

## NEWS / REGION / STATE

# Where the votes are in NY Democratic primaries

Andrew M. Cuomo and challenger Cynthia Nixon will be looking to mobilize their supporters for the Sept. 13 Democratic contest. See where the votes have come from in the past.



Gov. Andrew Cuomo and challenger Cynthia Nixon will look to mobilize their supporters especially in New York City as well as downstate counties for the Sept. 13 primary. Photo Credit: Louis Lanzano; Marisol Diaz-Gordon

**By Yancey Roy**

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The Democratic candidates for governor have spent most of their campaign time in the five boroughs of New York City for good reason: It's where the votes are.

In primary after primary, high turnout or low, the city steadily has been the source of more than half the votes in statewide Democratic contests. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and challenger Cynthia Nixon will be looking to mobilize their supporters, especially in the city as well as downstate counties for the Sept. 13 Democratic contest.

Here are five things to keep in mind about turnout as the campaigns move to the homestretch:

## **New York City supplies more than half the vote for statewide Democratic primaries.**

And it has been consistent: It delivered 52 percent of the vote in the 2014 Democratic gubernatorial primary, 52 percent in the 2010 attorney general primary, and 53 percent in the 2006 gubernatorial primary.

Digging a bit deeper, recent history shows Manhattan and Brooklyn accounting for the largest number of Democrats going to the polls in recent contests. Brooklyn accounted for 17 percent of the Democratic votes cast in 2014; Manhattan, 14 percent (although it was tops in 2010 with 17 percent). Queens has been a reliable third borough, with around 12 percent.

Some observers expect the city's proportion to stay about the same this year.

"The regional percentages tend to hold regardless of whether it's an overall low or high or medium turnout," said Bruce Gyory, a longtime political consultant and lobbyist.

## Concentration of votes

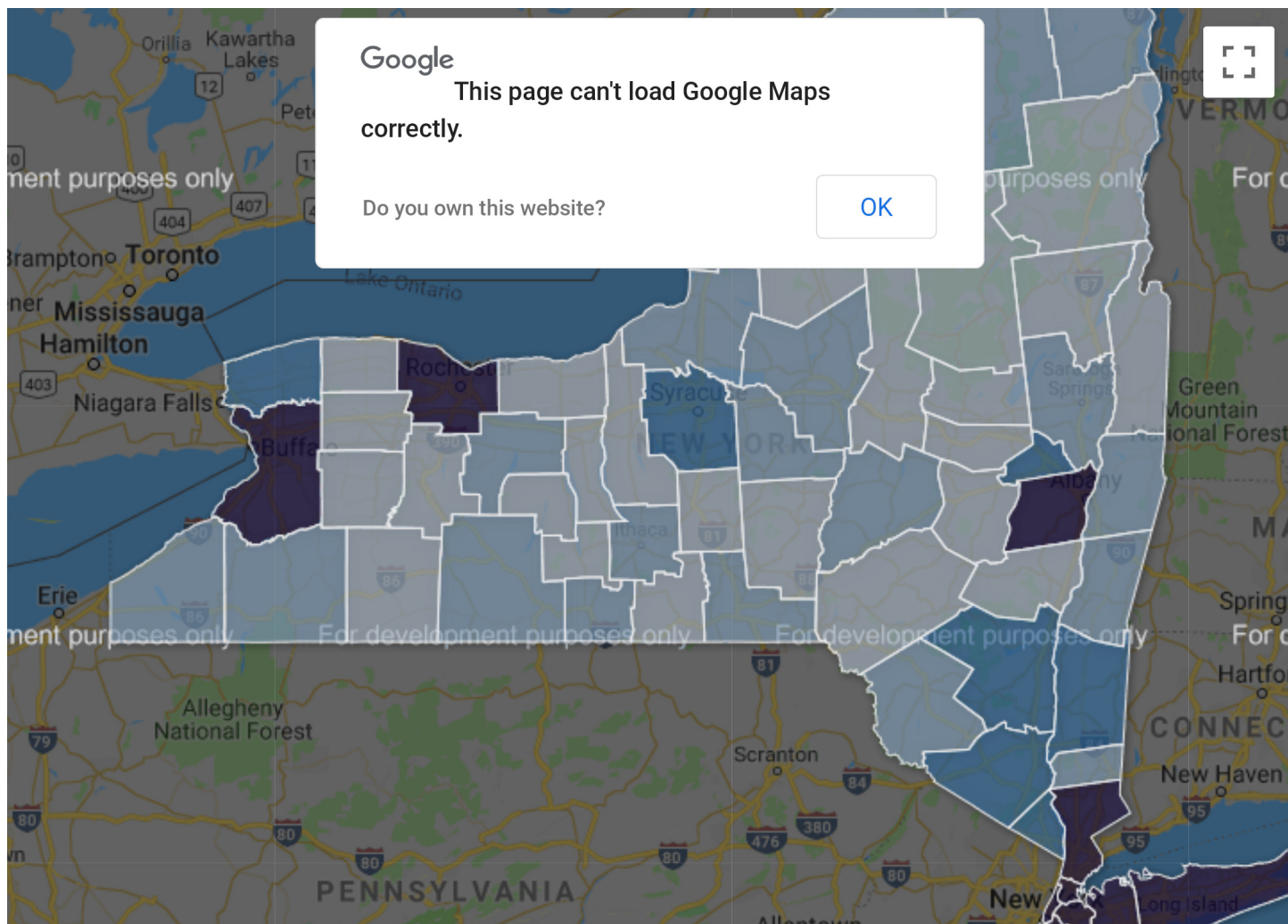
The number of Democratic primary votes in each county in 2014.

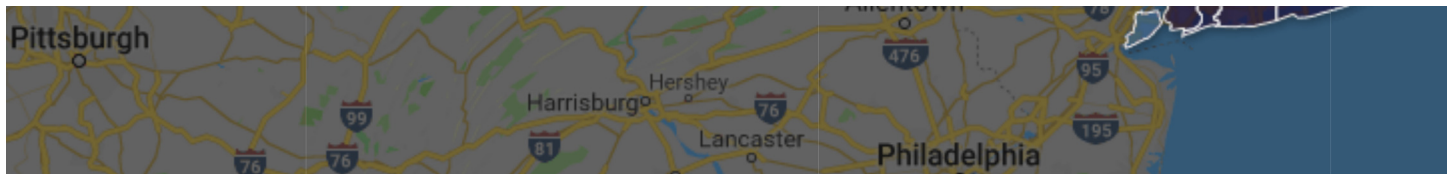
Up to 1,000

Up to 5,000

Up to 15,000

Up to 97,000





## Outside of New York City, Erie County (Buffalo) supplies the next biggest bloc of Democratic voters. Long Island and Westchester typically follow Erie.

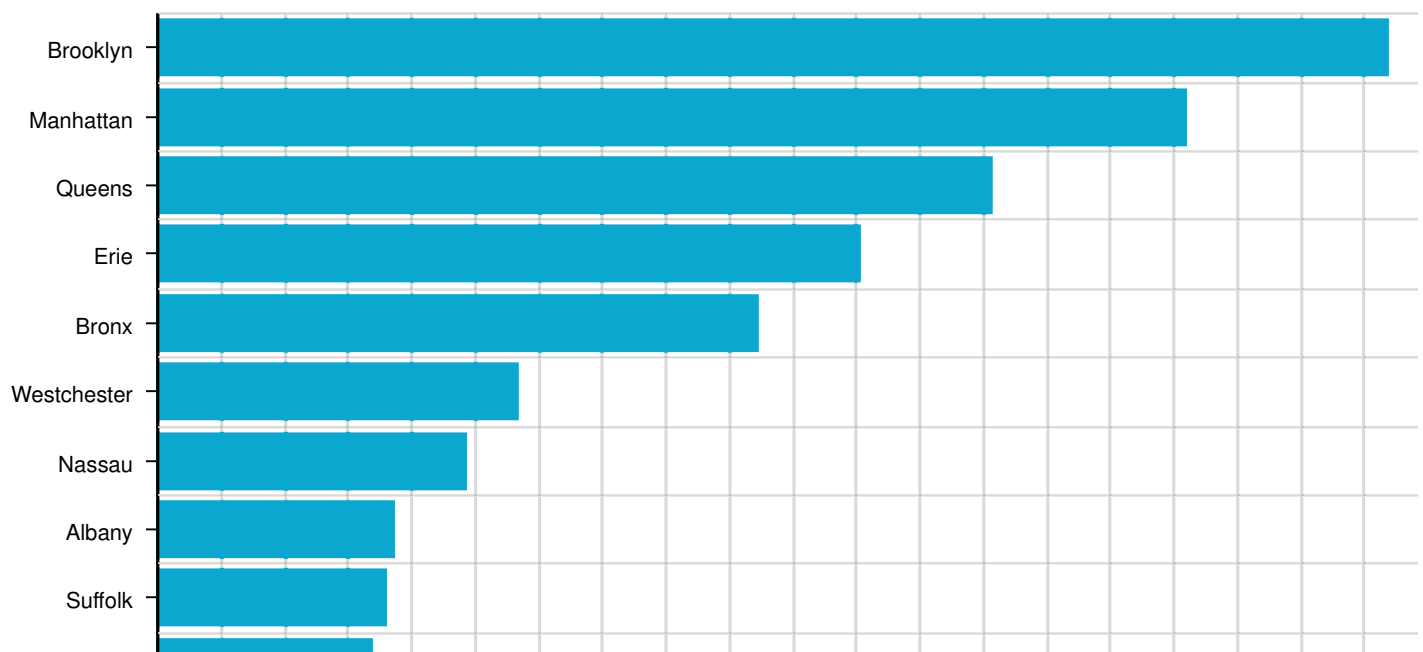
About 55,000 Erie County Democrats voted in the 2014 primary, or about 10 percent of the statewide total. In 2010, Erie accounted for 9 percent of the total.

Likely because of a “hometown” candidate (then-Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice), Nassau accounted for 7 percent of the Dem turnout in 2010. But it dropped to 4 percent in 2014.

Suffolk County has been 4 percent or less of turnout; Westchester County, about 5 percent. New York City combined with Long Island and Westchester has accounted for 65 percent to 68 percent of the party turnout in the last two statewide primaries.

## Where the votes are

The Top 10 counties for number of votes cast in the 2014 Democratic race for governor.



## **Congressional primaries in June saw a bump in turnout. Will that Democratic enthusiasm carry over into races that don't directly touch on Washington?**

It's a relatively small sample size, but the handful of congressional districts that had Democratic primaries in 2016 and 2018 all saw higher turnouts in June — including the 1st Congressional District on the eastern end of Long Island. Analysts said this fits with anecdotes about progressive Democrats becoming more energized about voting since the election of President Donald Trump.

“What I'm seeing is all sorts of groups — not just candidates — working to get out the vote,” said K.T. Tobin, a political scientist at SUNY New Paltz. But she cautioned there's no way to tell yet whether turnout will be boosted: “Certainly the results are to be determined.”

## **Turnout in statewide Democratic primaries has decreased steadily.**

About 16 percent of active Democratic enrollees participated in the 2006 gubernatorial primary, about 12.5 percent in the 2010 attorney general primary, and 10.7 percent in the 2014 gubernatorial primary.

## **Democratic enrollment in New York hasn't increased since Trump was elected; in fact, it's decreased.**

That's based on spring enrollment numbers and, obviously, wouldn't include the results of any summertime registration drives. Still, it seems an enrollment surge Democrats hoped for hasn't happened in the Empire State.

In fall 2016, there were 5.66 million enrolled Democrats in the state. By April 2018, the number dipped to 5.62 million. The overall number of registered voters is down too, likely signaling that elections officials have followed through on plans to become more efficient at purging voters who have died,

moved out of state or otherwise become ineligible.