faced greater difficulties voting.

Voting and Registration Barriers

Voters report a range of reasons why they did not register to vote. Women are less likely than men to say they are not interested in the election or in politics (26%, compared with 31% of men). Data underscore the importance of physical infrastructure, like polling places and schools, for low-income women and that greater informational campaigns could help voters overcome obstacles.

- + Women in lower-income households are more likely to cast their ballots on Election Day (72%, compared with 61% of those in households earning \$100,000 or more annually). Additionally, three-quarters of Latinas said they voted in person.
- + Women of color are more likely to register at polling places, schools, or hospitals, underscoring the importance of trusted, community-based access points.
- + Nearly 40% of Black women who did not register to vote said they had missed the registration deadline, while Latinas and Asian women were more likely to report confusion about where or how to register.

- + Caregiving remains a major barrier to voting for women, with 21% of women citing illness or care work as reasons for not voting, nearly twice the rate of men.

Civic Engagement and Leadership

- + Schools and community organizations are critical parts of civic life, often serving as hubs for neighborhood engagement. Participation in neighborhood, school, or community groups is one of the most common forms of civic engagement, with 11% of all New Yorkers and 14% of women reporting involvement and Black women (18%) reporting the highest involvement.
- + Formal civic participation (such as membership in advocacy groups, religious organizations, philanthropic clubs, or professional organizations with social or civic aims) is lower, with only 5% of women reporting they have served as a leader in a local organization. Participation is highest among Black women (6%), and white women (5%), and lower among Asian women (1%) and Latinas (1%). Like other forms of civic engagement, participation in leadership roles increases with income, topping out at 15% among women in households earning \$150,000 or more annually.
- + Women are more likely than men to volunteer (20% vs. 17%), with participation increasing among higher-income households.
- + Women are more likely to participate in informal community networks, through talking with their neighbors, speaking regularly with friends and family, offering or receiving help from neighbors, and discussing politics at home.
- + Women are also more likely than men to say they have engaged in consumer activism by boycotting or buying a product based on a company's social or political stances (15% vs. 10%).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing Barriers and Expanding Women’s Civic Participation

Women in New York City are already leading community activism, advocacy, and civic life despite systemic barriers. Expanding economic equity, civic education, and voting access is essential to building a stronger, more representative democracy for all. To address barriers and expand women’s participation, WCC recommends the following:

- 1. Align New York City’s local elections with federal-election years to increase turnout and reduce racial and economic disparities.**



- 2. Implement same-day voter registration and multilingual outreach to ensure accessibility for immigrant and low-income women.**



- 3. Resource women-led solutions by directly investing in microgrants for women.**



- 4. Invest in civic education and youth-engagement programs to empower young women and future leaders.**



- 5. Implement policies such as paid family leave, flexible work schedules, and accessible early-voting options to help alleviate the barriers women face because of caregiving responsibilities.**



- 6. Restore minimum-wage purchasing power by indexing the minimum wage to match rising labor productivity and increasing costs of living. The state should also raise wages for home health workers, adopt a meaningful annual minimum-wage inflation adjustment, and eliminate the tipped minimum wage. Women and workers of color stand to benefit most from minimum-wage adjustments.**



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing Low Pay and Pay Inequity

Economic insecurity exacerbates “time poverty,” the time crunch women face in trying to fit in civic and democratic activities alongside a full workday and care responsibilities. Addressing low pay and pay inequity, particularly for women of color, through economic policies can also help move the city toward greater equity and broader-based civic participation. To that end, WCC recommends the following:

- 1. Address human-services pay inequities predominantly affecting women of color in the nonprofit human-services workforce.**
- 2. Raise the pay of childcare workers, who are overwhelmingly women, predominantly women of color, and among the lowest-paid.**
- 3. Restore minimum-wage purchasing power by indexing the minimum wage to match rising labor productivity and increasing costs of living.**
- 4. Enhance tax credits benefiting low-income families.**
- 5. Raise unemployment-insurance benefits for low- and moderate-income workers and take actions to improve accessibility to benefits.**



CALL TO ACTION

Women in New York City are deeply engaged in civic life—voting, organizing, advocating, and leading grassroots efforts that strengthen democracy. Despite their high participation rates, however, economic inequities, caregiving responsibilities, and structural barriers to voting, advocacy work, volunteering, and leadership continue to limit full civic engagement. The U.S. has a long history of voter suppression, with legal and procedural obstacles disproportionately affecting marginalized communities, including communities of color and low-income voters. Voting rights are shaped not only by laws but also by infrastructure. Ensuring that polling places are accessible, welcoming, and adequately staffed is just as crucial as expanding legal protections.

New York has taken important steps to expand voter access, including the enactment of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act in 2022, but additional steps remain. Policies such as same-day voter registration and aligning local elections with federal cycles could significantly increase voter turnout and reduce disparities, particularly among women from underrepresented communities. Expanding family-friendly voting policies, strengthening public campaign financing, and investing in leadership pipelines will further remove systemic barriers and empower more women to take active roles in shaping policy and governance.

As WCC celebrates 110 years of impact, it remains committed to strengthening civic education, expanding democratic access, and advocating for policies that empower all women—regardless of race, income, immigration status, or gender identity—to lead, vote, and fully engage in civic life.

Looking ahead, WCC sees this report as more than a research study—it is a roadmap for action. By identifying structural barriers, amplifying women's voices, and advancing policy solutions, we are dedicated to ensuring that women in New York City—across race, class, and gender identity—have the tools, resources, and power to shape their communities and strengthen democracy for generations to come.

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INTRODUCTION

As Women Creating Change (WCC) celebrates its 110th anniversary, this report builds upon a century-long commitment to advancing women’s civic and political participation in New York City. Founded in 1915 as the Women’s City Club of New York, WCC emerged from the women’s suffrage movement, advocating for the political rights of women when they were still denied the right to vote. Throughout the 20th century, WCC members including Eleanor Roosevelt and Frances Perkins helped shape policies that expanded access to civic participation, fought for social justice, and advanced gender equity in the political arena. Over time, WCC evolved from a membership-based organization to a citywide leader in civic education, advocacy, and leadership development for historically excluded women.

Women in lower-income households, women of color, immigrant women, and gender-expansive individuals face unique challenges in civic participation.

This report, *The Power of Participation: Women's Voting and Civic Engagement in New York City*, continues WCC's legacy, examining the state of women's civic participation today, the barriers they face, and the policies needed to strengthen democracy for all women in New York City. Democratic participation is foundational for an equitable and representative society, shaping not only policy but also the social and political fabric of communities. While voting is often the most visible form of democratic engagement, civic participation extends far beyond the ballot box to include engaging in mutual aid networks and volunteering in neighborhood clean-up efforts as well as organizing at the grassroots level and advocating for policy changes. Understanding the scope and nature of women's participation is critical for identifying barriers, amplifying their voices, and ensuring that democratic structures reflect the needs and priorities of all communities.

Yet, so far, these trends have not been systematically examined for women in New York City. Integrating quantitative data and qualitative insights from community leaders and advocacy groups, this report seeks to:

- + Investigate the full range of women's civic participation, from voting to grassroots activities.
- + Identify economic, structural, and legal barriers that prevent women—particularly low-income women and women of color—from fully engaging in public life.
- + Highlight best practices from New York City-based organizations working to expand voter access, eliminate systemic obstacles, and support women's leadership.

- + Propose actionable policy recommendations to create a more equitable and participatory democracy in New York City.

Women in lower-income households, women of color, immigrant women, and gender-expansive individuals face unique challenges in civic participation. To foster an inclusive democracy, policymakers must strengthen access to civic education, eliminate structural barriers to engagement, and create leadership pathways that reflect the diverse voices and needs of all women in New York City.

Why This Report? Addressing Civic Engagement in 2025

Attention to civic engagement and access to voting cannot be limited to presidential elections every four years. Doing so overlooks the crucial impact of local elections, which happen far more frequently and have a more direct impact on the lives of New Yorkers, influencing key issues like gender equity, economic security, and democratic participation. While women have long outvoted men in elections, disparities persist in who has the time, resources, and access to engage fully in civic life. WCC's 2021 report, *A Blueprint for Women's Civic Engagement in New York City*, established that civic participation is more than just voting and running for office—it encompasses grassroots organizing, community advocacy, and everyday leadership. Effective civic engagement therefore strengthens democracy by ensuring that every community member has the tools and opportunities necessary to shape decision-making processes that impact their lives.

This report expands on that framework by examining how women participate in civic life and what barriers continue to limit their full engagement.

Expanding Civic Participation and Advancing Systemic Change

Despite the historic gains women have made, economic insecurity, gendered social roles, and political exclusion continue to limit their full civic participation. Previous WCC research—including *Closing the Gender Pay Gap* (2023) and *Unequal Ground* (2024)—has shown how income inequality and occupational segregation shape women’s opportunities for civic and political engagement. This report builds on those findings by highlighting:

- + The intersection of economic barriers and civic participation.
- + The ways in which policy interventions can dismantle structural inequities.
- + The importance of grassroots organizing and advocacy in building long-term civic engagement.

Throughout this report, we emphasize that civic engagement occurs through formal channels, such as voting, and through

the everyday, often informal acts that sustain communities and advocate for justice.

This report also examines the gendered voting behavior of New Yorkers, as well as trends among women of different income and racial and ethnic backgrounds. We look at how women tend to register and cast their ballots in New York City, asking where women vote and what infrastructure and institutions they most rely on to register and vote. What challenges do women face in exercising their political voices, and what are the bottlenecks or hurdles that policymakers can address to facilitate voting? We then consider a range of data that illuminate women’s participation in civic life, including insights from a burgeoning network of civic engagement-community groups in the city. We look at how seemingly small acts of engagement—attending a PTA meeting, contacting an elected official, or mobilizing neighbors for a community effort, for example—contribute to broader democratic health. By analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, this report aims to showcase the full spectrum of women’s civic engagement, highlighting both strengths and areas for policy intervention to foster a more inclusive and participatory democracy in New York City.

Throughout this report, we emphasize that civic engagement occurs through formal channels, such as voting, and through the everyday, often informal acts that sustain communities and advocate for justice.





GENDER PAY INEQUITY

AND ECONOMIC BARRIERS

TO CIVIC PARTICIPATION

In 2023 and 2024, WCC released two reports exploring the persistent gender pay inequities in New York City: *Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Why Pay Equity Has Stalled in New York City* and *the Urgent Need for Action and Unequal Ground: The Impact of Industrial and Occupational Segregation on Women’s Economic Outcomes in New York City*. This report builds on those analyses of gender and economic inequality, which highlighted the economic barriers women face in the workforce, to explore how economic challenges impact civic participation. That research made clear how, despite decades of progress and progressive legislation in New York City, gender pay inequity remains, with Black women, Latinas, and Asian women experiencing the most severe wage disparities due to occupational segregation, caregiving burdens, and structural inequities.

Women with lower wages and fewer economic resources have less time and flexibility to engage in democratic processes—whether through voting, community organizing, or holding leadership positions in civic organizations.

Here, we extend that analysis by examining how women participate in civic life despite these disproportionate economic challenges. And yet, economic barriers affect democratic participation, including the rates at which women engage in formal and informal civic action. We track the long trails of economic injustice—how wage gaps, limited career mobility, and financial precarity shape not only individual economic security but also the broader patterns of political and civic engagement.

Despite national- and state-level efforts to close the gender pay gap, progress in New York City has stalled over the past 25 years. While the gender-earnings ratio has inched upward nationally—from 81 cents per each dollar earned by men in 1997 to 87 cents in 2022—New York City has seen no significant improvement. In 2022, full-time women workers in the city earned 90 cents for every dollar earned by men, unchanged from 2007 and slightly lower than the 92 cents recorded in 1997.¹ More strikingly, when compared specifically with white men, the gender-earnings ratio drops to 67 cents on the dollar, revealing deeper disparities driven by occupational segregation and racial inequities.

The pay gap is even more pronounced for women of color, who face compounded gender and racial economic disadvantages. In 2022, white women earned 87 cents and Asian women earned 72 cents for every dollar earned by white men, showing a substantial gap despite high levels of educational attainment. Black women earned only 57 cents and Latinas earned just 54 cents, the lowest earnings ratio among major demographic groups, meaning they must work nearly twice as long as white men to achieve equivalent earnings.

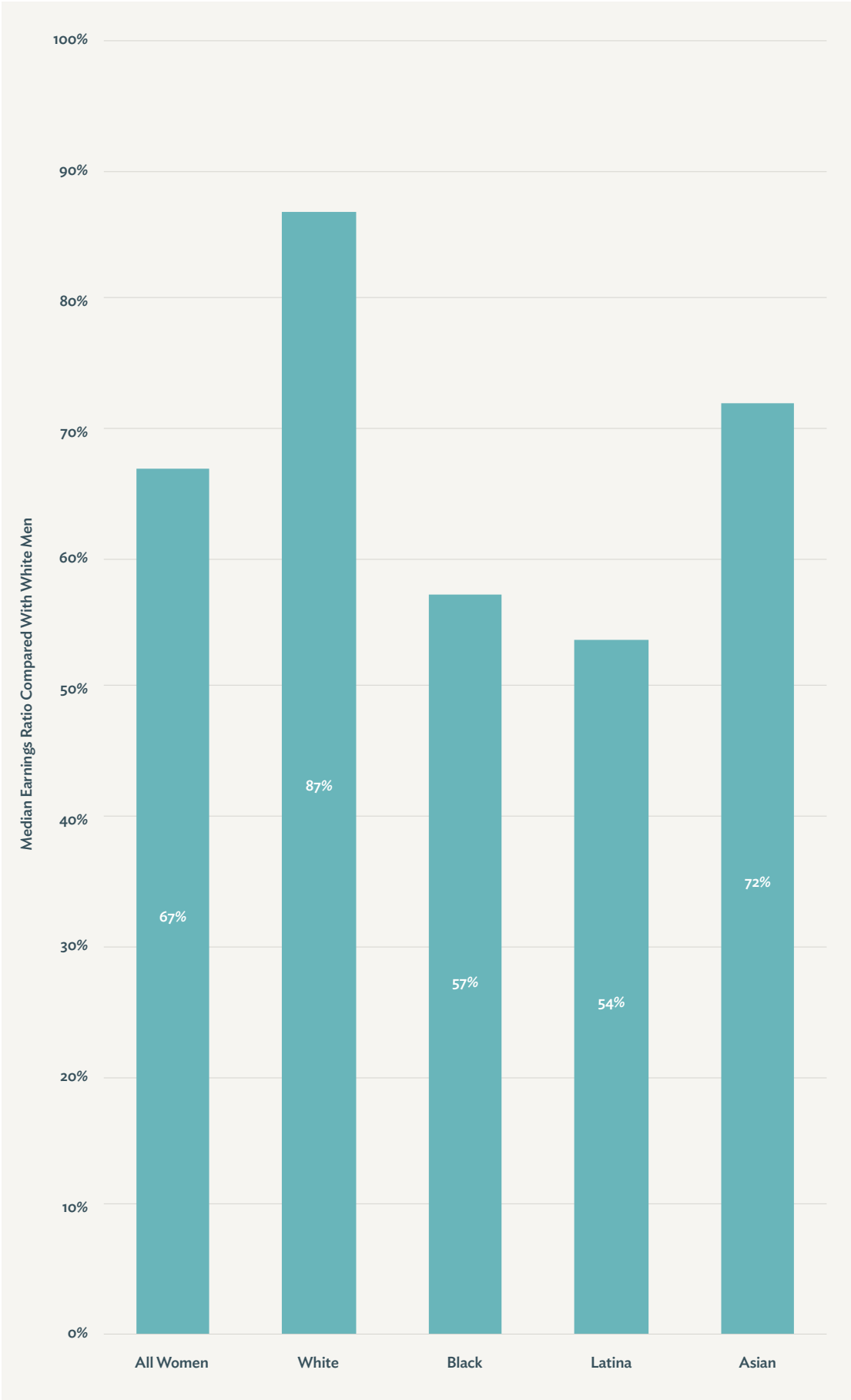
Structural factors exacerbate these inequities. Occupational segregation means that women disproportionately work in lower-paid industries such as care work, education, and social

services—fields that are vital to society but consistently undervalued in terms of wages. Additionally, women continue to do more unpaid domestic and care labor than men, which can limit women’s ability to take on higher-paying, often less-flexible positions or to work overtime, pursue additional skills, or travel and network to advance in their careers. As women disproportionately take time away from the labor force to care for young children, they can miss out on prime earning years and fall behind on the career ladder compared with their male peers. This “motherhood penalty” further depresses wages for women who take time out of the workforce for caregiving responsibilities.

These persistent economic inequalities have direct implications for civic participation. Women with lower wages and fewer economic resources have less time and flexibility to engage in democratic processes—whether through voting, community organizing, or holding leadership positions in civic organizations. Financial instability can act as a deterrent to participation in civic life, as the burdens of unpaid labor and economic precarity take precedence over public engagement. Without structural reforms that address wage disparities, economic justice, and work-life balance, the gender pay gap will continue to serve as a barrier to women’s full political and civic participation.

The consequences of these economic barriers are visible in civic-participation trends. As this report will illustrate, women in lower-income households register, vote, and participate in civic life at lower rates, reflecting the structural challenges that limit their engagement. The intersection of economic insecurity and the “double burden” of paid and unpaid labor means that many women face practical and systemic obstacles to making their voices heard in the democratic process. Understanding these disparities is essential to developing policies and interventions that ensure all women, regardless of income or background, can fully participate in civic and political life.

FIGURE 1
**Gender Pay Gap in
New York City: Racial
Disparities Among
Women’s Median
Earnings (Baseline—
White Men Only)**



Data sources: Economic Policy Institute, 2023. U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS) Extracts, Version 1.0.40.





VOTING: WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC

PARTICIPATION IN NEW YORK CITY

Voting rights in the United States are shaped not only by legal frameworks but also by the infrastructure and resources that determine whether policies translate into accessible participation. Ensuring polling places are convenient, welcoming, adequately staffed, and open during hours that accommodate working people is just as crucial as the laws that define who can vote and how. Over time, U.S. election policies have oscillated between expanding and restricting voter access, often reflecting broader struggles over political power, equity, and representation.

New York’s Policy Landscape

The U.S. has a long history of voter suppression, with legal and procedural barriers disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. Tactics such as literacy tests, poll taxes, and voter intimidation were systematically used to disenfranchise Black voters and other marginalized groups for much of American history. While landmark legislation like the Voting Rights Act of 1965 dismantled many of these barriers, efforts to suppress voting persist. In recent years, several states have introduced new laws making it harder to vote—whether through restrictive voter-ID requirements, limits on mail-in ballots, or rollbacks of early-voting opportunities. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, numerous states have reinstated or reinforced voting restrictions, underscoring the ongoing nature of these battles.²

New York, by contrast, is among the states working to expand and safeguard voting rights. A significant development in this effort was the enactment of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York (NYVRA) in 2022.³ The NYVRA strengthens voting rights-protections, particularly for historically marginalized communities, by implementing preclearance requirements (requiring jurisdictions with a recent history of discrimination or suppressing voting rights to get approval from the state’s attorney general before changing voter rules), enhancing legal remedies for voter suppression, and expanding language access for voters.⁴ Further bolstering voter access, the New York State Court of Appeals upheld the Early Mail Voter Act in 2024, allowing any registered voter to cast a ballot by mail. This ruling, which followed a Republican-led challenge to the statute, affirmed that the state constitution does not explicitly require in-person voting and allowed the expansion of mail-in ballots.⁵

Despite these advancements, New York City does not currently permit same-day voter registration. Except for a single “Golden Day” exception that allows voters to register on the first day of early voting, existing rules require residents to register at least 10 days prior to the day of an election to be eligible to vote. For example, to participate in the upcoming June 24, 2025, primary election, New Yorkers’ registration applications must be received by June 14, 2025.⁶ A 2021 ballot measure sought to eliminate the 10-day registration requirement. This would have enabled the legislature to enact laws permitting same-day voter registration. However, this proposal was rejected by voters, leaving the existing deadline in place.

Recently, several measures at the city level have sought to expand democratic participation, including voter initiatives but also other strategies for engaging citizens in city governance. For example, The People’s Money, a citywide participatory budgeting process, allows residents to vote on allocating a small portion of the city’s budget to address local community needs. Under Mayor Eric Adams’ administration, DemocracyNYC, in collaboration with the Civic Engagement Commission, spearheaded a “Get Out the Vote” campaign that focused on educating New Yorkers about ranked-choice voting and sought to expand multilingual voting materials, partnering with community- and faith-based organizations to maximize reach.⁷

Moreover, New York City local elections are not conducted on the same schedule as federal elections. Because the U.S. census surveys voting habits in November of national election years, these data do not capture local voting rates. (See Appendix 1: Methods and Data Sources for a complete discussion of data sources and limitations.) As we will discuss in the policy recommendations section, the timing of New York City’s local elections tends to lead to low voter turnout,

particularly among young voters and voters of color, which can incentivize municipal candidates to focus on meeting the demands of a small slice of the electorate and erode public confidence that local officials are supported by and responsive to broad democratic mandates. Recently, DemocracyNYC collaborated with the City University of New York (CUNY) to fund a corps of democracy volunteers who spearheaded an educational and get-out-the-vote campaign around municipal off-year voting. In our policy recommendations below, we discuss a number of campaigns around election timing, education, and funding that would help strengthen and expand these initiatives.

Finally, while this report outlines important trends among women voters in New York City, critical pieces of this landscape remain blank. U.S. census surveys allow us an invaluable glimpse into the voting trends of women in New York City, but the data offer only a limited intersectional picture. Because historic census data sources offer only male and female options when self-disclosing sex, our analysis does not capture the experiences of gender-expansive, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people.⁸ A growing body of research has shown that LGBTQ+ and gender-nonconforming people face unique and interrelated economic barriers. Therefore, while data constraints mean this report relies on the reported sex of respondents along a gender binary, the voting and civic-participation trends and policy

implication we draw out are also important for LGBTQ+ and gender-nonconforming people.⁹

Recent Voting Trends

Nationally, women vote at higher rates than men and have done so for decades. In New York City, women have also consistently outvoted men, with a 2-to-5-percentage-point gap since 1994. (These voting rates are captured by the Census Voting Supplement, fielded in September of even years. See Appendix 1 for a full description.)

In New York City, 69% of women voted compared with 64% of men (this pools the most recent three years of data available: 2018, 2020, and 2022). Among women, Black women had the highest voting rates (77%), followed by white women (76%), with a drop-off in voting rates among Latinas (58%) and Asian women (50%). (The U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey [CPS] Voting Supplement surveys citizens 18 years and older; see Appendix 1 for a lengthier discussion of the CPS methods.) Voting rates increased consistently in higher-income households, though the largest gap separated women in households earning less than \$50,000 from those in households earning more than this threshold, suggesting that the lowest earners faced greater difficulties voting.

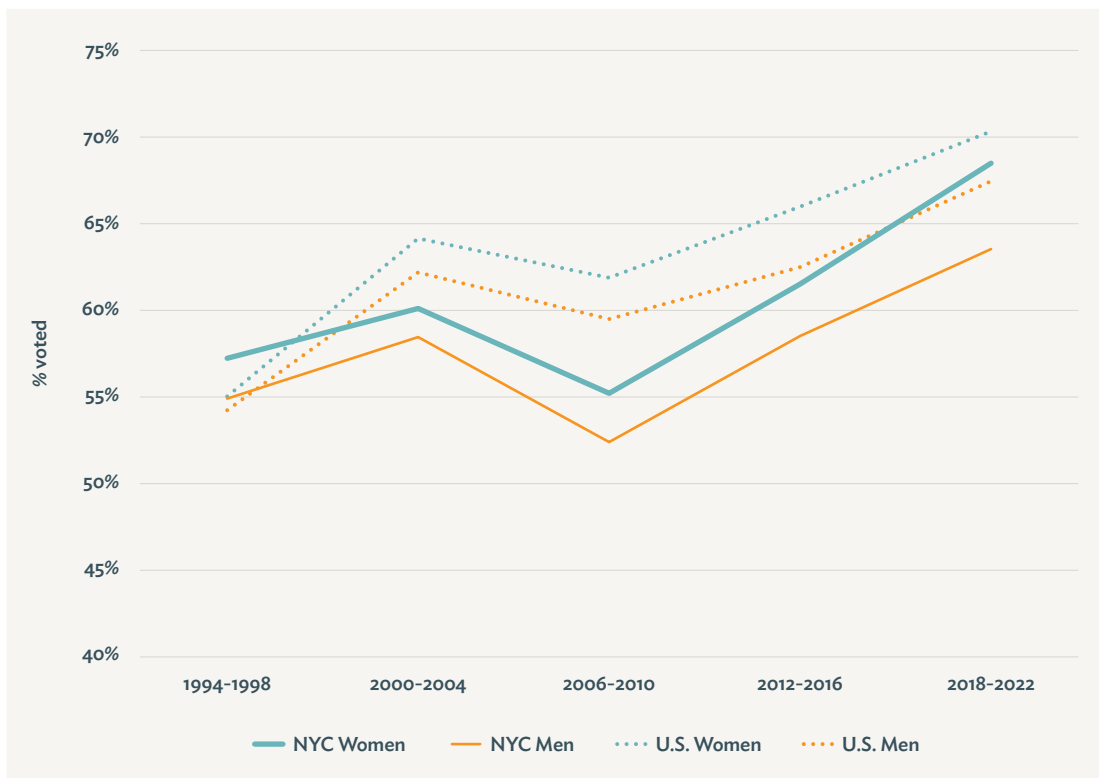
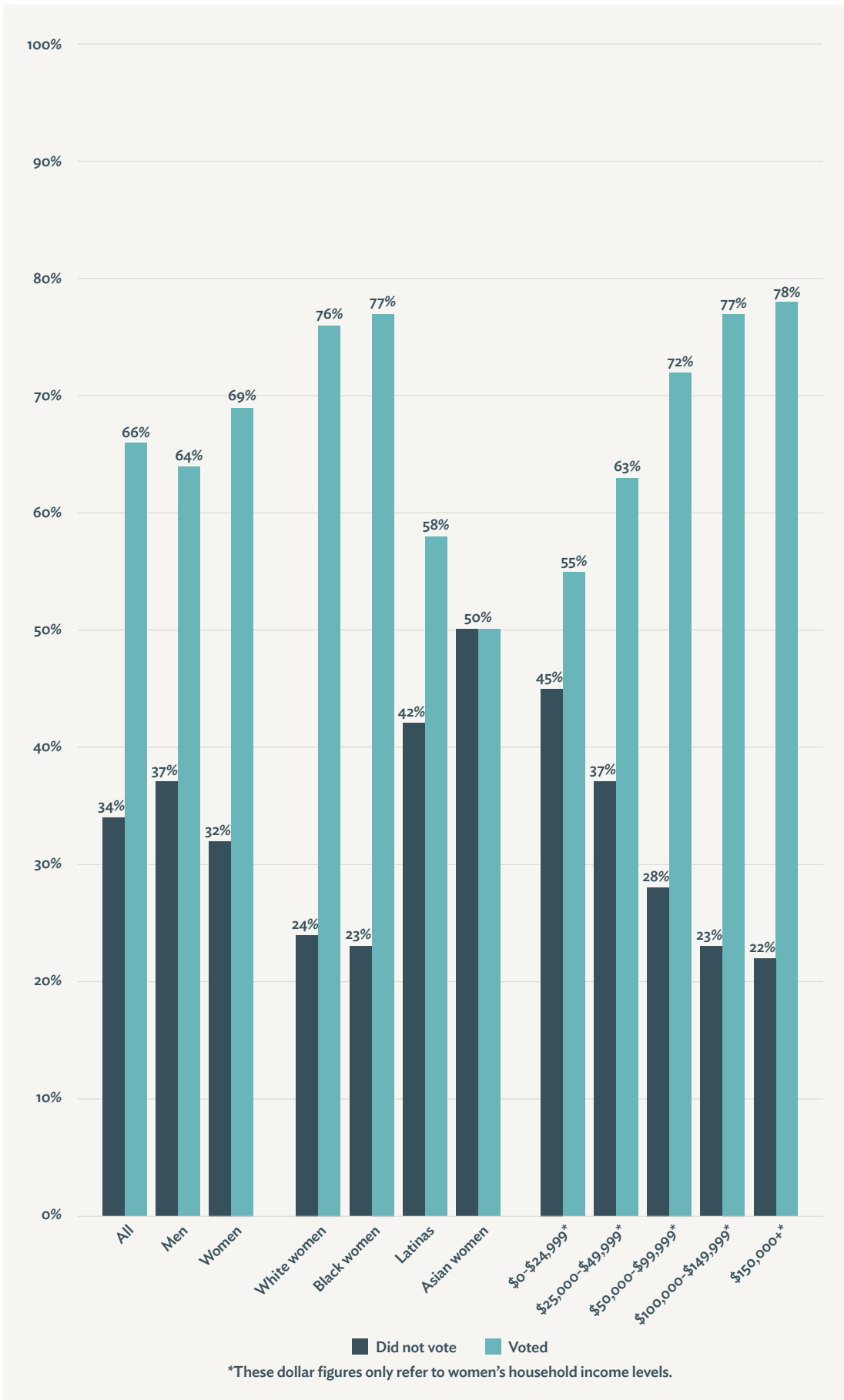


FIGURE 2
Voting Trends by Gender Over Time, U.S. Compared With New York City

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled three-year samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

FIGURE 3
Voting Rates in
New York City by
Gender, Race/Ethnicity,
and Household Income



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Method of Voting

Women are slightly more likely than men to vote by mail (17% compared with 15%). Among women, Asian women are the most likely to vote by mail, with more than a fifth sending in their ballot (22%), followed by white women

(20%), and Black women (15%). By contrast, Latinas are the least likely to use mail-in ballots (9%). Women in lower-income households are more likely to vote in person, highlighting the importance of in-person, convenient polling locations for women in households earning less than \$50,000 annually.

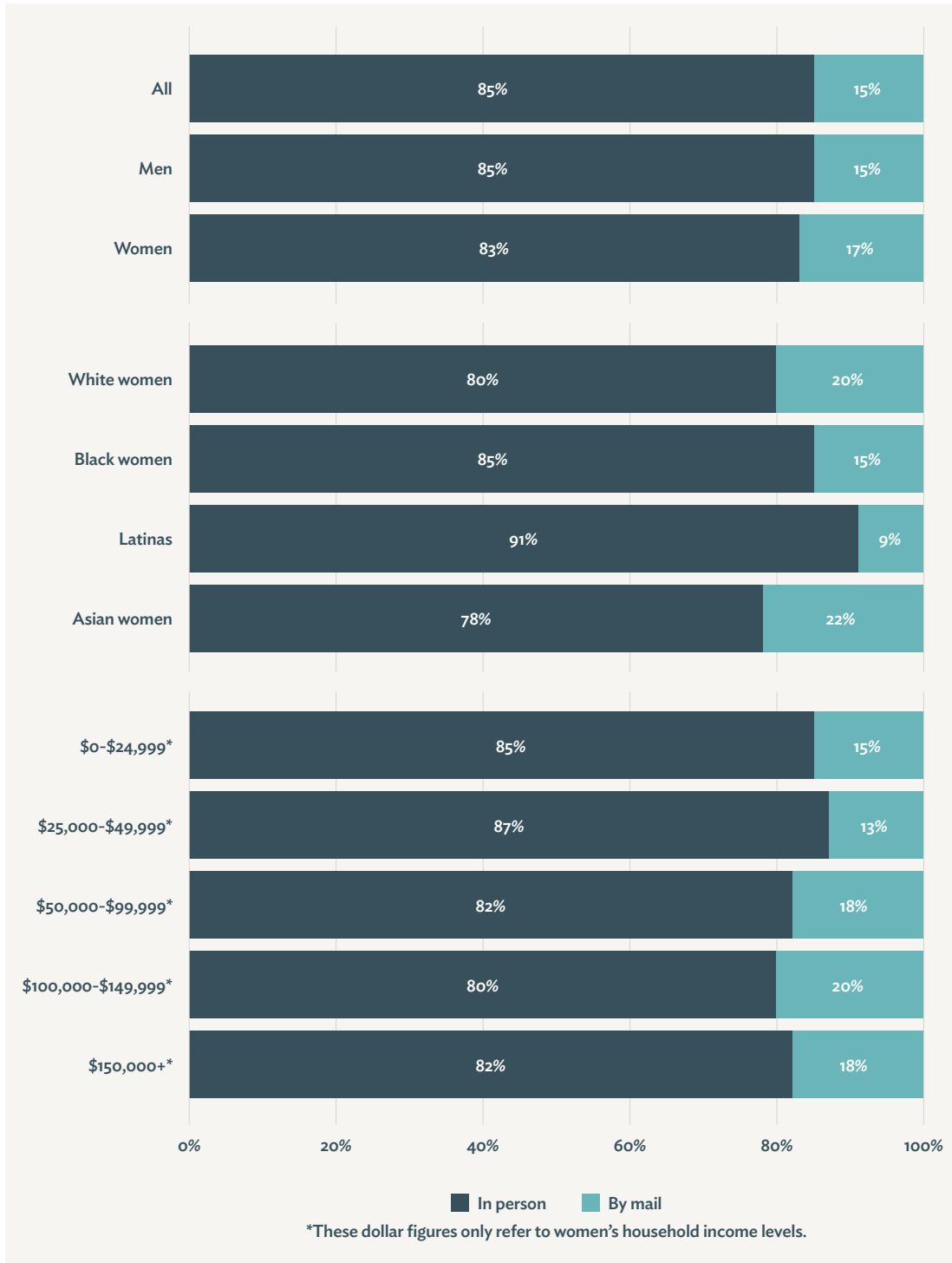


FIGURE 4
Method of Voting in New York City by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Timing of Voting

Overall, two-thirds of New Yorkers tend to vote on the day of the election, with rates about equal for men and women. However, among women some demographic groups tend to vote early instead of casting their ballot on Election Day. White women and women in higher-income households were more likely to vote early. Women in lower-income households

were more likely to cast their ballots on Election Day (72%, compared with 61% of those in households earning \$100,000 or more annually). Three-quarters of Latinas said they voted in person, the highest of any single group. This breakdown underscores the importance of convenient, well-staffed polling places for lower-income voters and women of color to be able to cast their ballots in-person on the day of an election.

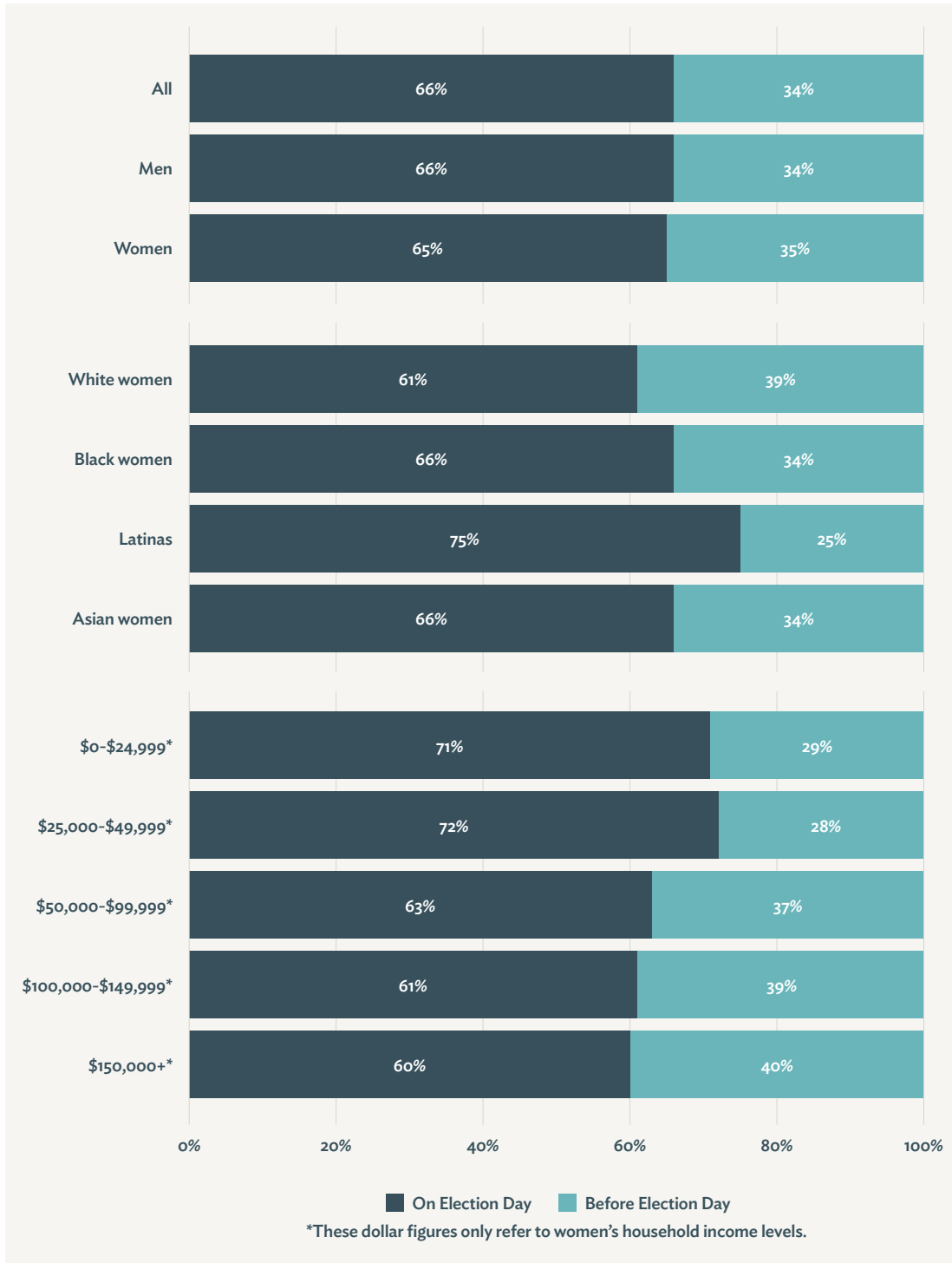


FIGURE 5
Rates of Voting Early or on Election Day in New York City by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Method of Registering to Vote

Women of color, and Latinas in particular, were more likely to go to a school, hospital, or campus to register to vote. White women were most likely to register by mail, at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), or online. Asian women registered most frequently by mail, at a local institution, at the DMV, or online. These trends show a complex map of places that all serve voters in helping them register to vote, but some trends stand out. Overall, women of color were more likely to register at a local institution, such as a school, hospital, or campus, highlighting that physical places and infrastructure matter for facilitating access for these voters. Women from lower-income households were also more reliant on public-assistance agencies, local institutions, and other

in-person registration places.

Voters reported a range of reasons for why they did not register to vote, though some trends emerged for women voters. Women were less likely than men to say they were not interested in the election or in politics (26% compared with 31% of men), but they were more likely than men to say they thought they were not eligible to vote.¹⁰

Some responses suggest that greater informational campaigns could help voters overcome obstacles. For example, nearly two-fifths of Black women who did not register to vote said they had missed the registration deadline, while a higher percentage of Latinas and Asian women said they did not know where or how to register to vote.

	At a Department of Motor Vehicles	At a public-assistance agency	By mail	At a school, at a hospital, or on campus	At a town hall or government registration office	At a registration drive	At a polling place	On the internet	Other
All	24%	2%	22%	19%	3%	5%	7%	13%	6%
Men	27%	1%	23%	17%	3%	5%	6%	13%	5%
Women	21%	3%	22%	19%	3%	4%	8%	14%	6%
White women	22%	2%	24%	13%	3%	3%	9%	18%	6%
Black women	22%	3%	22%	19%	3%	4%	11%	10%	6%
Latinas	19%	5%	20%	28%	2%	5%	3%	10%	7%
Asian women	18%	0%	19%	19%	6%	7%	5%	18%	8%
\$0-\$24,999*	9%	11%	24%	26%	4%	4%	10%	11%	2%
\$25,000-\$49,999*	16%	4%	22%	18%	2%	4%	16%	9%	9%
\$50,000-\$99,999*	22%	0%	26%	9%	3%	2%	11%	17%	10%
\$100,000-\$149,999*	19%	0%	19%	19%	2%	4%	12%	20%	5%
\$150,000+*	30%	1%	25%	8%	3%	2%	4%	24%	4%

FIGURE 6
Method of Registering to Vote in New York City by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

*These dollar figures refer only to women's household income levels.

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

	Did not meet registration deadlines	Did not know where or how to register	Did not meet residency requirements/ did not live in NYC long enough	Permanent illness or disability	Difficulty with English	Not interested in the election or not involved in politics	Did not think my vote would make a difference	Not eligible to vote	Other	Concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic
All	14%	6%	4%	6%	5%	28%	4%	21%	11%	1%
Men	13%	2%	4%	6%	4%	31%	8%	18%	12%	0%
Women	15%	8%	3%	7%	5%	26%	2%	22%	10%	1%
White women	20%	2%	3%	11%	4%	26%	4%	14%	14%	2%
Black women	39%	3%	0%	0%	0%	30%	0%	18%	8%	3%
Latinas	9%	11%	7%	5%	3%	24%	0%	31%	11%	0%
Asian women	2%	15%	0%	10%	13%	27%	0%	26%	7%	0%
\$0-\$24,999*	9%	2%	0%	18%	10%	26%	3%	26%	6%	0%
\$25,000-\$49,999*	22%	8%	4%	3%	1%	24%	0%	23%	12%	3%
\$50,000-\$99,999*	9%	14%	4%	5%	4%	32%	2%	21%	10%	0%
\$100,000-\$149,999*	17%	10%	0%	0%	7%	31%	0%	22%	13%	0%
\$150,000+*	26%	8%	9%	0%	4%	14%	7%	17%	15%	0%

FIGURE 7
Reasons New Yorkers
Did Not Register to
Vote by Gender,
Race/Ethnicity, and
Household Income

*These dollar figures refer only to women's household income levels.

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Overall, women of color are more likely to register at a local institution, such as a school, hospital, or on campus, highlighting that physical places and infrastructure matter for facilitating access for these voters.

	Illness or disability (own or family's)	Out of town	Forgot to vote or send in absentee ballot	Not interested, felt my vote wouldn't make a difference	Too busy, conflicting work or school schedule	Transportation problems	Didn't like candidates or campaign issues	Registration problems (i.e., didn't receive absentee ballot, not registered in current location)	Bad weather conditions	Inconvenient polling place	Other	Concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic
All	16%	9%	6%	17%	23%	2%	5%	5%	0%	5%	11%	1%
Men	12%	9%	7%	20%	22%	1%	6%	6%	1%	3%	12%	0%
Women	21%	8%	6%	13%	22%	2%	5%	4%	0%	6%	10%	2%

FIGURE 8
Reasons New Yorkers Did Not Vote by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

White women	21%	7%	4%	9%	33%	6%	2%	3%	2%	4%	7%	2%
Black women	28%	4%	9%	13%	13%	2%	10%	3%	0%	8%	10%	0%
Latinas	14%	11%	0%	19%	21%	0%	0%	7%	0%	8%	16%	4%
Asian women	21%	10%	11%	12%	18%	0%	11%	2%	0%	7%	6%	2%

\$0-\$24,999*	34%	6%	8%	12%	10%	5%	2%	6%	0%	6%	8%	4%
\$25,000-\$49,999*	25%	10%	6%	11%	23%	2%	0%	3%	2%	4%	9%	5%
\$50,000-\$99,999*	14%	12%	4%	21%	23%	2%	6%	2%	0%	2%	15%	0%
\$100,000-\$149,999*	10%	0%	0%	24%	19%	0%	25%	0%	0%	15%	6%	0%
\$150,000+*	7%	8%	7%	2%	45%	0%	5%	5%	0%	11%	9%	0%

*These dollar figures refer only to women's household income levels.

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Why New Yorkers Did Not Vote

Women and men reported striking differences for why they did not vote. Women were nearly twice as likely not to vote because of illness or care work compared with men and significantly less likely note to vote because they felt apathetic about politics.

That is, 21% of women did not vote due to either their own or a family member's illness (compared with 12% of men) and only 13% of women said they did not vote because they were not interested in politics or felt that their vote did not count (compared with 20% of men). Economic disparities further

shape these challenges. Women from households earning less than \$25,000 were nearly five times as likely as women in households earning \$150,000 or more to cite illness or disability as the reason they did not vote.

Interestingly, lower-income women were not more likely to report that polling places were inconvenient—suggesting that their primary barriers to voting were time, caregiving, and poor health, rather than logistical access to polling places. By contrast, higher-income women (in households earning more than \$100,000) who cited polling place inconvenience were also more likely to say they were too busy to vote, indicating

a potential overlap between personal schedules, time constraints, and perceived inconvenience.

Overall, personal obstacles—illness, being out of town, time constraints, and lack of interest—posed greater hurdles to voting than logistical issues like transportation or fears about COVID-19.

Voting and Registration Key Takeaways and Implications for Civic Engagement

These findings underscore the complex social and economic factors that shape women’s voting participation. While women vote at higher rates than men, racial and economic disparities persist, affecting not just voter turnout but also registration methods and voting habits.

- + Women in lower-income households and women of color rely more on in-person voting and physical registration sites. Our data highlight the importance of institutions, suggesting how critical it is that polling locations and voter registration offices remain accessible to reduce barriers to participation. Women relying on local schools, hospitals, or college campuses are also likely engaging with these locations not just because of proximity but because these are trusted institutions where they feel comfortable and can receive guidance.
- + Given that approximately 40% of New York City’s population are immigrants, many voters—especially first-time voters, non-native English speakers, and those from historically marginalized communities—seek familiar and reliable locations where they can get assistance navigating the registration process.¹¹
- + Informational campaigns targeting registration deadlines and eligibility misconceptions could help

increase participation, particularly among Black women, Latinas, and Asian women.

- + The caregiving burden remains a significant barrier to voting for women. Policies such as expanded early-voting hours, same-day voter registration, and paid time off for voting could ease the structural challenges that disproportionately prevent women from casting a ballot.

The findings also emphasize that trusted community spaces (schools, hospitals, campuses) are critical to voter participation, that bilingual support and voter education play an important role in these settings, and that policymakers and advocacy groups should consider the physical infrastructure of voting when aiming to expand voter access. At the same time, rates of voter disengagement remain high across gender, race and ethnicity, and income. High levels of nonparticipation among Black women, Latinas, Asian women, and women earning \$100,000 or more warrant further research to more closely examine the causes of why women in high-income households, who may be leaders in their communities and family networks, are experiencing political disengagement.

By identifying these economic, logistical, and structural barriers, policymakers, advocates, and civic organizations can work toward a more equitable voting system that allows all women to fully participate in the democratic process. Moreover, these trends in voting behavior foreground broader patterns of civic engagement—where economic barriers, caregiving responsibilities, and structural inequalities shape not just voting but also the broader arena of public participation. The next section of this report examines how women engage in civic life beyond the ballot box, exploring community engagement, neighborhood participation, and more formal activism through which women shape public life, even in the face of economic and structural challenges.

The findings also emphasize that trusted community spaces (schools, hospitals, campuses) are critical to voter participation, that bilingual support and voter education play an important role in these settings, and that policymakers and advocacy groups should consider the physical infrastructure of voting when aiming to expand voter access.

Gender Voter Choice Gap

Women outvote men by nearly every measure. In every presidential election since 1964, the number of female voters has exceeded the number of male voters. Since 1980, women have registered and voted at higher rates than men. This means that across the U.S., the number of women registered to vote has typically been about 10 million more than the number of men registered to vote, and the proportion of eligible female adults who voted has exceeded the proportion of eligible male adults who voted, though the voter turnout rate for women (the percentage of registered voters who vote) was lower than the rate for men over the same time period. These trends hold true across race and ethnic categories, with Asian American/Pacific Islanders, Black women, Latinas, and white women outvoting their male counterparts. The gender gap in voter turnout rates is the largest for Black voters.¹²

Women and men exhibit a persistent partisan “gender vote gap,” with a greater proportion of women than men preferring Democratic candidates in every presidential election since 1980. However, women are not a uniform voting bloc. While women are consistently more likely

than men to vote for a Democratic candidate, a majority of white women have voted for the Republican candidate since 2000, when white women were narrowly split between Al Gore and George W. Bush. By contrast, a large majority of Black women, Latinas, and Asian women have supported the Democratic candidate for the entirety of the time period for which data are available.¹³

These trends held true in 2024. Women were more likely to vote for the Kamala Harris-Tim Walz ticket across every race and ethnic, age, and education group. According to the one major national exit poll (the Edison exit poll), there was a 10-point gender gap in favor of the Democratic ticket (53% of women and 43% of men supported Harris-Walz, and 45% of women and 55% of men supported the Donald Trump-JD Vance ticket). However, Black women, Latinas, college-educated white women, and young women (18-29) showed the highest levels of support for the Democratic ticket, with 9 in 10 Black women voters supporting Harris-Walz, greater than any other group of women voters. A clear majority of Latinas supported Harris-Walz (60% according to Edison), though this portion supporting the Democratic ticket fell from nearly 70% in 2020. A narrow majority of white women (53%) supported Trump-Vance.¹⁴

Women and men exhibit a persistent partisan “gender vote gap,” with a greater proportion of women than men preferring Democratic candidates in every presidential election since 1980.

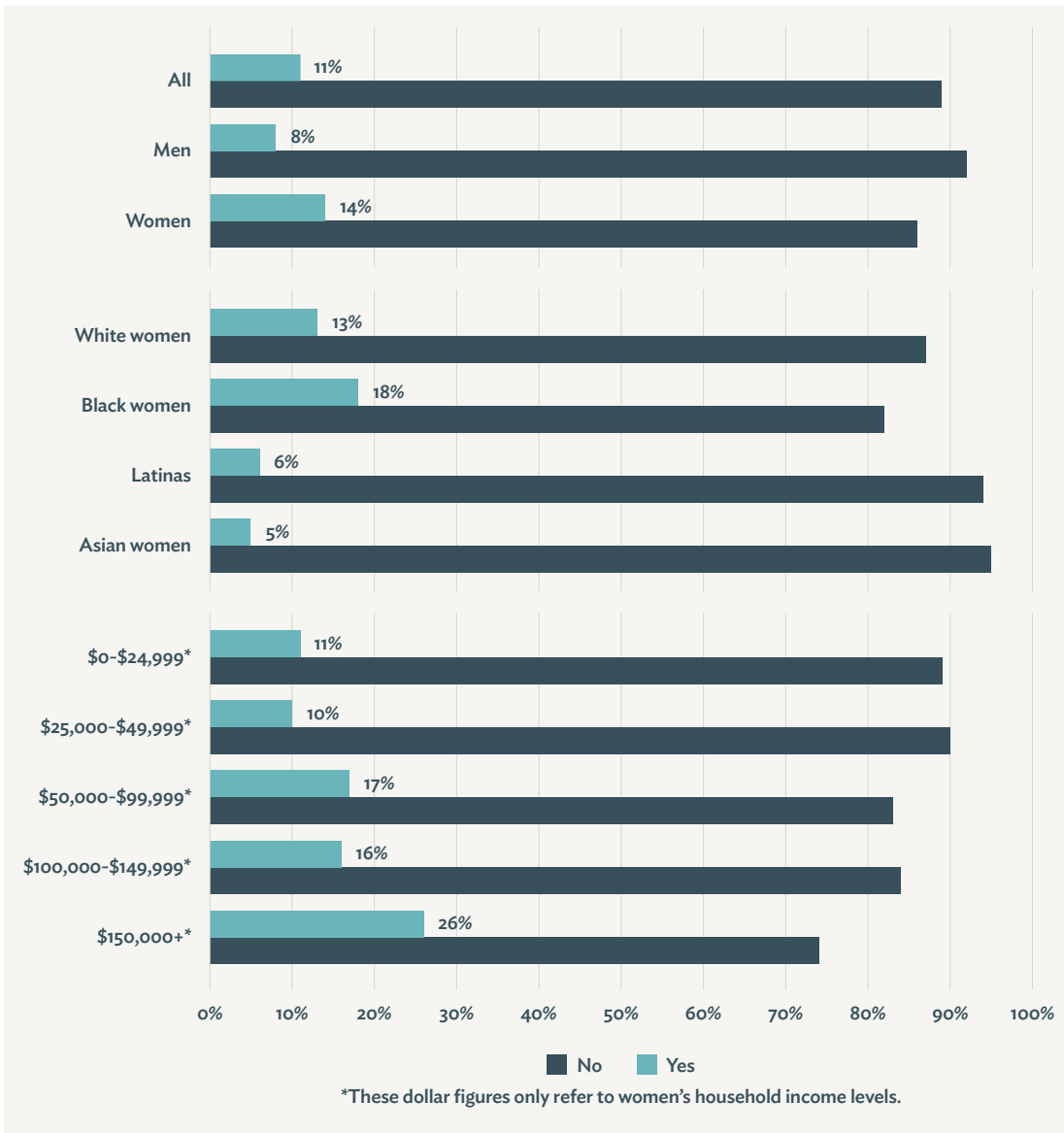




The U.S. Census CPS Civic Engagement Supplement provides a broad picture of how Americans engage in their communities.

This supplement asks respondents about their participation in civic and community organizations, their communication with neighbors and family, and their involvement in political discussions and consumer activism. Since 2008, these questions have been asked biannually of respondents age 18 and older. The following analysis highlights key findings from the most recent data, illustrating patterns of engagement among New Yorkers and, in particular, women of different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. (For a complete description of the survey and methods used, see Appendix 1.)

FIGURE 9
**New Yorkers’
 Participation in
 School, Neighborhood,
 or Community
 Organization by Gender,
 Race/Ethnicity, and
 Household Income**



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Forms of Civic Participation

Community and Neighborhood Engagement: Schools and community organizations are critical parts of civic life, often serving as hubs for neighborhood engagement. Participation in neighborhood, school, or community groups was one of the most common forms of civic engagement, with 11% of all New Yorkers and 14% of women reporting involvement. Among women, Black women had the highest participation rate (18%), followed by white women (13%), Latinas (6%), and Asian women (5%). Engagement in community groups was highest among those in high-income households (\$150,000 and above) but remained robust among middle-income earners (\$50,000–\$149,999, 17%) and still significant among lower-income households (under \$50,000, 11%). Community

group participation was a key avenue of civic engagement for New Yorkers as a whole and for women from across different race, ethnic, and income backgrounds.

Participation in Service or Civic Organizations: Formal civic participation, such as membership in service organizations (e.g., advocacy groups, religious organizations, philanthropic clubs, professional organizations with social or civic aims), was notably low across all groups. Just 3% of both men and women reported membership in a civic organization, with similarly low participation rates among Black women (3%) and white women (3%) and even lower participation among Latinas (1%) and Asian women (1%). Membership was slightly higher among wealthier households, increasing marginally from 1% to 4% in households earning up to \$149,999, and reaching 7% among households

earning \$150,000 and over annually. (See Figure 2.1)

Serving on a Committee or as an Officer of an Organization:

Participation rates were somewhat higher when respondents were asked if they had served on a committee or as an officer in a neighborhood, school, or civic organization. Among all women, 5% reported having taken on such roles, with participation highest among Black women (6%), white women (5%), and lower among Asian women (1%) and Latinas (1%). Like other forms of civic engagement, participation in leadership roles increased with income, topping out at 15% among women in households earning \$150,000 or more annually. (See Figure 2.2)

Contacting a Public Official: Contacting a public official is one of the least common civic actions, with only 7% of all New

Yorkers reporting they had done so. Gender differences were minimal, though participation varied by income: 16% of those in households earning \$150,000 or more had contacted a public official compared with only 4% in households earning under \$50,000. Racial disparities also existed: Latinas (4%) and Asian women (2%) were the least likely to report contacting an official. (See Figure 2.3)

Volunteering: Women were more likely than men to have volunteered in the past year, (20% compared with 17% of men) with rates of volunteering increasing in households with higher incomes. Volunteer rates were highest for white women (24%), followed by Asian and Black women (14%), and lowest among Latinas (10%). Women overall reported double the median number of yearly volunteering hours (30 compared with 10 for men). (See Figure 2.4)

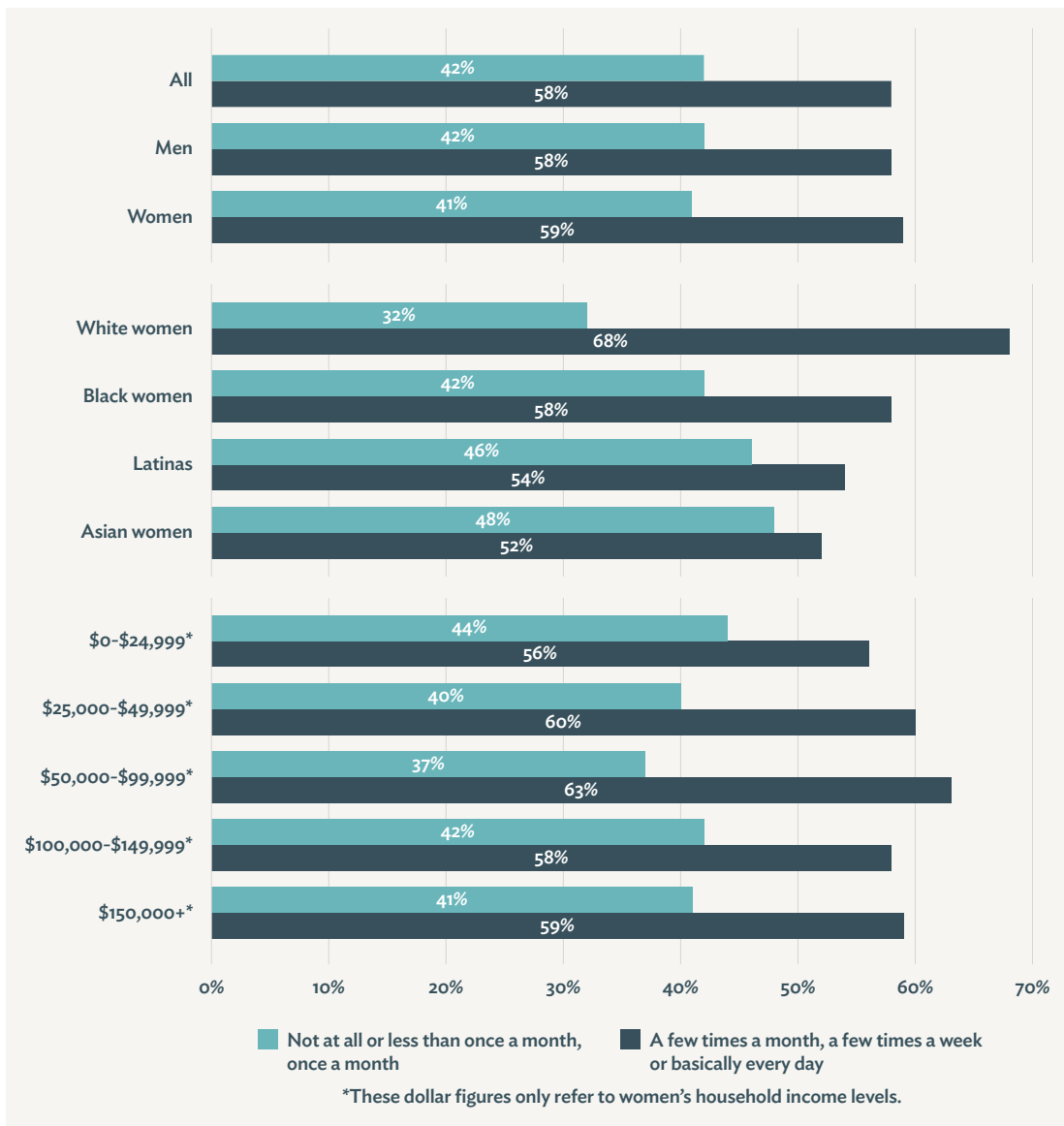


FIGURE 10
How Often New Yorkers Talk With Neighbors by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Informal Community Networks and Social Ties

Talking With Neighbors: Women were slightly more likely than men to talk frequently with their neighbors (at least a few times a month). Nearly 3 in 5 women said they spoke with neighbors regularly, compared with 41% who did so once a month or less. White women were the most likely to have frequent neighborly interactions (68%), followed by Black women (58%), Latinas (54%), and Asian women (52%). Interestingly, socializing with neighbors was highest among middle-income households, rather than at the high or low end of the income spectrum.

Talking With Family: Women were also slightly more likely than men to report frequent contact with family (81% vs. 78%). Consistently high rates of familial interaction were observed among women in households earning at least

\$50,000 (86%), but rates dipped to 77% among women in lower-income households. (See Figure 2.5)

Helping Neighbors (and Receiving Help in Return): The frequency of doing favors for neighbors—such as watching a neighbor’s child, lending tools, or running errands—varied by income level, though data suggest strong reciprocal support systems across different demographic groups. Women were slightly more likely than men to do or receive favors from neighbors at least once a month or more. White women (46%), followed by Black women (38%), and Latinas and Asian women (33%) received or gave a favor at least once a month. Frequency of helping neighbors increased slightly with higher household income levels, with the largest gap between women in households earning less than \$25,000 annually and those in households with annual income above this level.

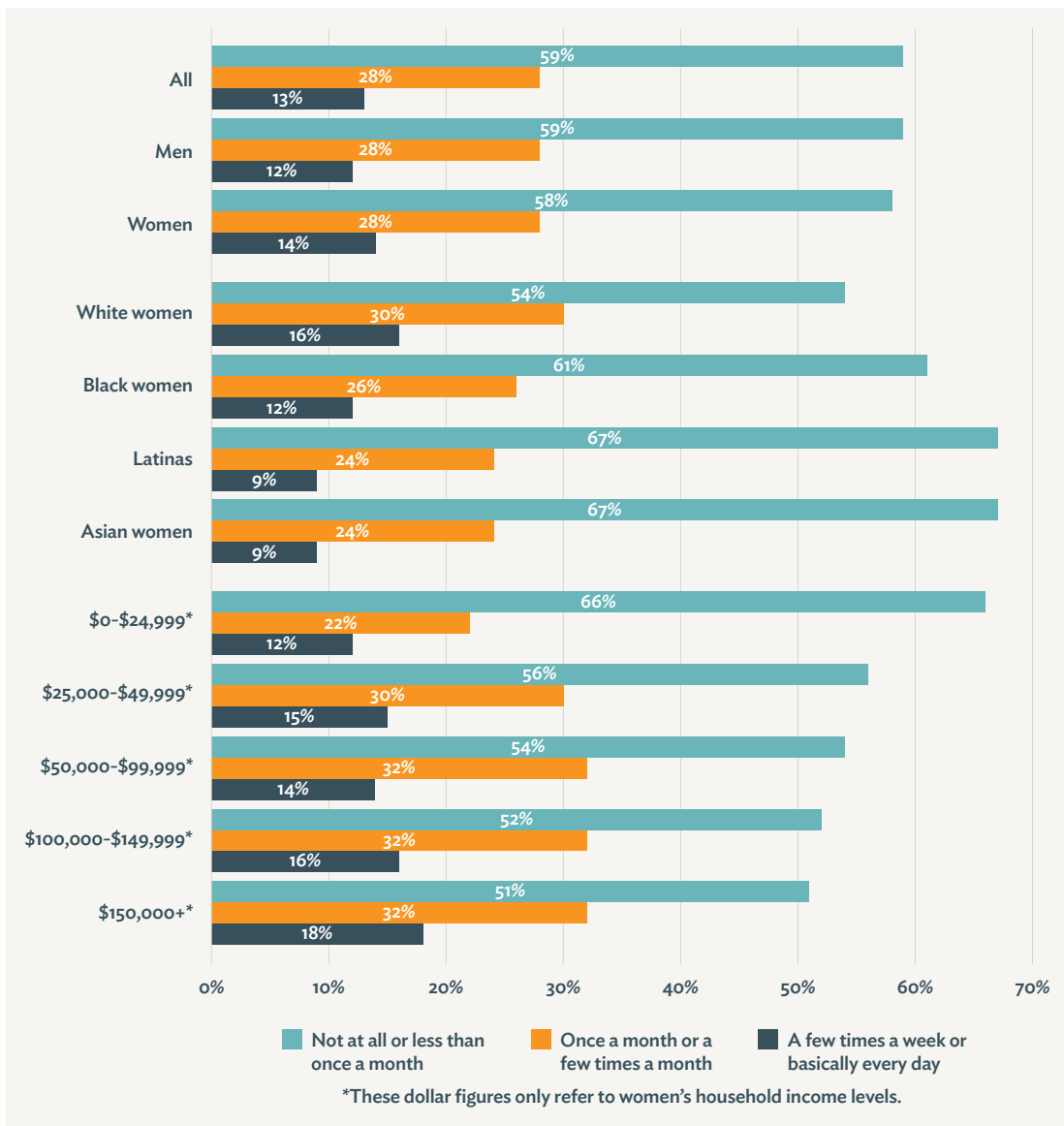


FIGURE 11
How Often New Yorkers Help or Are Helped by Neighbors by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Political Discourse and Consumer Activism

Discussing Politics: Political discussion patterns among women vary by race and ethnicity, and income level. Overall, nearly 2 in 5 New Yorkers reported rarely or never discussing politics with friends or family, with women slightly more likely than men (38% vs. 35%) to say they never or rarely discussed politics. Political discussions increased with income—nearly half of women in households earning under \$50,000 reported never or rarely discussing politics, while only a quarter of those earning \$100,000 or more said the same. Latinas were the least likely group to say they never or rarely discussed politics (12%), and Latinas and white women were the groups that reported the highest levels of engaging with politics a few times per week or basically every day (41% and 63%). Black and Asian women were the most likely to say they rarely

or never brought up politics with friends or family (28%), and more likely to engage in political conversations at a moderate, less frequent rate (once or a few times a month, 46% and 34%).

Consumer Power As Civic Engagement: Women were more likely than men to say they bought or boycotted a product based on a company’s social or political values (15% vs. 10%). This form of civic engagement was highly correlated with income, with women in households making \$150,000 or more (29%) being more than four times as likely to engage in consumer activism than those making under \$50,000 (7%). Black women (21%) and white women (20%) were about equally likely to report engaging in consumer activism, significantly higher than the rates for Asian women (7%) and Latinas (5%).

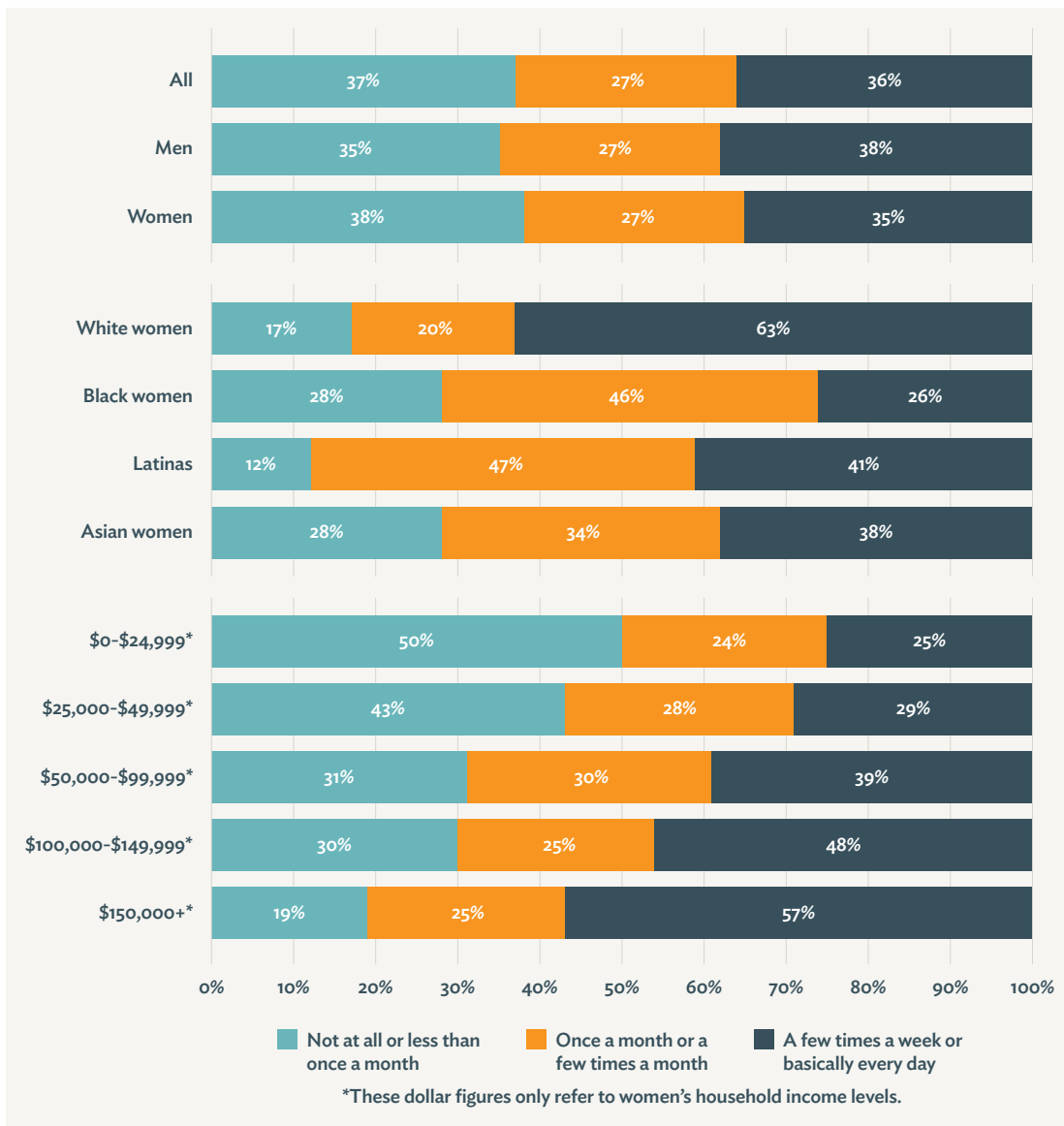
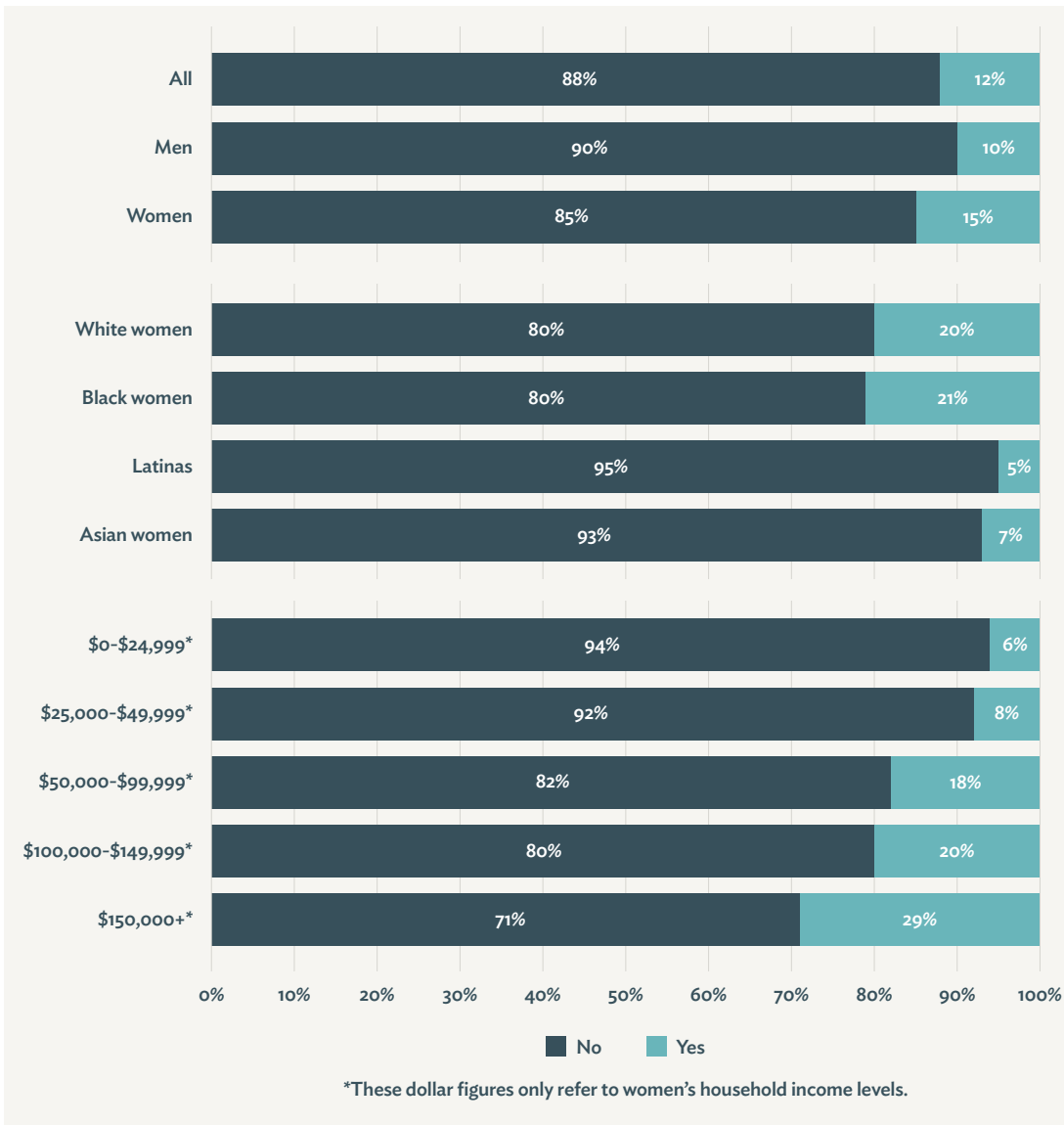


FIGURE 12
How Often New Yorkers Discuss Politics With Friends or Family by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

FIGURE 13
New Yorkers' Consumer Activism by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

Measures and Variety of Civic Participation: These civic engagement trends in New York City reveal disparities in formal and informal participation across income and racial groups. Informal social interactions are key indicators of community strength and civic engagement, influencing social cohesion and neighborhood resilience. On nearly every measure of civic participation recorded by the census, women were more likely than men to engage in social and civic actions. While the census survey offers a broad, anonymous dataset, it does not delve into why individuals participate or what barriers and incentives shape their

engagement. Particularly in a high-cost, high-density city like New York City, economic pressures, time constraints, and structural inequalities play a significant role in shaping civic participation. Further research is needed to understand the factors in addition to economic barriers that enable or prevent engagement across different communities. In the final section of this report, we turn to the activities of a growing network of New York City community-based, political, and advocacy organizations that are working to create more inclusive pathways for participation.



POLICY LANDSCAPE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The last two WCC reports emphasized not only the persistent gender pay gap but also how progress in closing this gap has stalled in New York City over the past 25 years. Women make up nearly half the city’s workforce, but from accountants to childcare workers, and lawyers to home health aides, women earn less than men in nearly all occupations for which we have sufficient earnings data.

Though all women face these economic disparities, women of color in particular face even deeper disparities. Compared with every dollar earned by white men, white women earned 87 cents, Asian women earned 72 cents, Black women earned only 57 cents, and Latinas earned just 54 cents.

Closing the Gender Pay Gap and Unequal Ground highlighted that while New York City has implemented progressive policies—such as pay-transparency laws, the expansion of early-childhood education, and strong paid-family-leave protections—these measures have not been enough to counteract entrenched inequities. Further action is needed to raise wages in women-dominated sectors, address racial disparities in earnings, and ensure that all workers have access to fair pay and career mobility. These economic reforms are not only crucial for gender equity but also for fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Advocacy and Community-Based Work

A growing network of social- and civic-advocacy organizations in New York City are working to increase voting and support women in running for office. The League of Women Voters has long worked in New York City to promote an informed and active citizenry, offering nonpartisan voter-education resources, spearheading registration drives, and helping New Yorkers apply for absentee ballots and understand election processes. Organizations like The New Majority and Eleanor’s Legacy recruit, train, and support women candidates for state and local offices throughout New York. Eleanor’s Legacy focuses on pro-choice candidates, and The New Majority provides a political network and mobilizes endorsements, mentorship, and fundraising efforts to help women gain representation in New York City government. Vote Mama Foundation is tackling one of the most persistent barriers to women’s political leadership: caregiving responsibilities.

The organization advocates for policies that allow campaign funds to cover political candidates’ childcare costs and conducts research on the political participation of mothers as part of a broader program to help mothers overcome the multidimensional structural challenges—social, economic, and logistical—of running for office as a primary caregiver.

New York’s grassroots organizations play an expansive role in working to dismantle structural barriers to full civic and democratic participation. Citizen Action of New York, Community Voices Heard, and Make the Road New York are only a few examples of the member-led organizations that focus on structural challenges, such as housing justice, health equity, fair wages, universal childcare, mass incarceration, and immigrants’ rights. These groups also offer political education and training programs that empower members to support candidates they align with on the issues. The New York Immigrant Coalition is a statewide umbrella policy and advocacy organization for more than 200 immigrant- and refugee-rights groups that focuses on policy advocacy, civic engagement (including promoting voter registration), and capacity building for local organizations. SisterSong, a national activist organization dedicated to reproductive justice for women of color, highlights how reproductive justice is key to women’s full civic participation.

Faith-based organizations in New York City play a significant role in supporting women’s civic and political engagement. The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies offers direct support to human-service and faith organizations as well as policy and research on structural barriers to economic security and well-being. Auburn Theological Seminary supports faith leaders, including women, to engage in civic activism and social-justice work. Faith in New York focuses on the relationship between faith and community work, offering training such as the Transformative Leadership School, to strengthen members’ active civic participation. Interfaith

America's Vote Is Sacred initiative highlights voting as a civic and moral responsibility, encouraging faith communities to strengthen democratic engagement.

New York City is home to numerous organizations and elected officials dedicated to dismantling discrimination and advancing LGBTQ+ rights, including voting rights and civic participation. The LGBTQIA+ Caucus of the New York City Council works on legislative efforts to protect LGBTQ+ residents, with members such as Tiffany Cabán (Queens), Erik Bottcher (Manhattan), Crystal Hudson (Brooklyn), Chi Ossé (Brooklyn), Lynn Schulman (Queens), and David Carr (Staten Island) advocating for policies addressing discrimination, health-care access, and housing. The Audre Lorde Project mobilizes LGBTQ+ people of color for social and economic justice, while SALGA NYC provides support and advocacy for South Asian LGBTQ+ individuals, addressing immigration and cultural acceptance. The Center (also known as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center) offers health, wellness, and civic-engagement resources, helping LGBTQ+ individuals navigate voting rights and political participation. Equality New York and the New Pride Agenda push for statewide policy reforms, including protections for transgender rights and economic justice.

A number of organizations focus on young people's involvement in democracy. For example, YVote, founded by New York City high school students, aims to boost youth voting and civic engagement by addressing obstacles young people face in becoming informed, active voters and leaders. DoSomething.org provides resources for young people to learn about issue areas and build community among peers as a step toward building a more action-oriented generation of young civic leaders. New Girl City at the Lower Eastside Girls Club offers a six-month training course across all five boroughs that introduces young women in high school to the nuts and bolts of civics in order to build between grassroots organizing and advocacy groups with the civic and policymaking process. Generation Vote is also working to support intersectional, youth-led movement action on a range of voting-related issues through community organizing, leadership training, and policy development.

Recent Legislative Progress

New York has recently taken significant steps to address the financial barriers that disproportionately impact first-time and low-income political candidates. New York City established a Campaign Finance Program in 1988, and the city's current program matches small-dollar contributions from New York City residents to participating candidates. Over time, the

matching rate has evolved to further amplify the impact of small contributions. For instance, in the 2021 election, a \$10 contribution from a city resident could be worth as much as \$90 to a participating candidate.¹⁵ However, to qualify for matching gifts, candidates need to raise \$5,000 from at least 75 individual contributors, which remains a barrier to overcome for a working person.¹⁶

Nontraditional candidates face steeper financial hurdles, lacking the wealthy-donor networks or institutional backing that more established candidates may rely on. Maintaining and strengthening the public-financing structure is therefore essential for supporting first-time, working-class, and caregiving candidates. Without continued investment and protections, these gains risk being eroded, reinforcing the barriers that have historically kept women, people of color, and low-income individuals out of the political process.

This report on voting and civic engagement trends therefore appears against the background of a strong and growing network of community-based organizations focused on dismantling barriers to active participation in civic life by women and gender-expansive people. Grassroots, voting-rights, youth-engagement, and faith-based organizations reflect a multifaceted, intersectional approach to strengthening women's civic participation. Here, we add to this conversation by examining how voting and civic-engagement trends among women in New York City may inform the community-based work across different levels of engagement—from voter education and registration to leadership development and policy advocacy—to ensure that women, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, have the resources and support needed to participate fully in civic life.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following six policy recommendations are informed by women’s voting and civic-engagement trends, current legislation, and advocacy efforts. While policy approaches to dismantle structural economic, political, and social structural barriers are numerous, we focus on recommendations for New York City and New York state that would expand women’s voting and civic participation, make voting more equitable, and encourage more women to run for office:

1. **Align the Timing of New York City Local Elections With Federal Elections.**

Resolution 189A-2024 urges the New York State Legislature to pass an amendment to the New York State Constitution to move New York City elections to even-numbered years. Along with good-governance groups such as the League of Women Voters of the City of New York, Citizens Union, and the Brennan Center, we support this measure for the city to switch the timing of its local elections, both primaries and general elections, to even-numbered years, to coincide with federal-election dates. In New York City, voter turnout can be three times higher in federal-election years than in the alternate years when local elections are held. In other cities like Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Baltimore, switching local elections to the same year as U.S. congressional and presidential elections has been shown to increase voter participation by 20% to 60% overall and to reduce racial and age disparities, increasing participation rates among younger voters and voters from underrepresented backgrounds. At the same time, low turnout in local elections can have a broader negative impact on the perceived democratic legitimacy of elected officials, with a sense that local officials win by appealing to a smaller portion of the electorate. Holding elections in even-numbered years could boost voter participation and encourage candidates to address issues that engage with a wider swath of the electorate.¹⁷



2. **Implement Same-Day Voter Registration and Expand Outreach to Underserved Communities.**

As of March 2025, New York did not allow same-day voter registration, which disproportionately affects low-income women, women of color, and immigrant communities, many of whom miss registration deadlines due to work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, or lack of access to voter education. Along with organizations like the New York Immigration Coalition, Make the Road New York, and the League of Women Voters NYC, we recommend that legislative efforts be revived to allow same-day voter registration and ensure expanded multilingual voter outreach through trusted community organizations, faith-based groups, and service providers.



3. **Resource Women-Led Solutions by Directly Investing in Microgrants for Women.**

A major barrier to civic engagement is the lack of direct investment in women with the vision to lead but not the resources to act. Too often, grassroots ideas stall due to limited funding access. Flexible, low-barrier microgrants can change that—empowering women as civic leaders, and ensuring that engagement is not just about participation, but also about shaping the future

of their neighborhoods. Direct investment removes structural barriers, turning participation into leadership. This approach requires collective action. Philanthropic funders must also prioritize support for women in underserved communities, ensuring those closest to the issues can drive meaningful change. With targeted investment, civic engagement becomes a lived, lasting force for progress across New York City and State.



4. Continue Supporting Equitable Access to Early Voting and Voting by Mail.

We found that women in lower-income households and women of color rely more on in-person voting. Maintaining robust polling hours and easy-to-access early-voting locations in historically disenfranchised neighborhoods can lower barriers to voting. New York has expanded its vote-by-mail education efforts, and these efforts to expand language access and disability accommodations should be fully supported, as should provisions for absentee-ballot access, which makes it easier for caregivers and workers with irregular schedules to vote.



5. Expand Civic Education and Leadership Development for Women and Young Voters.

There is no silver bullet for voter and democracy education. However, civic education and engagement opportunities are inconsistent across New York City, with younger and first-time voters often lacking guidance

on how to engage beyond Election Day.¹⁸ We support recommendations from youth-voting organizations such as Generation Vote, YVote, and DoSomething to strengthen civic education in public schools and peer-to-peer education groups that empower young people, particularly young women in underserved communities, to receive nonpartisan political education and leadership training. These youth-led organizations, as well as other grassroots and faith-based initiatives, are helping to equip young people with organizing skills, political education, and mentorship opportunities, forming the critical baseline of a pipeline toward political, civic, and neighborhood leadership roles.



6. Take Policy Steps to Address Gender Pay Inequity.

Economic insecurity exacerbates time poverty, the time crunch women face trying to fit in civic and democratic activities alongside a full workday and care responsibilities. Addressing low pay and pay inequity, particularly for women of color, through a suite of economic policies, can also help move the city toward greater equity and broader-based civic participation. Building upon the economic recommendations from our previous two reports, WCC recommends restoring minimum-wage purchasing power by indexing the minimum wage to match rising labor productivity and increasing costs of living. The state should also raise wages for home health workers, adopt a meaningful annual minimum-wage inflation adjustment, and eliminate the tipped minimum wage. Women and workers of color stand to benefit most from minimum-wage adjustments.¹⁹



CONCLUSION

Women's civic and political engagement is a cornerstone of a strong democracy, yet economic barriers, caregiving responsibilities, voter suppression, and systemic inequities continue to limit full participation. While women in New York City outvote men in elections, many women—particularly women of color, immigrants, and low-income earners—face structural barriers that hinder their ability to engage in traditional political processes such as running for office, participating in public meetings, or navigating complex voter-registration requirements.

However, civic engagement extends far beyond the ballot box. The landscape of advocacy and local organizations in New York City is filled with women organizing mutual-aid networks, advocating for local policy change, and leading grassroots initiatives that strengthen democracy. These too-often-overlooked forms of participation are vital, yet they remain underrepresented in policy discussions. Recognizing this broader definition of civic engagement more accurately reflects the lived experiences of women, particularly those balancing caregiving, employment, and leadership within their communities.

Expanding women's voting rights, political participation, and leadership pathways requires 1) greater knowledge about the voting and registration behavior and barriers on the ground, 2) an understanding of the existing policy and

advocacy landscape, and 3) a comprehensive call to action that addresses economic, structural, and social barriers. Our research shows that lower-income women and women of color face significant challenges in democratic and civic participation. By modernizing voter registration, addressing caregiving-related challenges, increasing campaign-financing equity, ensuring voting accessibility, and investing in civic education, both the city and the state can begin to create a more inclusive and representative democracy.

To truly break down systemic barriers to women's full civic participation, New York City must expand family-friendly voting policies, increase financial support for women candidates, and ensure that civic education and leadership development opportunities are accessible to all. These policy changes are essential for ensuring that women across all races and ethnicities, classes, and gender identities have the resources and power to shape their communities and influence the future of democracy.

WCC remains committed to its vision, advocating for policy reforms, amplifying women's voices, and expanding access to leadership opportunities. By embracing an expanded definition of civic engagement, we strengthen democracy, thereby ensuring that women's contributions, leadership, and collective power are reflected in the policies and decisions that affect their lives.

To truly break down systemic barriers to women's full civic participation, New York City must expand family-friendly voting policies, increase financial support for women candidates, and ensure that civic education and leadership development opportunities are accessible to all.





APPENDIX 1

Methods and Data Sources

Historians have reconstructed voting rates based on total population and the population eligible to vote from the late-18th century, when only white male property owners were eligible to vote, through the 19th century, when voting was expanded to non-property-owning white men with the rise of universal white male suffrage in the 1820s and 1830s, and then to the 20th century, when the 19th Amendment (1920) expanded the vote to women; it was another 45 years, however, before the Voting Rights Act of 1965 began to help dismantle Jim Crow hurdles that had long prevented Black voters from exercising full participation. Other key expansions include the 15th Amendment (1870), which technically granted Black men the right to vote but was undermined by discriminatory practices in the South, and the 26th Amendment (1971), which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.²⁰

Therefore, historic rates of voting participation depend on who is eligible to vote, and eligible populations have changed over time based on federal and state law. Early-voting rates often appear higher when calculated as a percentage of the total population because the electorate was so limited. Conversely, periods of expansion—such as after the enfranchisement of women in 1920 or the enforcement of voting-rights protections in the 1960s—saw fluctuations in turnout rates as new voters were integrated into the electorate. Additionally, voter-suppression laws, such as literacy tests and poll taxes in the post-Reconstruction South or contemporary voter-ID laws and registration restrictions, have also shaped participation levels, further complicating historical comparisons of voting rates.

Voting Data

Because voter–turnout data is generally not linked to voter demographics, we use survey data to analyze demographic trends.²¹ This analysis uses the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey primarily designed to measure labor–force statistics but which in November of national election years includes a Voting and Registration Supplement. (Because New York City’s local elections are conducted in odd-numbered years and therefore not aligned with federal elections, local voting rates are captured in the Civic Engagement Survey in the category of “propensity to vote in local elections”; however, sample sizes restrict the use of this question for the purposes of intersectional analysis.²²) The CPS’s voting supplement gathers data on voting behavior and registration status among the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population age 18 and over. Because the Census supplement focuses on U.S. citizens, the denominator used in calculating voting rates includes only eligible respondents (referred to as the “voting-eligible population,” or VEP), not the broader population that includes noncitizens.²³ Other measures of voter turnout, such as those based on the Voting Age Population (VAP), may include noncitizens and other individuals who may be ineligible to vote based on state law in their denominators, which leads to different estimates of voter–turnout rates compared with those reported by the CPS.

The CPS has some documented limitations, including voting overreporting bias, in which more people tend to say they voted than administrative data (or vote counts) confirm. This is a widely observed phenomenon across all election polls.²⁴ Additionally, voting-related questions have a lower response rate than unemployment and earnings questions. However, the census treats these nonresponses as nonvoters, which lowers the CPS’s turnout-rate estimates compared with that of other surveys, such as the American National Election Survey (ANES). Overall, the CPS’s voting and registration rates tend to be closer to administrative data tracking actual turnout than the higher estimates provided by the ANES. It is possible following Hur and Achen (2013) to reweight the CPS state-level turnout rates to be equal to the VEP turnout rates published; however, the CPS’s universe of the noninstitutional citizen population is a relatively close approximation to a weighted VEP.²⁵ A primary difference is that “noninstitutional” populations include dorms, military barracks, nursing care homes, and prisons, which depending on state law may affect the eligible voting population.²⁶

As the University of Florida Election Lab’s Michael McDonald notes, while the cumulative effect of both these forms of error can mean that the CPS estimates voting rates close to

administrative data (important for our purposes here), it can lead to misperceptions of turnout. McDonald notes that, for example, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in his Shelby County decision how racial discrimination in voting was in the past because Black turnout in Mississippi exceeded that in Massachusetts; however, this may have been influenced by a lower response rate to the Voting and Registration Supplement among Black respondents in Massachusetts.²⁷

The analyses in this report pool the most recent three years of data (2018, 2020, and 2022), except for Figure 2, which shows voting trends over time using pooled three-year samples from 1994 onward. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18 and older, who live in New York City.

Civic Engagement Data

The Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement is another supplement to the CPS, first introduced in 2008 and subsequently fielded every two years in September. This supplement collects data on how people age 16 and over participate in civic life beyond voting, including volunteer work, participation in community organizations, and engagement with public officials, and because it is attached to the larger CPS, it can link these activities to the demographics of respondents. The supplement collects data from both U.S. citizens and noncitizens, thereby providing a more holistic view of civic-engagement patterns within the United States regardless of citizenship status.²⁸

Because of available sample size, multiple years of data are pooled to analyze New York City voting and civic-engagement activities (generally the most recent three years of data—2017, 2019, and 2021—unless otherwise indicated), using respondents age 16 and older who live in New York City.

Qualitative Interviews With Community Leaders and Advocates

Quantitative analysis was supplemented by a series of fifteen 30-to-60-minute semi-structured qualitative interviews with New York City-based leaders in voting policy, youth-voting initiatives, community and grassroots advocacy, LGBTQ+, faith-based initiatives, and broader efforts to support community and civic engagement. These interviews provided contextual insights into the lived experiences and challenges of New York City residents, as well as the advocacy strategies employed by organizations and advocates working to enhance broad-based voter participation. They also helped to identify

Voted in the most recent November election	Weighted totals 3-year pooled (2018, 2020, 2022)		Percentage		Raw sample size	
	Did not vote	Voted	Did not vote	Voted	Did not vote	Voted
All	4,457,099	8,563,738	34.2%	65.8%	969	1,863
\$0-\$24,999	1,123,301	1,196,082	48.4%	51.6%	277	303
\$25,000-\$49,999	1,195,044	1,745,539	40.6%	59.4%	244	370
\$50,000-\$99,999	1,158,088	2,466,606	31.9%	68.1%	243	522
\$100,000-\$149,999	381,088	1,208,738	24.0%	76.0%	76	253
\$150,000+	599,579	1,946,774	23.5%	76.5%	129	415
Men	2,024,754	3,523,229	36.5%	63.5%	413	730
Women	2,066,610	4,498,349	31.5%	68.5%	338	876
\$0-\$24,999	589,275	732,552	44.6%	55.4%	100	147
\$25,000-\$49,999	531,254	897,673	37.2%	62.8%	90	181
\$50,000-\$99,999	517,141	1,354,171	27.6%	72.4%	80	267
\$100,000-\$149,999	166,483	563,030	22.8%	77.2%	26	100
\$150,000+	262,457	950,924	21.6%	78.4%	42	181
White women	612,969	1,916,300	24.2%	75.8%	138	428
Black women	388,690	1,291,402	23.1%	76.9%	84	287
Latinas	591,900	812,083	42.2%	57.8%	116	161
Asian Women	461,264	459,278	50.1%	49.9%	102	96

1.1
Voting Rates in New York City by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income

*These dollar figures refer only to women's household income levels.

Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Voting and Registration Supplement, pooled 2018, 2020, and 2022 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

policy gaps, structural barriers, and potential interventions that quantitative data alone may not fully capture. By incorporating these qualitative perspectives, we were able to deepen our understanding of the policy landscape, explore

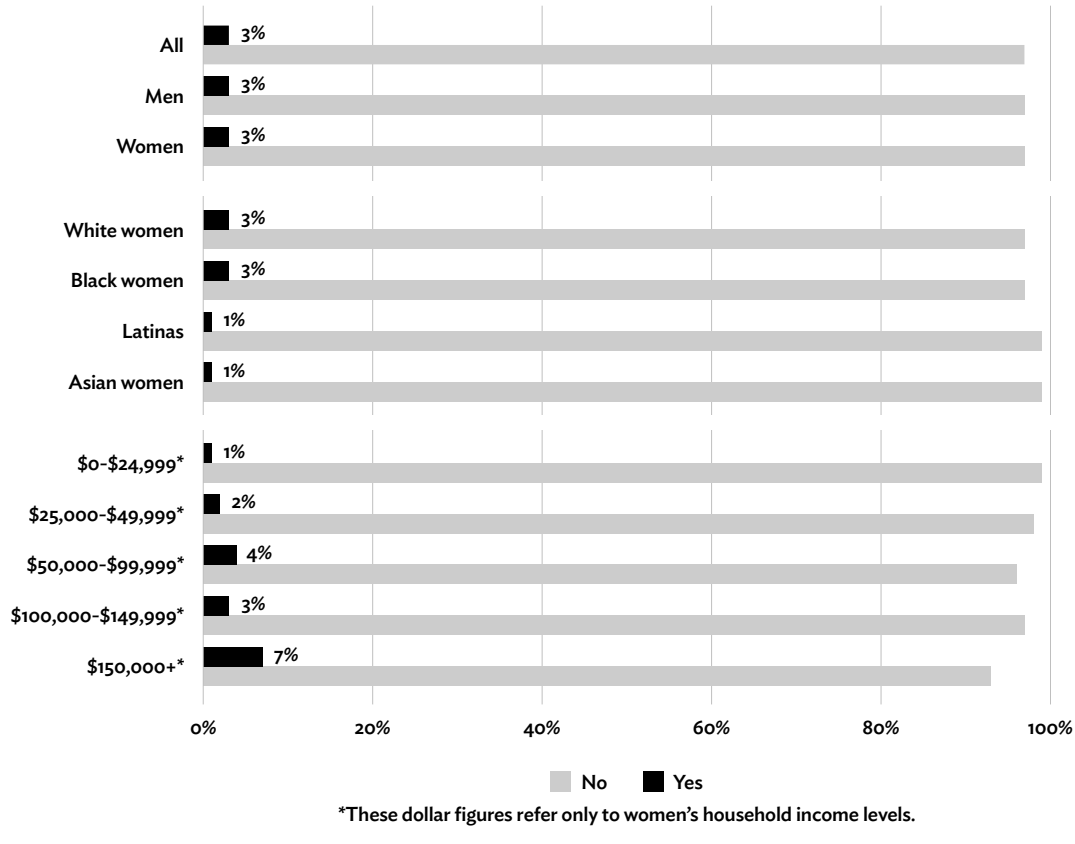
underreported obstacles to civic engagement, and highlight opportunities for targeted initiatives aimed at boosting voter participation across diverse communities in New York City.



APPENDIX 2

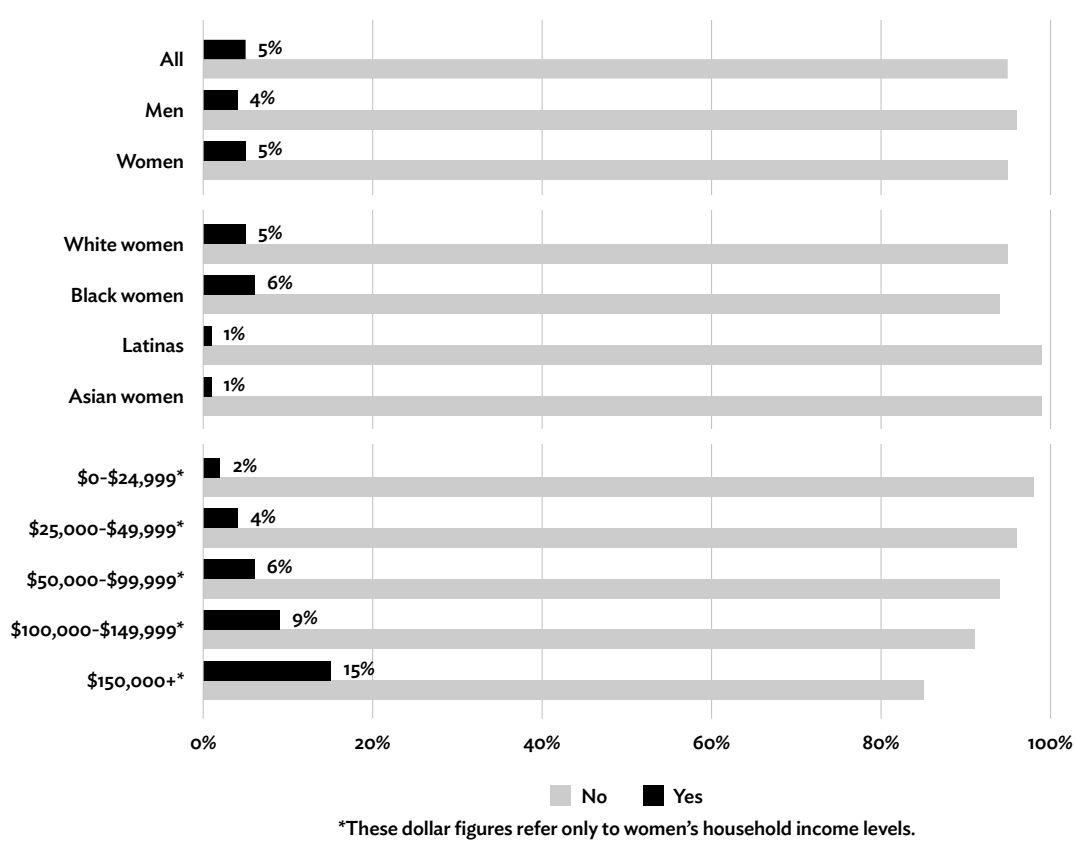
Voting and Civic Engagement Figures

2.1
**New Yorkers’
 Participation in Service
 or Civic Organizations by
 Gender, Race/Ethnicity,
 and Household Income**



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

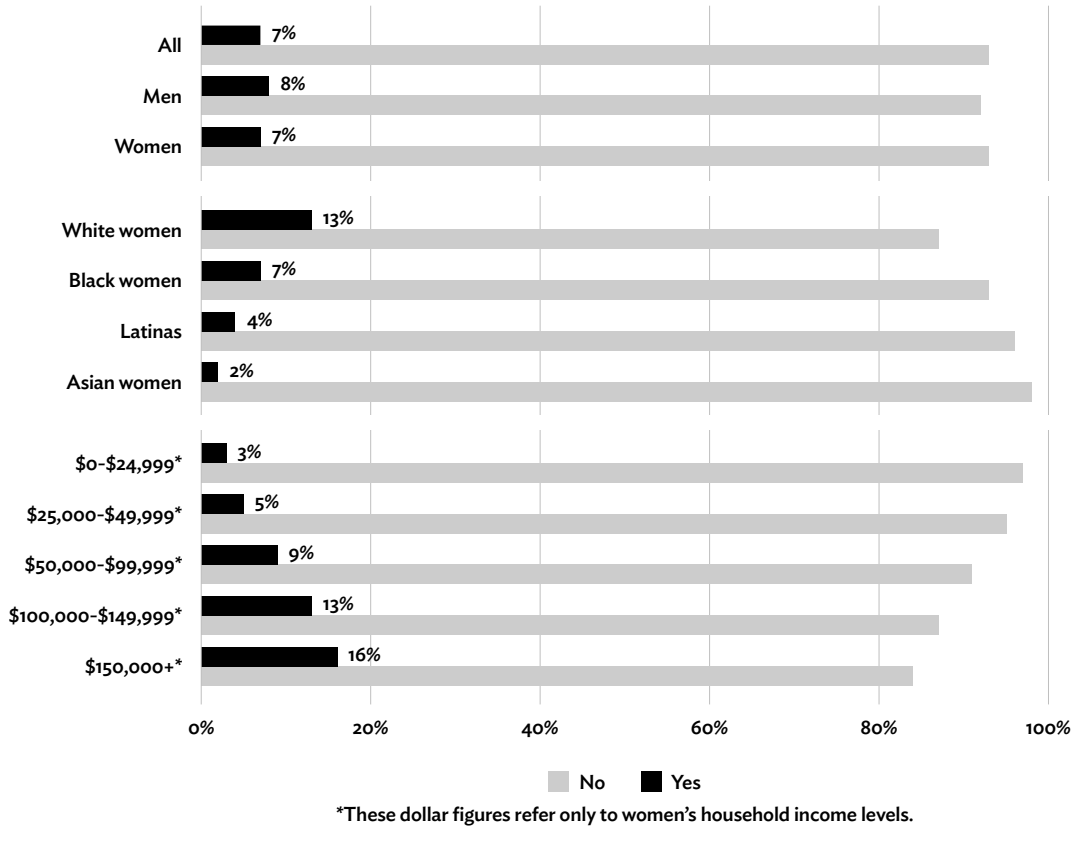
2.2
**New Yorkers’ Service
 on a Committee or
 as an Officer of an
 Organization by Gender,
 Race/Ethnicity, and
 Household Income**



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

2.3

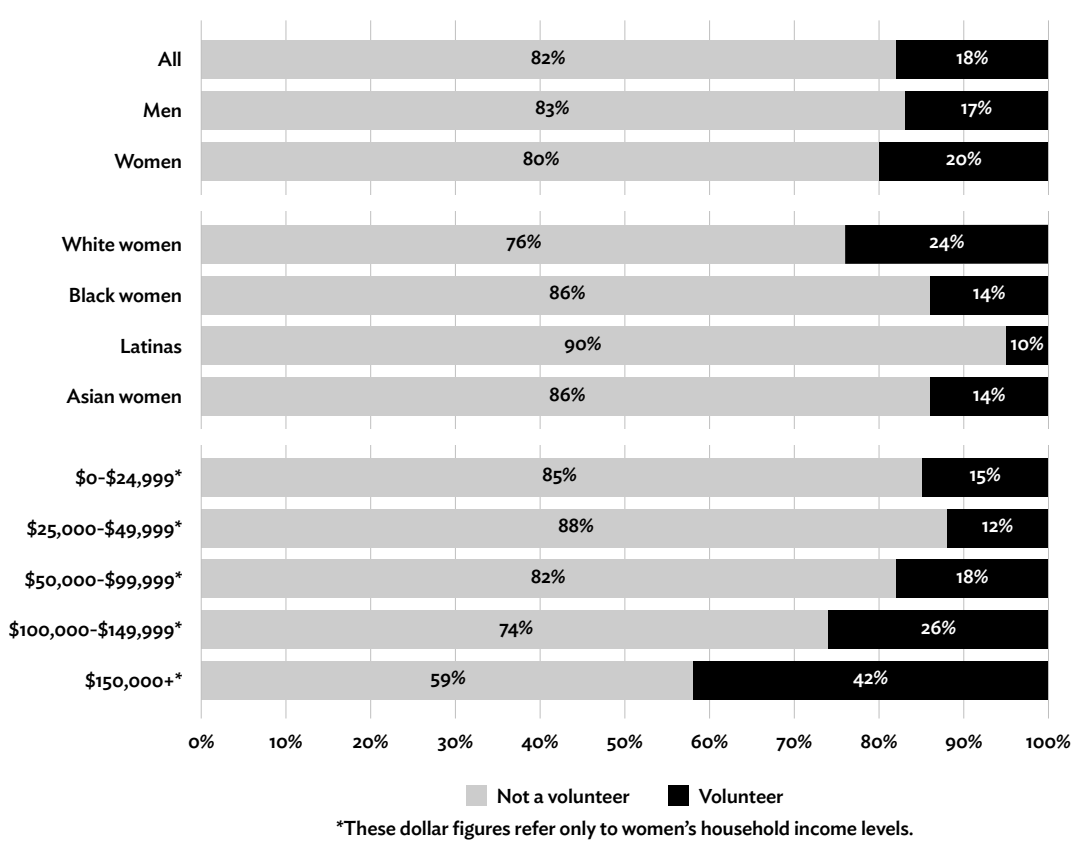
New Yorkers' Contact With a Public Official by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

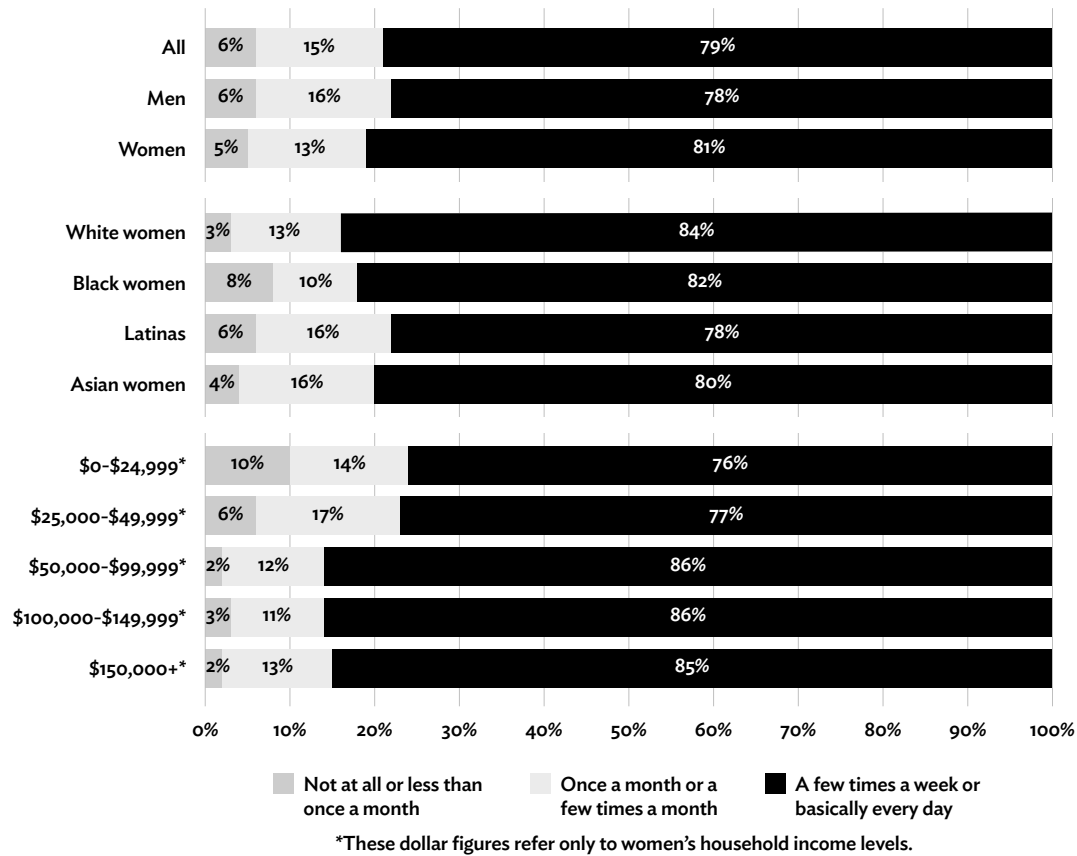
2.4

New Yorkers' Volunteer Rates by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.

How Often New Yorkers Saw or Heard From Friends or Family, by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Household Income



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, pooled 2017, 2019, and 2021 samples. Respondents include eligible voters (as determined by the census), age 18+ who live in NYC.



Endnotes

- 1 Here, 2022 refers to the average from 2020–2022 and 1997 refers to the average from 1995–1997.
- 2 Brennan Center for Justice, “[Voting Laws Roundup: September 2024](#).”
- 3 Introduced as Senate Bill S.1046-E and Assembly Bill A.6678-E, the law passed the State Senate on May 31, 2022, and the State Assembly on June 2, 2022, before being signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul on June 20, 2022. See Office of the New York Attorney General, “[New York Voting Rights Act](#).”
- 4 “[How Preclearance Protects NYC Voters](#),” Legal Defense Fund.
- 5 Joseph Ax, “[New York’s Top Court Upholds Mail-in Voting for All, Rejecting Republican Challenge](#),” Reuters, August, 20, 2024.
- 6 The “Golden Day” exception signed into law in early 2023 allows voters to register to vote on the first day of early voting; see Ariama C. Long, “[Golden Day: NYC Sees Highest Turnout Ever for Early Voting](#),” The New York Amsterdam News, October 31, 2024. New York State Board of Elections, “[Registration and Voting Deadlines](#).”
- 7 Civic Engagement Commission (CEC), “[The People’s Money](#).” CEC, “[DemocracyNYC to Launch \\$2 Voter Education Campaign](#).”
- 8 Due to the small sample size of respondents, this analysis is limited in the analysis it offers of the many racial and ethnic groups who make up New York City. See Appendix I: Methods and Data Sources for a complete description.
- 9 Kevin Miller, Deborah J. Vagins, Anne Hedgepeth, and Kate Nielson, *The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap* (AAUW, 2018) and *Systemic Racism and the Gender Pay Gap: A supplement to The Simple Truth* (AAUW, 2021).
- 10 According to the census, voters who were not eligible to vote were most likely not eligible because they were registered in another location.
- 11 The 2020 census reported that nearly 40% of New York City’s population is made up of immigrants, an estimate many experts think is low due to undercounting of undocumented workers. See “[2023 Annual Report on New York City’s Immigrant Population and Initiatives of the Office](#).”
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- 13 CAWP, 2025. “[Gender Gap: Voting Choices in Presidential Elections](#).” New Brunswick, NJ: Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University–New Brunswick, accessed February 7, 2025.
- 14 CAWP, 2025. “[Gender Differences in 2024 Vote Choice Are Similar to Most Recent Presidential Elections](#).” New Brunswick, NJ: Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University–New Brunswick, accessed February 7, 2025.
- 15 Joanna Zdanys and Marina Pino, “[Public Campaign Financing and the Indictment of NYC Mayor Eric Adams](#),” Brennan Center for Justice, October 3, 2024. New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB), “[How It Works](#),” accessed March 17, 2025.
- 16 New York City CFB, “[Limits & Thresholds](#),” accessed March 17, 2025.
- 17 Hartney, Michael T., and Sam D. Hayes. 2021. “Off-Cycle and Out of Sync: How Election Timing Influences Political Representation.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 21(4): 335–54. doi: 10.1017/spq.2020.6.; Citizens Union. 2023. *Moving Municipal Elections to Even-Numbered Years*; League of Women Voters, “[Memorandum of Support Resolution 189A-2024](#),” January 2025.
- 18 [YVote](#).
- 19 [Align | Raise Up NY](#). See also: L.K. Moe, “Recent NYC Job Growth Concentrated in Low- and Moderate-Wage Industries,” February 2023, <https://www.centrernyc.org/reports-briefs/recent-nyc-job-growth-concentrated-in-low-and-moderate-wage-industries-long-term-employment-growth-prediction-suggests-job-quality-should-be-a-top-policy-priority>
- 20 U.C. Santa Barbara, The American Presidency Project, “[Voter Turnout](#),” accessed March 17, 2025. U.S. Census, “[Historical Reported Voting Rates](#),” accessed March 17, 2025.
- 21 U.F. Election Lab, “[Turnout Demographics](#),” accessed March 17, 2025.
- 22 For further reading see, for example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ suggestion on sample size and analysis, “[Sample Size and Data Quality](#),” accessed March 17, 2025.
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- 24 Pascal Sciarini and Andreas C. Goldberg, “[Turnout Bias in Postelection Surveys: Political Involvement, Survey Participation, and Voter Overreporting](#),” *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology* (2016).
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- 26 UF Election Project, “[CPS Over-Report and Non-Response Bias Correction](#),” accessed March 17, 2025.
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