

2017. RCV by the Numbers - St. Paul

By every measure, Ranked Choice Voting earned voters' support in the 2017 Saint Paul municipal election. The numbers tell the story and detail how RCV overwhelmingly met voters' expectations.

SUMMARY

- 83% of voters found RCV simple to use
 - 76% of voters ranked their ballots
 - 72% of voters said they like and want to continue using RCV
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KEY FINDINGS

- Mayor Melvin Carter became the first African American mayor of Saint Paul. He won on the first ballot by building a broad coalition of core support, receiving 51 percent of all ballots cast.
- RCV ensured more diverse choice. This year saw the most demographically diverse slate of mayoral candidates in St. Paul's history. Among the top five candidates, two were people of color and one was a woman.
- Turnout increased significantly. Turnout for the 2017 city-wide mayoral race was 61,646, the city's highest turnout for a municipal election in 18 years.
- A vast majority of voters chose to rank. Voters demonstrated a deep and thorough understanding of Ranked Choice Voting with 76 percent of voters ranking at least two choices.
- RCV was easy for voters. An impressive 83 percent of polled voters said they found RCV simple to use, including 83 percent of people of color. This was remarkably consistent across different levels of income, age and education, which counters the argument from critics that RCV might be too much for some voters to understand. A high percentage of voters indicated that RCV was easy or somewhat easy, including:
 - 76 percent of voters 65 and older
 - 80 percent of people earning less than \$50,000 a year
 - 77 percent of individuals without a college degree
- RCV familiar to voters. Voters came to the polls on Election Day ready to rank their vote. An impressive 69 percent said they were "very or somewhat familiar with RCV before going to the polls." This strong finding demonstrates the importance and success of the outreach and education efforts undertaken by FairVote Minnesota in partnership with community organizations and Ramsey County Elections.

- RCV fostered more civil campaigns. An overwhelming 90.4 percent of polled voters felt that candidates did not spend most of their time criticizing opponents. Ninety percent of voters were also satisfied with the candidates for mayor which may be due in part to the high level of civility the voters experienced. The one negative mailing that was produced by an independent expenditure group on behalf of one of the candidates backfired.
- Voters want to keep RCV. Voters like and wish to continue using RCV. In fact, 72 percent of all Saint Paul voters said they want to continue to use RCV in future municipal elections and 62 percent would like to see it used for state elections. This is consistent across a wide range of Saint Paul voters who would like to see RCV continue in Saint Paul, including:
 - 71 percent of voters earning less than \$50,000 annually
 - 60 percent of those without a college degree
 - 60 percent of voters age 65 and older

Prepared by FairVote Minnesota Foundation, December 2017

Sources:

- *Election results provided by Ramsey County elections at <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/elections-voting/results-maps-archives/election-results>*
- *Exit Poll conducted by Edison Research. The poll was conducted in-person at 12 randomly selected voting precincts among 962 Saint Paul voters, using a weighted design to ensure an accurate representation of all voters. The margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level for the full Saint Paul sample of voters is +/-5.*

Top 5

Ranked Choice Voting

Points — to Share —

From the 2017
St. Paul Municipal
Election

1

Polled Voters who found
Ranked Choice Voting
simple:

Including:
83%

83%

of Voters of Color, finally putting to rest the concern
that communities of color would find RCV difficult

2

Voters
who
ranked
their
ballots:

76%

3

Voters
who
turned
out:

30%

(Highest in 18 years)

4

Voters who want to
continue using RCV

In Municipal Elections:

72%

Statewide:

62%

5



2017
saw the
election of

**Saint Paul's
FIRST African
American Mayor**