

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

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Policy Analysis Report

To: Supervisor Hillary Ronen
From: Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office
Subject: Adoption of the right to vote for 16- and 17-
year-olds in the U.S.
Date: March 25, 2024



Summary of Requested Action

Your office requested that the Budget and Legislative Analyst conduct an analysis of the jurisdictions that have attempted, either successfully or unsuccessfully, to lower the voting age to 16. Further, you requested an analysis of the implementation challenges experienced in Berkeley and Oakland, analysis of the two unsuccessful attempts to lower the voting age in San Francisco, and a review of the arguments used by winning and losing campaigns.

For further information about this report, contact Fred Brousseau, Director of Policy Analysis, at the Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office.

Executive Summary

- At least nine U.S. cities have approved voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds since 2013 when Takoma Park, Maryland became the first to approve such a measure; at least eight other cities have followed suit through 2024. A number of other cities and some states are currently considering lowering their voting age to 16 while some cities, including San Francisco, have acted on but not approved such proposals to date, either due to a vote of the people or legislative actions. At least one national organization has been in place since 2015 advocating for voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds.
- Of the cities that have adopted 16- and 17-year-old voting, a high proportion are in Maryland, where state law allows cities to adopt such initiatives at the discretion of their city councils, without a vote of the people. Other cities that have adopted 16- and 17-year-old voting include Newark, New Jersey and Brattleboro, Vermont.
- In California, where state law requires that allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote must be approved by the voters, the cities of Berkeley and Oakland have approved 16- and 17-year-old voting for their school board elections only. Proposals in San Francisco and Culver City to give 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in all local elections have not

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passed (voters rejected lowering the voting age twice in San Francisco). In these three cases, the ballot initiatives have been defeated by narrow margins, with voter approval rates of 47.9 percent and 49.2 percent in the 2016 and 2020 San Francisco elections, respectively, and 49.95 percent in Culver City. As of 2022, the U.S. Census Bureau reported there were approximately 12,000 16- and 17-year-olds in San Francisco.

- San Francisco election data show there were high voter turnouts in both 2016 and 2020. However, voter participation by 18- to 29-year-olds, the group nearest in age to 16- and 17-year-olds, was much lower than for the next two age groups: 30- to 39-year-olds and 40- to 49-year-olds. To the extent that the 18- to 29-year-old age group was more supportive of the initiatives, a higher turnout by their age group could have made the difference in the narrow defeats.
- Proponents of 16- and 17-year-old voting in cities that have voted on the matter have consisted of city council and school board members, and advocacy organizations. Opponents have largely been individuals though in the case of the San Francisco elections, they included two organizations: the San Francisco Taxpayers Association and the Republican Party. A common argument in favor of allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote is that starting voting at a younger age sets the stage for ongoing voting and civic participation in the future. Arguments against the proposal have included that this age group is not mature enough to take on the responsibility of voting.
- Other countries that have lowered their voting ages to 16 or 17 include the following:
 - Age 16: Argentina, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina (if employed), Belgium (European elections only), Brazil, Croatia (if employed), Cuba, Dominican Republic (if married), Ecuador, Estonia (local elections only), Germany (certain states have lowered the voting age for local elections only), Guernsey, Hungary (if married), Indonesia (if married), Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta (local elections only), Nicaragua, Scotland (non-federal elections only), Serbia (if employed), Slovenia (if employed), and Switzerland (one canton, or state, for regional elections only).
 - Age 17: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Greece, Indonesia, Israel (for local elections), Seychelles, Sudan, and Timor-Leste (East Timor).¹

¹ National Youth Rights Association, *Voting Age Status Report*, Available at: <https://www.youthrights.org/issues/voting-age/voting-age-status-report/>

Policy Options

It is a policy choice for the Board of Supervisors as to whether it wishes to pursue a third attempt to lower the voting age to 16 for local elections. The academic literature and the experience in at least one jurisdiction, Takoma Park, Maryland, indicates that lowering the voting age leads to higher turnout and civic engagement among youth. Given the electoral success of lowering the voting age for school board elections in Berkeley and Oakland, the Board of Supervisors may wish to consider the option of lowering the voting age for school board elections only as a means of engaging youth and building greater support for expanding voting to municipal elections at a later time.

Project Staff: Fred Brousseau, Rashi Kesarwani

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Twenty-Sixth Amendment to U.S. Constitution Lowered Voting Age to 18

Since the nation’s founding through 1971, the voting age for U.S. elections was 21, borrowed from British common law.² In 1971, the Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. This change required approval by two-thirds of each house of Congress and three-quarters of the states. Public sentiment to

“...the right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by a State on account of age.”
Section I, Amendment 26 of the U.S. Constitution

lower the nation’s voting age dates to World War II, when President Roosevelt lowered the draft age of young men from 21 to 18-years-old. The slogan first heard during World War II— “Old enough to fight, old enough to vote”—was adopted by student activists during the Vietnam War in the 1960s, culminating in the amendment to the Constitution in 1971.³

Maryland Towns Were First to Lower Voting Age to 16, Followed by Other Localities

The Legal Principle of “Home Rule” Guides where it is More Likely that the Voting Age has been Lowered to 16

Some states allow local jurisdictions to lower the voting age under the legal principle of “home rule”; that is, the ability of local jurisdictions to govern themselves as they see fit so long as local laws do not conflict with the state and federal constitutions. Maryland and California grant broad home rule authority to local jurisdictions, whereas many other states give no authority to their local jurisdictions. In Maryland, state law allows cities to pass a charter amendment with a city council vote, rather than a voter referendum.⁴ In others, the determination of whether localities have home rule authority is open to interpretation.⁵ In Massachusetts, for example, the state legislature is required to approve each local-specific rule that a municipality adopts. Cities that have successfully lowered the voting age have three features in common:

² Douglas, Joshua A. (2020) *Lowering the Voting Age from the Ground Up: The United States’ Experience in Allowing 16-Year Olds to Vote*. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_11

³ Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, The 26th Amendment, <https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/news/26th-amendment> (Accessed: 1 March 2024)

⁴ Generation Citizen, *Lowering the Voting Age for Local Elections in Takoma Park and Hyattsville, MD: A Case Study*, October 2016

⁵ Douglas, Joshua A. (2020) *Lowering the Voting Age from the Ground Up: The United States’ Experience in Allowing 16-Year Olds to Vote*. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_11

- State law allows it, per the home rule doctrine;
- The city council, the voters, or both have approved the measure;
- And the politics supported it.

Maryland Towns are First to Lower Voting Age to 16 for Local Elections

Takoma Park, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. with a population of about 17,000, was the first U.S. city to lower the voting age to 16 for local elections in 2013. According to a Generation Citizen case study of Takoma Park, many community members describe the city as having a unique culture of political engagement due to its proximity to Washington, D.C. The proposal to amend the city's charter was introduced by Councilmember Tim Male, who had learned that Scotland was debating whether to lower the voting age for its 2014 Independence Referendum. Debate on the proposal lasted about eight months and included two public hearings. Youth testimony at public hearings proved influential, according to the Generation Citizen study. The City Council passed the measure to lower the voting age to 16 for local elections by a 6-1 vote; 16- and 17-year-olds are able to vote for mayor and city council members, but school board elections are controlled by the county. Male told *Governing* magazine that critics were "fixated on the idea that 16- and 17-year-olds are too immature to vote."⁶ Maryland already allowed 16-year-olds the opportunity to pre-register to vote, simplifying implementation of the policy.

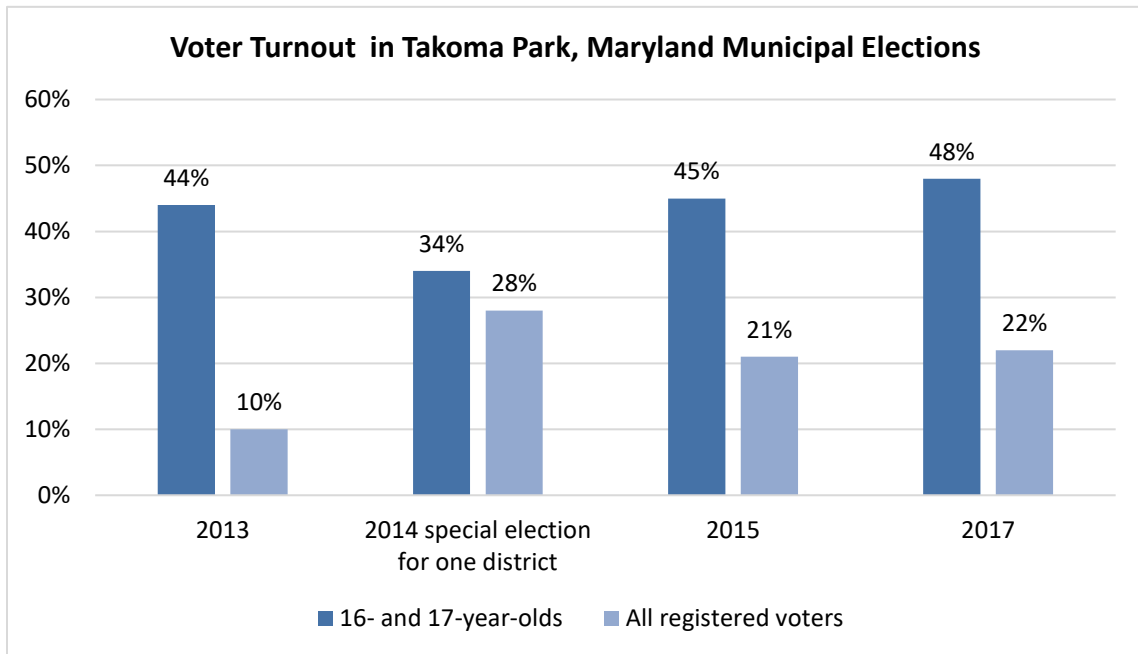
Voter Turnout Higher Among 16- and 17-Year-Olds in Takoma Park, Maryland

The lower voting age went into effect for the mayoral and city council election in 2013. The turnout rate (number voting relative to number registered to vote) for 16- and 17-year-olds was about 44 percent, while the turnout rate among all registered voters citywide was just 10 percent, as shown in Exhibit 1. (Only 134 16- and 17-year-olds were registered out of about 370 eligible, so the total number of youth voters was low, also shown in Exhibit 1⁷). The election had few contested races.

⁶ *Governing*, Takoma Park, Md. Gives 16-Year-Olds the Right to Vote, <https://www.governing.com/archive/gov-takoma-gives-teens-voting-rights.html> (Accessed 1 March 2024)

⁷ Generation Citizen, Lowering the Voting Age for Local Elections in Takoma Park and Hyattsville, MD: A Case Study, October 2016

Exhibit 1: Turnout in Takoma Park, Maryland Local Elections Was Higher Among 16- and 17-Year-Olds after the Voting Age was Lowered to 16



Source: Douglas, Joshua A. (2020) *Lowering the Voting Age from the Ground Up: The United States' Experience in Allowing 16-Year Olds to Vote*. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_11

Raw Number of Youth Voters in Takoma Park, Maryland Municipal Elections Was Relatively Low, With Only About a Third of Eligible Youth Registering to Vote

	Nov. 2013	April 2014 special election for one district	Nov. 2015
Total 16 and 17-year-olds (estimate)	370	NA	370
Registered	134	41	105
Voted	59	14	47
Turnout among registered	44%	34%	45%

Source: Generation Citizen, *Lowering the Voting Age for Local Elections in Takoma Park and Hyattsville, MD: A Case Study*, October 2016

Hyattsville, Greenbelt, Riverdale Park, and Mount Rainer Followed Takoma Park
 Additional Maryland towns followed Takoma Park's lead. The Hyattsville City Council adopted a charter amendment to lower the voting age to 16 in January 2015. According to the Generation

Citizen study, the council voted 7-4 to pass the amendment and was inspired by passionate public comment by young people. Greenbelt, Maryland was the next locality to lower the voting age to 16 in 2018. After the City Council first rejected the proposal in August 2017, young people led a campaign for a nonbinding referendum, which passed in November 2017 with 53 percent of the vote. The City Council then unanimously supported the idea in January 2018, and the change went into effect for the November 2019 election.

Riverdale Park lowered its voting age to 16 in 2018 and Mount Rainer did so in 2021. Glenarden, Maryland lowered its voting age to 16 in 2016, but repealed the law and raised the voting age back to 18 a year later.

Vote16 Local Campaigns

Since Takoma Park, Maryland first lowered its voting age to 16 in 2013, numerous other cities across the country have sought to lower the voting age. Vote16USA is a national campaign, organized by the non-profit organization Generation Citizen, that works to support efforts to lower the voting age to 16 at the local level. We address the cases of Berkeley, Oakland, and Culver City in greater detail in the next section. Below is a list of other localities that have attempted, both successfully and unsuccessfully, to lower the voting age.

- Washington, D.C.: The City Council considered allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in federal elections in 2018, but the legislation was stalled indefinitely.
- Golden, Colorado: In November 2018, voters rejected the measure to give teens the right to vote in local elections by a wide margin, with the yes campaign garnering only 35.6 percent of the vote. This was the only city measure that appeared on the November 2018 ballot.⁸
- Los Angeles, California: In 2019, the Los Angeles Unified School District board voted unanimously (6-0) for a resolution that directs the superintendent to study the feasibility of lowering the voting age to 16 for school board elections for the 2020 election. However, we did not find evidence of further activity in our review.
- Boston, Massachusetts and other localities: In 2022, the Boston City Council supported a home rule petition to the state allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in all municipal elections. A number of Massachusetts cities have sought to lower the voting age, including Ashfield, Brookline, Cambridge, Concord, Lowell, Northampton, Shelburne, Somerville, and Wendell. However, state lawmakers did not pass legislation—dubbed the EMPOWER Act—during the 2019-2020 legislative session to grant municipal governments the power to lower the voting age in their communities without individually seeking home rule petitions.

⁸ Jefferson County Election Results, November 6, 2018 General Election, <https://results.enr.clarityelections.com/CO/Jefferson/91809/Web02.222611/#/>

- Brattleboro, Vermont: State law passed in 2023 amended the city’s charter to lower the voting age to 16 for all local elections.
- Newark, New Jersey: The City Council voted in January 2024 to lower the voting age to 16 for school board elections, as allowed by state law per the state’s home rule law.

State and Federal Action

State bills to lower the voting age have been introduced in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and Virginia but thus far have not prevailed, as detailed in Exhibit 2. A total of 18 states and the District of Columbia allow 16 year-olds to preregister to vote.⁹ Six states set another age at which an individual may preregister, and three states permit preregistration beginning at age 17. In these states, 18-year-olds may vote in the first election after their 18th birthday. If they were not yet 18 at the time of primary elections, they still may vote in the subsequent general election if that occurs after their 18th birthday.

Exhibit 2: State Laws to Lower the Voting Age Have Generally Been Unsuccessful

State	Bill Number	Year Introduced	Description	Status
Calif.	ACA 10	2017	Each measure is a state constitutional amendment to lower the voting age to 17	ACA 10 did not pass the Assembly
	ACA 8	2019		ACA 8 was approved by Assembly (clearing a required two-thirds threshold), but did not receive a vote in the State Senate to be placed on the ballot
	SCA 2	2023		SCA 2 is an active bill
Colo.	HB19-1243	2019	Lowers voting age to 16 for school board elections	HB19-1243 postponed indefinitely by House committee
	HB20-1149	2020		HB20-1149 failed in Appropriations Committee
Hawaii	HB1304	2015	Each bill proposed an amendment to the constitution to lower the voting age to 17 for state and local elections and requires a two-thirds vote in each chamber,	HB1304 not given a committee hearing
	HB1576	2017		HB1576 proposed a working group
	SB4	2019		SB4 was carried over to 2020, passing the Senate but not the House

⁹ Preregistration for Young Voters, National Conference of State Legislatures, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/preregistration-for-young-voters>, Jan. 9, 2024

State	Bill Number	Year Introduced	Description	Status
	HB742	2023	according to the state constitution	HB742 was carried over to 2024 regular session
Mass.	H.583	2013	Lowers voting age to 17 for all cities and towns	H.583 did not pass and was ordered for study
	H.556	2015		H.556 had no further action after hearing
	H.2902	2017		H.2902 did not pass and was ordered for study
	H.657	2019	Lowers voting age to 16 in all cities and towns	H.657 did not pass and was ordered for study
	H.720	2019	Lowers voting age to 16 in cities and towns that vote to do so (Empower Act)	H.720 did not pass
	H.791	2021	Lowers voting age to 16 for all cities and towns	H.791 did not pass and was ordered for study
	H.686	2023		H.686 had no further action after hearing
Va.	HJ 678	2019	Amendment to the constitution to lower the voting age to 16 in local elections	Bills did not get out of committee
	HJ 551	2021		
	HJ 459	2023		

Sources: California Legislative Information, Colorado General Assembly, Hawaii House of Representatives, the 193rd General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and Virginia’s Legislative Information System

A number of efforts have been made to lower the voting age to 16 at the federal level. Most recently, in January 2023, members of Congress reintroduced legislation to replace the 26th Amendment with a new amendment that would allow 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote.

Internationally, the following countries have a voting age under 18:

- Age 16: Argentina, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina (if employed), Belgium (European elections only), Brazil, Croatia (if employed), Cuba, Dominican Republic (if married), Ecuador, Estonia (local elections only), Germany (certain states have lowered the voting age for local elections only), Guernsey, Hungary (if married), Indonesia (if married), Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta (local elections only), Nicaragua, Scotland (non-federal elections only), Serbia (if employed), Slovenia (if employed), and Switzerland (one state for regional elections only).

- Age 17: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), Greece, Indonesia, Israel (for local elections), Seychelles, Sudan, and Timor-Leste (East Timor).¹⁰

California Cities Berkeley and Oakland Successfully Lowered the Voting Age, while Culver City Fell Short

Berkeley and Oakland Lower Voting Age to 16 for School Board Elections . . .

Whereas Maryland localities lowered the voting age for all local elections, California cities Berkeley and Oakland sought to lower the voting age to 16 for school board elections only. In Berkeley, the effort was initiated in September 2015 by a group of students at Berkeley High School. The student activists convinced the City Council to unanimously place a measure on the ballot to lower the voting age to 16 for school board elections. The Berkeley Measure Y1 passed with 70.3 percent of the vote in November 2016. A total of 15 local measures appeared on the ballot of Berkeley residents in November 2016: 11 measures from the City of Berkeley and one measure each from Alameda County, the Berkeley Unified School District, Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, and the Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

Oakland followed in November 2020 with Measure QQ, which lowered the voting age to 16 for school board elections. The measure passed with 67.9 percent of the vote. According to the text of the measure, Measure QQ was estimated to cost “approximately \$7,000 to \$10,000, in years in which Oakland school board elections are held.”

The arguments in favor of these measures centered around the following key themes:

- The need to do something to better engage youth and foster the next generation of responsible participants in our democracy;
- The measure will increase voter turnout, as was found to be the case in Takoma Park, Maryland after the voting age was lowered to 16;
- Sixteen and 17-year-olds already drive, work, pay taxes, help support their families, and can be charged with a felony as an adult.

In Exhibit 3, we provide a list of the public endorsers for the Berkeley and Oakland ballot measures. As can be seen, proponents were a mix of elected officials and pertinent non-profit organization representatives. There were no ballot statements submitted against the measures in Berkeley and Oakland.

¹⁰ National Youth Rights Association, *Voting Age Status Report*, Available at: <https://www.youthrights.org/issues/voting-age/voting-age-status-report/>

Exhibit 3: Public Endorsers for Berkeley and Oakland Vote16 Ballot Measures

Berkeley	Oakland
Public endorsers:	
Nancy Skinner, Former State Assemblymember	Abdi Soltani, Executive Director, ACLU of Northern California
Laurie Capitelli, Berkeley City Councilmember, District 5	Lukas Brekke-Miesner, Executive Director, Oakland Kids First
Jesse Arreguín, Berkeley City Councilmember	Keith Brown, President, Oakland Education Association
Beatriz Leyva-Cutler, Berkeley School Board President	James Harris, School Board Director, Oakland Unified School District
Sheila Jordan, Alameda County Superintendent of Schools Emerita	Rebecca Kaplan, Oakland City Councilmember
Public opponents: none	Public opponents: none

Source: Ballot Statements for Berkeley Measure Y1 (2016) and Oakland Measure QQ (2020)

... But Berkeley and Oakland have Faced Implementation Challenges from the Alameda County Registrar of Voters

The Alameda County Registrar of Voters has not implemented Berkeley Measure Y1 (passed in 2016) or Oakland Measure QQ (2020), according to an August 2022 news report.¹¹ The report notes:

“In the case of youth voting initiatives in Berkeley and Oakland, the measures have stalled at the Registrar’s office, where staff have hired a consultant and an attorney to work out the complexities of issuing ballots in multiple languages to a select group of voters for only one race: school board.” The article notes that the ballots and voting methods must be accessible to people with disabilities. The

“In a perfect world, this would be easy to implement. But we want to make sure we do it right. I completely understand how frustrated people are. We all hoped this would be done sooner. ... We’ve done a lot of work on this already, and it’s going well. We’re very close.”
 Alameda County Deputy Registrar
 Cynthia Cornejo

Alameda County Deputy Registrar said the goal is to integrate the voting rolls, so students who vote in school board races and those who’ve preregistered, which became legal in California in 2017, can seamlessly join the regular rolls once they turn 18.

¹¹ Jones, Carolyn, *Berkeley and Oakland Passed Measures to Let 16- and 17-Year-Olds Participate in School Board Elections. So Why Can’t They Vote Yet?* <https://www.kqed.org/news/11921973/berkeley-and-oakland-passed-measures-to-let-16-and-17-year-olds-participate-in-school-board-elections-so-why-cant-they-vote-yet>, Aug. 8, 2022

The Alameda County Registrar presented the status of implementing youth voting for Berkeley and Oakland at a Special Meeting of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors on March 19, 2024, describing it as running a “second election in parallel.” He said that a new software system to implement the change was completed in December 2023 at a total cost of \$113,000 with additional costs expected for maintenance, and that the next step was to test the new system. Memoranda of Understanding are being developed between the County Registrar of Voters and the City of Berkeley and Berkeley Unified School District as well as with the City of Oakland and Oakland Unified School District to specify cost-sharing. The cost of administering the election ranges from \$9 per voter to as much as \$20 per voter, with the expectation of a total number of new voters in the “low thousands.” After seven plus years since approved by Berkeley voters and three plus years for Oakland, the Registrar of Voters said that he plans to implement youth voting for the November 2024 election.

Culver City Rejected Its Vote16 Ballot Measure for Local Elections by Just 17 Votes in November 2022

A charter city in Los Angeles County, Culver City placed a Vote16 ballot measure (Measure VY) on the November 2022 ballot that would have enabled 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in all local elections. The ballot statement in support of the measure argued that lowering the voting age to 16 will lead to “generations of Culver City youth...transformed into well-informed, lifelong voters.” The ballot statement noted that the cities of Berkeley and Oakland approved similar measures and that turnout among 16-and 17-year-olds was more than double the rate of any other age group in Takoma Park and Hyattsville, Maryland.

In the case of Culver City, a ballot statement against the measure also appeared in the voter guide; it argued that local elections were not “elections with training wheels.” The statement noted that local elections are big elections to choose people to make traffic and parking easier or harder; increase or decrease the police department; and keep Culver City safe from lawless elements. Measure VY to lower the voting age appeared on the ballot alongside another local ballot measure. Ultimately, the Vote 16 measure failed, earning just shy of 50 percent with 49.95 percent and falling just 17 votes short of passage. The list of public endorsers and opponents for Culver City’s measure is shown in Exhibit 4, with most proponents Culver City elected officials. The public opponents consisted of a former mayor and school board president and a retired school administrator.

Exhibit 4: Public Endorsers and Opponents for Culver City Vote16 Ballot Measure

Public Endorsers

Tyler Muir, Culver City High School ASB President

Anthony Prieto, La Fuerza Student Affinity Group President

Daniel Lee, Mayor

Steven M. Levin, President, Culver City School Board

Harden Alexander “Alex” Fisch, Councilmember

Taniah Orr, Black Student Union President

Dr. Kelly Kent, Governing Board Member Culver City Unified School District

Triston Ezidore, Culver City Unified School District School Board Candidate

Paula Amezola, Vice President, Culver City Unified School District Governing Board

Yasmine-Imani McMorrin, Culver City City Council Member

Public Opponents

Steven Gourley, Former Mayor and School Board President

Rosalind H. LaBriola, Retired School Administrator

Source: Ballot Statements for Culver City Measure VY (2022)

San Francisco Vote16 Ballot Measures Fell Short in 2016 and 2020

San Francisco has had two unsuccessful attempts to lower the voting age to 16 for all local elections. The first attempt in 2016 was Proposition F: Youth Voting in Local Elections, which failed with 47.9 percent of the vote. At the time, the Controller noted the following in terms of costs in the ballot statement: “It would have a minimal impact on the cost of government. The amendment could be expected to increase the number of registered voters for municipal elections by up to approximately 1 percent if 16- and 17-year-olds register to vote at the same rate as the general population.” The 2020 ballot measure Proposition G: Youth Voting in Local Elections saw a slightly better result with 49.2 percent in favor, with a similar cost estimate prepared by the Controller. The list of public endorsers and opponents is shown in Exhibit 5.

The proponent’s argument in favor of Propositions F and G in 2016 and 2020 emphasized the following key points:

- The importance of increasing voter participation and strengthening democracy;
- Research shows that the earlier someone casts their first vote, the more likely they are to continue participating as a committed voter;
- On average, 16-year-olds possess the same level of civic knowledge as 21 year-olds, and the San Francisco Board of Education has committed to implementing curriculum to prepare 16- and 17-year-olds for their first election.

The rebuttal to the proponent’s argument noted the following:

- Most 16-year-olds have less caution in spending and selecting candidates than 18-year-olds and are prone to impulsive decision-making;
- Some “egocentric and self-seeking” politicians want voters who will ask fewer questions and blindly follow officeholders.

Exhibit 5: Public Endorsers for San Francisco Vote16 Ballot Measures

Prop. F (2016)	Prop. G (2020)
Proponent’s Argument in Favor of Proposition F:	Proponent’s Argument in Favor of Proposition G:
San Francisco Supervisor John Avalos	Board President, Norman Yee
CA State Senator Mark Leno	Mayor London Breed
Assemblymember David Chiu	Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer
Assemblymember Phil Ting	Supervisor Matt Haney
The San Francisco Democratic Party	Supervisor Rafael Mandelman
San Francisco High School Teachers: Morgan Wallace, Arisa Hiroi, Mark Mosheim, Kaija Tircuit-Peitso, Kevin Woodward, Valerie Ziegler	Supervisor Gordon Mar
Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club	Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Rebuttal to Opponent’s Argument Against Prop. F:	Supervisor Dean Preston
School Board President Matt Haney	Supervisor Hillary Ronen
School Board Vice President Shamann Walton	Supervisor Ahsha Safaí
School Board Commissioner Sandra Lee Fewer	Supervisor Shamann Walton
School Board Commissioner Hydra Mendoza-McDonnell	Rebuttal to Opponent’s Argument Against Prop. G:
School Board Commissioner Emily Murase	Crystal Chan, District 7 Youth Commissioner
School Board Commissioner Rachel Norton	Josh Park, Former District 4 Youth Commissioner
Paid Arguments in Favor:	Paid Arguments in Favor:
The San Francisco Democratic Party	Crystal Chan, District 7 Youth Commissioner
San Francisco High School Teachers: Morgan Wallace, Arisa Hiroi, Mark Mosheim, Kaija Tircuit-Peitso, Kevin Woodward, Valerie Ziegler	Megan Zheng, Vote 16 USA Board member
Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club	Mark Sanchez, President, Board of Education commissioner
	Gabriela Lopez, Vice-President, Board of Education commissioner

Prop. F (2016)	Prop. G (2020)
	Alison Collins, Board of Education commissioner
	Stevon Cook, Board of Education commissioner
	Jenny Lam, Board of Education commissioner
	Faauga Moliga, Board of Education commissioner
	Rachel Norton, Board of Education commissioner
	John Trasvina, California Executive Director, Generation Citizen
	San Francisco Rising
	Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
	Rudy Corpuz, Executive Director, United Playaz
	TODCO (Tenants and Owners Development Corporation)
	John Elberling, President TODCO
	Jon Jacobo, Director of Policy and Community Engagement (TODCO)
	Virginia Grandi, Yerba Buena Advocate
	Bernadette Borja Sy, Board member (TODCO)
	Alan Manalo
	Michael Pacia
	Jane Kim, Former Supervisor, CA Bernie 2020 Director
	Tom Ammiano, former public school teacher, Board of Education President, President of the SF Board of Supervisors, and State Assemblymember
	Kevin Bard and Kayla Williams, Co-Chairs, Co-Chairs, Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club
	Alice B. Toklas LGBTQ Democratic Club
	Jon Jacobo, Latino Task Force
	Gabriela Lopez, Vice President Board of Education Commissioner
	Erick Arguello, President Calle 24 Latino Cultural District

Prop. F (2016)	Prop. G (2020)
	Rose Pak Democratic Club
	Brandon Harami, Chair, SF Berniecrats

Source: Ballot Statements for San Francisco Prop. F (2016) and Prop. G (2020)

Public Opponents for San Francisco Vote16 Ballot Measures

Prop. F (2016)	Prop. G (2020)
Rebuttal to Proponent’s Argument in Favor of Prop. F:	Rebuttal to Proponent’s Argument in Favor of Prop. G and Opponent’s Argument Against Prop. G:
Dr. Terrence Faulkner, J.D., United States President’s Federal Executive Awards Committeeman (1988)	Richie Greenberg
Thomas C. Agee, Concerned Citizen	Paid Argument Against:
Patrick C. Fitzgerald, Past Secretary, San Francisco Democratic Party	San Francisco Republican Party
Opponent’s Argument Against Prop. F:	John Dennis, Chairman
Dr. Terence Faulkner, J.D., Past Regional Citizens Forum Board Member of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)	Delegates: 17 th Assembly District: Christian Foster, Cale Garverick, Krista Garverick, Lisa Remmer 19 th Assembly District: Howard Epstein, Stephanie Jeong, Tom Sleckman, Richard Worner
Paid Argument Against:	San Francisco Taxpayers Association
San Francisco Taxpayers Association	Judge Quentin L. Kopp (Ret)

Source: Ballot Statements for San Francisco Prop. F (2016) and Prop. G (2020)

San Francisco Elections Data

The San Francisco Department of Elections reports on voter registration, turnout, and vote-by-mail ballot returns for every election, and we analyzed data for the 2016 and 2020 elections. On Election Day in November 2016, there were a total of 513,961 voters registered, and 81 percent (or, 414,528) voted. On Election Day in November 2020, 86 percent (or, 449,866 people) cast their ballots out of a total of 521,425 registered voters. In Exhibit 6, we provide election voter registration and election turnout data from November 2014, a historically low turnout election, through the election in November 2022.

Exhibit 6: As Expected, San Francisco Voter Registration and Turnout was Higher in Presidential Election Years between Nov. 2014 and Nov. 2022

	Nov 2014	Nov 2016	Nov 2018	Nov 2020	Nov 2022
	Mid-Term	Presidential	Mid-Term	Presidential	Mid-Term
Voted In Person	94,995	151,437	127,886	38,455	35,595
Voted by Mail	136,219	263,091	244,962	411,411	274,476
Total	231,214	414,528	372,848	449,866	310,071
Voters as % of Total Registration	53%	81%	75%	86%	62%
Total Registration	436,099	513,961	500,390	521,425	497,902

Source: SF Department of Elections

We analyzed precinct-level vote tallies for Proposition F in 2016 and Proposition G in 2020, finding that the same general voting pattern held by neighborhood in the two elections, as can be seen in Exhibit 7. We note that polling conducted in early 2016 prior to the 2016 election found that Proposition F would earn just 36 percent support among all likely voters.¹² As noted above, actual support for Proposition F in the November 2016 election was 47.9 percent.

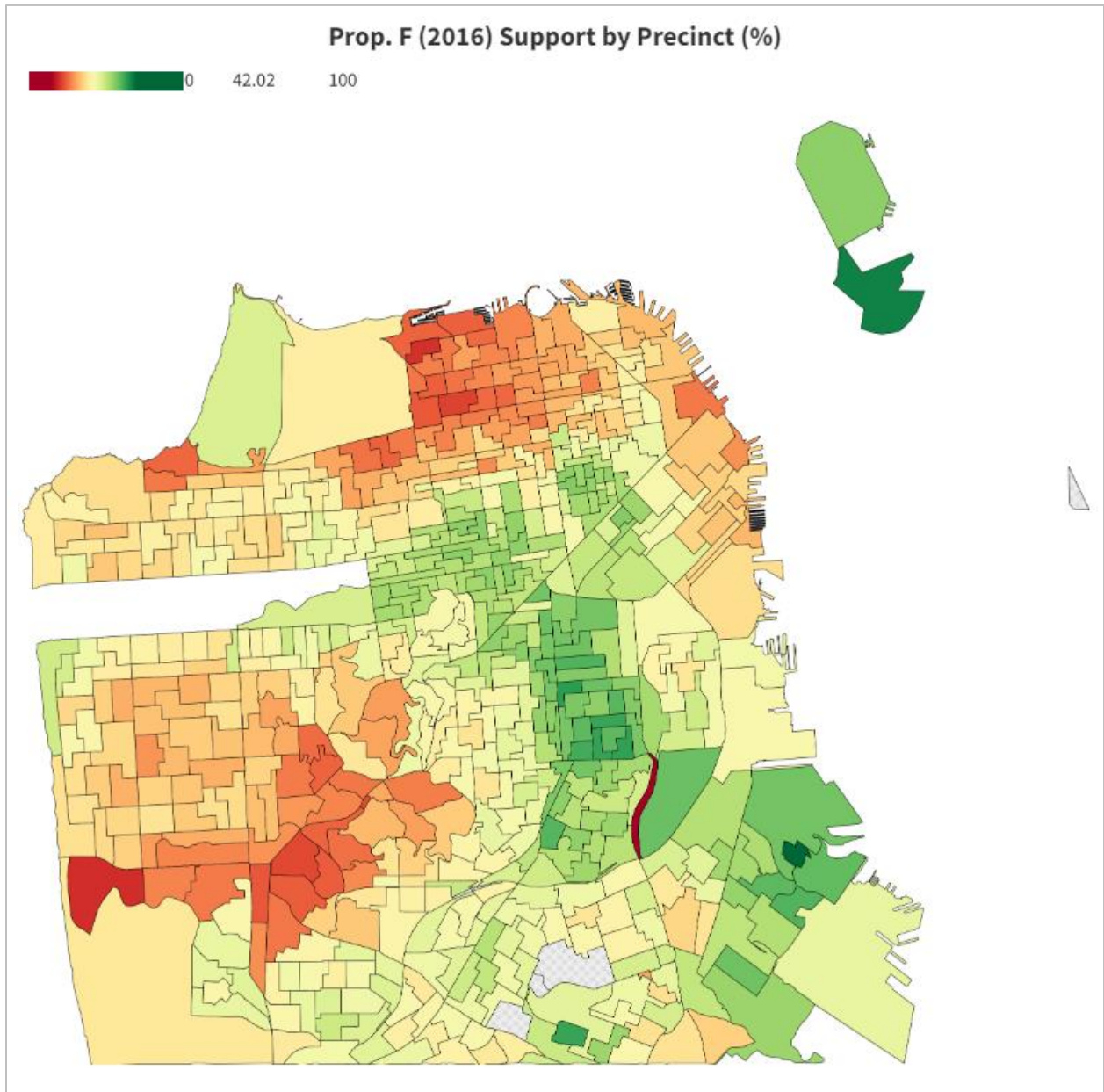
In 2016, Proposition F performed worst in the following neighborhoods: Excelsior, Lake Merced, Marina/Pacific Heights, Sea Cliff/Presidio Heights, Sunset, and Twin Peaks West.¹³ Conversely, the neighborhoods of the Mission and Bayview/Hunter’s Point had more than one precinct each in which voters supported Proposition F by a margin of 60 percent or more. In 2020, Proposition G performed better overall, earning 49.2 percent. In that year, fewer neighborhoods had more than one precinct in which the measure earned less than 30 percent support. The neighborhoods of Marina/Pacific Heights, Lake Merced, and Twin Peaks West continued to strongly reject the measure, whereas the following neighborhoods had more than one precinct that supported the measure by 60 percent or more: Bayview/Hunter’s Point, Civic Center/Downtown, Haight Ashbury, Mission, Bernal Heights, SOMA, Upper Market/Eureka Valley, and the Western Addition.

¹² Douglas, Joshua A. (2020) *Lowering the Voting Age from the Ground Up: The United States’ Experience in Allowing 16-Year Olds to Vote*. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_11

¹³ We define worst performance as neighborhoods where Proposition F received less than 30 percent support in more than one precinct.

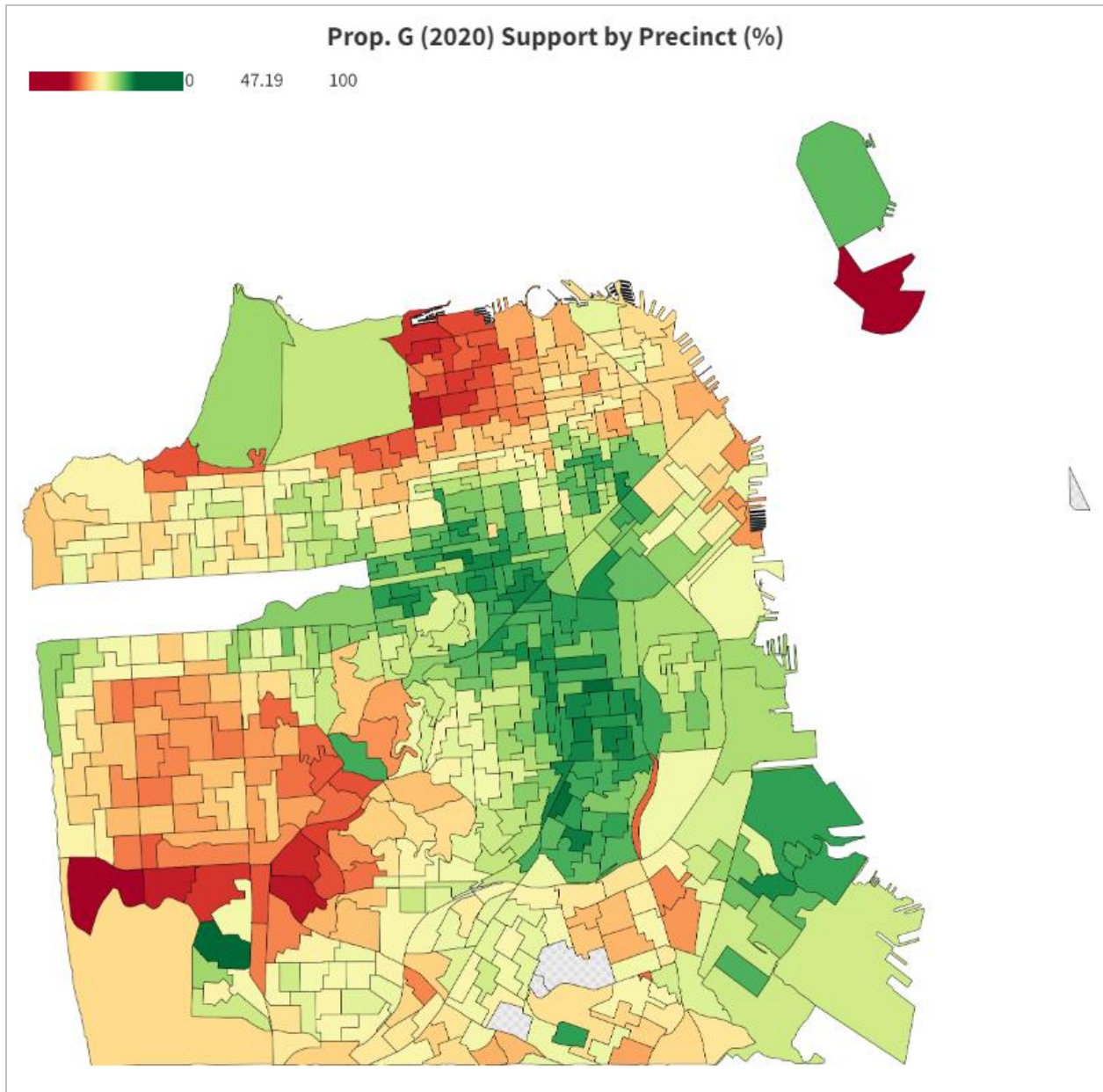
A total of 116 precincts had vote tallies between 45 to 49.99 percent in 2020 spanning neighborhoods across the City: Bayview/Hunter’s Point, Chinatown, Civic Center/Downtown, Diamond Heights, Excelsior, Ingleside, Inner Sunset, Lake Merced, Laurel Heights/Anza, Marina/Pacific Heights, North Embarcadero, Noe Valley, Portola, Potrero Hill, Richmond, South Bernal Heights, Sea Cliff/Presidio Heights, SOMA, Sunset, Twin Peaks West, Visitacion Valley, and the Western Addition.

Exhibit 7: Prop. F (2016) and Prop. G (2020) Precinct-Level Results Show Similar Neighborhood Voting Pattern



Note: Precincts shaded white and gray do not have a reported vote total.

Source: Data SF and SF Department of Elections; BLA analysis



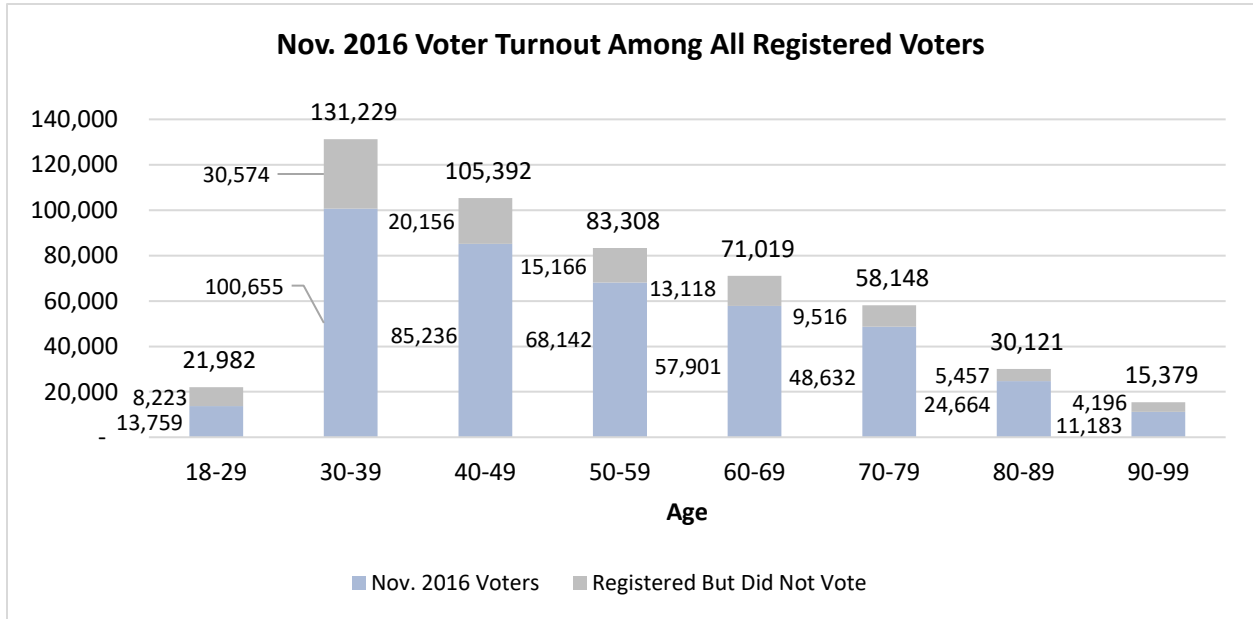
Note: Precincts shaded white and gray do not have a reported vote total.

Source: Data SF and SF Department of Elections; BLA analysis

We requested additional voter registration and vote-by-mail data from the San Francisco Department of Elections to better understand the demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, language, and supervisorial district) of people who voted in the November 2016 and November 2020 elections. For the November 2016 and 2020 elections, the largest share of voters was in their thirties, as shown below. Voters between the ages of 18 and 29, or those closest in age to 16- and 17-year-olds, had the lowest turnout in 2016 at 63 percent. The average turnout in 2016 for all other age groups was 80 percent.

The raw number of 18- to 29-year-olds voting in 2020 increased more than threefold over 2016, as can be seen comparing Exhibits 8 and 9. Consequently, the turnout rate also increased from 63 percent in 2016 to 79 percent in 2020. Turnout was also higher among all other age groups, averaging 86 percent. According to the 2022 American Community Survey, a total of approximately 12,000 16- and 17-year-olds reside in San Francisco.¹⁴

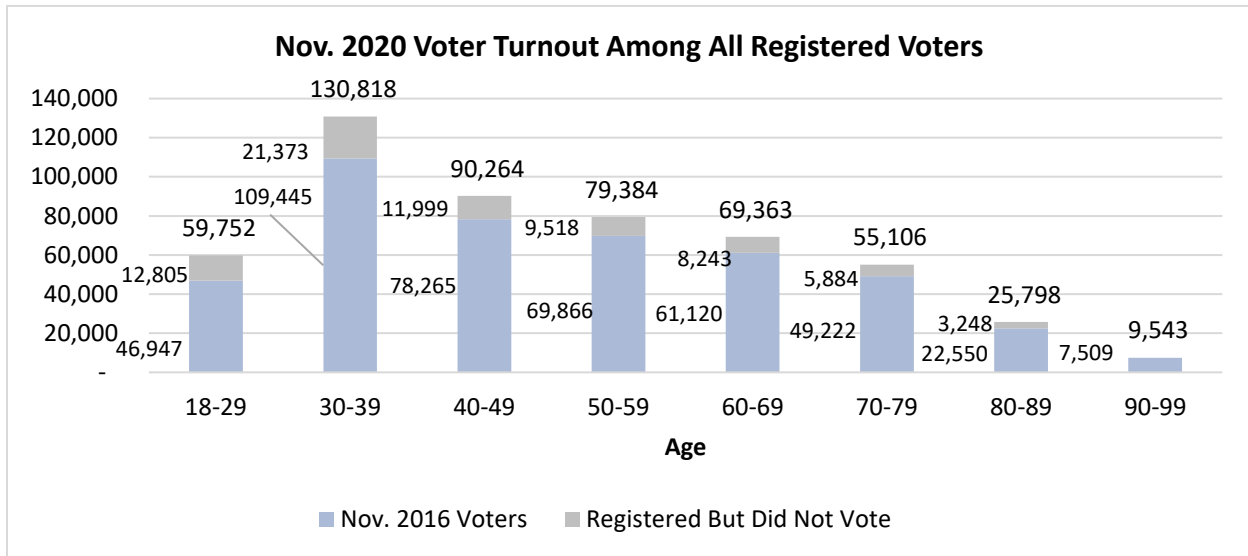
Exhibit 8: 45 Percent of San Francisco Voters in 2016 were in their Thirties and Forties



Source: SF Department of Elections

¹⁴ United States Census Bureau, *2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables*, S0101 Age and Sex, Available at: <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S0101?g=050XX00US06075>

Exhibit 9: 42 Percent of San Francisco Voters in 2020 were in their Thirties and Forties



Source: SF Department of Elections

Academic Research and Maryland Experience Suggest Lowering Voting Age is an Encouraging Means of Establishing Higher Turnout

The Takoma Park experience shows that lowering the voting age to 16 can increase voter turnout and civic engagement among youth. According to the Generation Citizen study, teachers say they discuss Takoma Park’s lower voting age when teaching about enfranchisement and the role of citizens in democracy. Further, when the charter amendment was being considered in 2013, the school newspaper covered the issue and students organized voter registration drives at their school. The lowered voting age also cultivated greater civic engagement of youth by candidates. The study notes that Takoma Park Mayor Kate Stewart hired a 17-year-old campaign manager, talked with students at the local high school, ran ads in the school newspaper, and organized an event in which high school bands played music and students could meet with local politicians.

We reviewed the academic literature on the subject of voter turnout when the voting age is lowered to 16, finding that there is a “first-time voting boost” phenomenon and that electoral turnout is higher for 16- and 17-year-olds than turnout of older first-time voters (18 to 20). For example, in a 2014 study of turnout in Austria after the voting age was lowered to 16, turnout

among 16- and 17-year-olds was 64.2 percent and thus significantly higher than turnout of 18- to 20-year-olds of 56.3 percent.¹⁵

Policy Options

It is a policy choice for the Board of Supervisors as to whether it wishes to pursue a third attempt to lower the voting age to 16 for local elections. The academic literature and the experience in at least one jurisdiction, Takoma Park, Maryland, indicates that lowering the voting age leads to higher turnout and civic engagement among youth. Given the electoral success of lowering the voting age for school board elections in Berkeley and Oakland, the Board of Supervisors may wish to consider the option of lowering the voting age for school board elections only as a means of engaging youth and building greater support for expanding voting to municipal elections at a later time.

¹⁵ Zeglovits, Eva, Aichholzer, Julian (2014) *Are People More Inclined to Vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the First-Time Voting Boost Among 16- to 25-Year-Olds in Austria*. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17457289.2013.872652> (Accessed: 1 March 2024).