



Settlement Houses
GET OUT THE VOTE!
2021 Report

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Executive Summary

For the past century, UNH and our member settlement houses have fought for progressive change and social justice. Today, one of the most important issues we face is the ongoing threat to our democracy. To reverse the national trend of voter suppression efforts, UNH remains committed to lifting the voices of communities, supporting settlement houses to inspire and mobilize their neighbors to vote, and building the collective power of the settlement house movement.

Since 2017, UNH's Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) campaign aims to support our member settlement houses to build nonpartisan political power in their communities by informing and engaging New Yorkers to have a more participatory voice in New York City. In 2021, UNH worked with 15 settlement houses in our network to increase voter turnout among historically low turnout populations in critically important local elections through creative, non-partisan tactics such as pledge-to-vote cards, virtual phone banking, peer-to-peer texting, and community events. To evaluate the impact of these efforts, UNH utilized voter outreach technology and data analysis to determine the efficacy of GOTV outreach efforts on voter turnout compared to the citywide turnout in municipal elections. This report provides a detailed overview of the methods and results that UNH used in its 2021 Get Out The Vote project with 15 settlement houses to determine that individuals are more likely to vote when contacted by a settlement house.

UNH's analysis of 2021 settlement house GOTV efforts demonstrate that settlement houses are effective at getting people to the polls. Key findings include:

- In the 2021 primary election, voters who pledged to vote with settlement houses were nearly twice as likely to vote (41%) versus average citywide turnout rate.
- Citywide turnout was 22% for the primary. Every settlement house exceeded that average turnout figure in the primary election, with an aggregate difference of 19% between the settlement house universe of voters and average citywide turnout rate.
- In the 2021 general election, voters who pledged to vote with settlement houses were again twice as likely to vote (43%) versus average citywide turnout (20%).
- Citywide turnout was 20% in the 2021 general election. All settlement houses exceeded the average citywide turnout rate, with an aggregate difference of 23% between the settlement house universe of voters and average citywide turnout rate.



Executive Summary

This report also makes recommendations about best practices for other nonprofit organizations wishing to carry out similar voter engagement work in their communities. Nonprofit organizations like settlement houses – that are deeply embedded in their communities, employ staff from the neighborhoods they serve, and offer an array of services across multiple generations – are ideal places to house GOTV efforts. Due to their deep ties in their neighborhoods and ability to connect with people on local issues of importance, these organizations (and other local nonprofit organizations) are worth investing in when it comes to increasing voter turnout in New York City and beyond. Recommendations include:

- Designate a staff person to lead the work for your organization;
- Ensure that data collection is standardized before doing any outreach;
- Set clear and attainable goals for your work; and
- Utilize social media to engage community members around voting.

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Introduction

United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH) is a policy and social change organization with a mission to promote and strengthen the settlement house movement’s neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of low- and moderate-income New Yorkers and the communities in which they live. UNH’s network today includes 45 settlement houses – 40 of which are based within the five boroughs of New York City – that together reach over 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

Through a non-partisan lens, UNH is committed to raising the voices of more New Yorkers to participate in government and voting in partnership with its network of settlement houses. UNH’s Get Out The Vote (GOTV) Project aims to increase voter participation among historically low turnout populations by building the capacity of our member settlement houses and their staff to lead successful voter education and engagement efforts in their communities. UNH’s reason for engaging in this work is two-fold.

UNH believes it is good for New York's neighborhoods and for democracy in general when all citizens are engaged in their communities and feel empowered to make their voices heard via the ballot box. It is also crucial for nonprofit organizations to be part of the political process and to build political power. Government makes decisions every day that deeply impact nonprofit organizations and the individuals they serve. Registering and inspiring voters is a key way to build political power and demonstrate the organization's impact and effectiveness in a neighborhood beyond just service delivery, and to show that individuals are engaged in policy issues that impact them.

UNH first launched this work in 2017 with support from Community Votes in order to cultivate and sustain voter education and inspiration practices throughout the settlement house network. In this initial GOTV Project, UNH provided customized training and materials to seven settlement houses, along with \$1,000 mini-grants in support of staff time and organizational resources. By continuing to run voter engagement initiatives in the following years, UNH was successful in gradually expanding the number of settlement houses that participate while also increasing the mini-grants to \$3,000. Today, UNH's GOTV cohort includes 20 settlement houses that are working across New York City and Syracuse to engage and inspire New Yorkers to vote in the 2022 New York State elections.

Having successfully expanded the scale and scope of this work to engage more settlement houses and reach new voters, UNH wanted to test the theory that nonprofit voter engagement has a positive effect on turnout in local elections. Building off of UNH's voter engagement work over the past four years, UNH's goals for the 2021 GOTV Project were to (1) implement a data-driven approach to track the voting behaviors of individuals that settlement houses contact through GOTV activities; (2) analyze voter contact data from settlement houses to determine the efficacy of this work; and (3) develop best practices for settlement houses that do not have dedicated funding for GOTV to embed voter engagement into daily programs and activities.

By analyzing the voting behaviors among the individuals who were contacted by a settlement house staff person, UNH found that voters who received an election-related reminder from a settlement house turned out to vote at a rate about 20% higher than comparable registered voters in New York City.

The following report provides a detailed overview of the methods and results that UNH used to determine the efficacy of settlement house-based voter outreach efforts, followed by recommendations about best practices for other nonprofit organizations wishing to carry out similar voter engagement work in their communities.

Background

In 2021, New York City conducted municipal elections for all locally elected positions. This was a consequential election because, due to term limits there were many open seats and New Yorkers were going to the polls to elect a new Mayor, new Comptroller, and many new City Councilmembers and Borough Presidents. 2021 also saw the first use of a ranked choice voting system in New York City's primary elections, where voters would rank their top candidates instead of selecting one. If no candidate received a majority of the vote initially, ballots would be re-ranked in support of the second candidate, and so forth. Given these changes, it was crucial that UNH and other organizations engage in nonpartisan voter education and mobilization work to ensure that voters were comfortable and confident heading to the polls.

UNH worked with 15 settlement houses to lead nonpartisan voter education and engagement campaigns throughout the five boroughs of New York City. UNH provided each settlement house with a \$3,000 mini-grant in recognition of staff time and organizational commitment to incorporating voter education and registration into daily programs, activities, and communications.

Given limited funding, UNH used a competitive application process to determine the cohort of settlement houses that would formally participate. Therefore, the data in this report is limited to the neighborhoods in which settlement house GOTV projects took place in 2021.

To support these settlement houses seeking to build their civic engagement capacity, UNH organized training opportunities, events, and monthly meetings to facilitate information sharing and networking among the growing pool of settlement house staff committed to this work over a 10 month period. UNH also provided individual coaching and resources to settlement house staff who were leading civic engagement activities, along with facilitating a GOTV Working Group for peer learning and support among settlement house staff.

In order to better understand the impact of settlement house-based voter engagement, UNH worked with a GOTV data consultant to collect and track voter contact information using the Voter Activation Network (VAN), an online database that allows users to view the voter file and measure the efficacy of both UNH's training and support and settlement house voter outreach efforts. In addition to providing data analysis, the consultant trained settlement house staff on how to properly enter and use VAN data for individual voter outreach efforts such as virtual phone banking, peer-to-peer texting, voter registration drives, and other community events, and produced a toolkit of resources for data- and technology-related protocols to implement in the next round of UNH's GOTV project.

Settlement House GOTV Tactics

Because settlement houses are deeply-embedded, trusted, neighborhood-based organizations that employ staff from the neighborhoods they serve and offer multiple services across multiple generations, they are ideal places to provide pathways to civic engagement and voting. The staff of settlement houses connect with individuals and families in numerous ways – when parents arrive to pick up their children from early childhood education classes or after-school programs, when adults participate in an art or English language class, when in the gym or swimming pool, during lunch at the senior center or at the food pantry, and as the operator of community centers in New York City Housing Authority complexes. In addition to having many options for communicating directly with voting-eligible adults, settlement houses integrate the value and importance of voting and civic participation in after-school and early learning programs, inspiring new generations of civically engaged young adults.

Pledge-to-vote cards, or “pledge cards,” are a proven tactic that allow 501c3 nonprofit organizations like settlement houses to mobilize voters in the communities they serve. Pledge cards act as both an action step for the voter and an opportunity for settlement houses to build a list of potential voters in their community. UNH provides settlement houses with customized pledge cards in digital and physical formats, which allows these hybrid outreach methods to reinforce each other.

The physical pledge card (pictured below) is designed to be printed front to back so that the staff at settlement houses can collect contact information from potential voters in their neighborhoods while simultaneously distributing community-tailored reminders about the importance of voting in the upcoming elections. The section with election information can be torn off and given to the potential voters, and settlement houses can capture these individuals’ contact information so that they can be sent reminders to vote.

 **I Pledge to Vote**
on 11/2/21

Pledge to vote to make your voice heard on the issues you care about. Election day is November 2, 2021.

First Name: _____	Want reminders by text? <input type="checkbox"/>
Last Name: _____	Want updates from Educational Alliance? <input type="checkbox"/>
City: _____	Visit vote.org to register to vote and request a mail-in ballot. <input type="checkbox"/>
State: _____	
Zip Code: _____	
Phone: _____	
Email: _____	

Our organization is not affiliated with any political party or candidate. Your information will never be sold to a third party.

Settlement houses used a variety of tactics to reach, educate, and motivate voters. They distributed and collected pledge cards, and staff and volunteers from settlement houses called their neighbors in ten different phone banking events, targeting voters by zip code.

UNH found that the most successful approaches incorporated GOTV work into existing programs in the community. Some examples of successful tactics include:

- 1 Hudson Guild ran a Vaccine Hub in Chelsea, Manhattan, where staff used the 15-minute period when community members were waiting after receiving a COVID vaccination to have one-on-one conversations with potential voters about the upcoming elections, and have them sign a pledge-to-vote card. Community members also had the opportunity to work with a Hudson Guild employee who would help them fill out and mail in their voter registration form.
- 2 Mosholu Montefiore Community Center staff attended New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) tenant association meetings at program sites throughout the Bronx to provide community members with information about candidates, deadlines for mailing in vote, and polling sites. MMCC also created a QR code to make it easier for residents to access the form. These QR codes were paired with a PSA highlighting local issues and topics that impact the communities MMCC serves.
- 3 Hamilton-Madison House (seen below) placed flyers with details on election dates and polling locations in pantry bags prior to distribution throughout the Lower East Side. Staff also used the mini-grant from UNH to provide community members with farmer's market produce, which was a draw to get people to talk with staff about the upcoming elections, sign a pledge card, and/or register to vote.



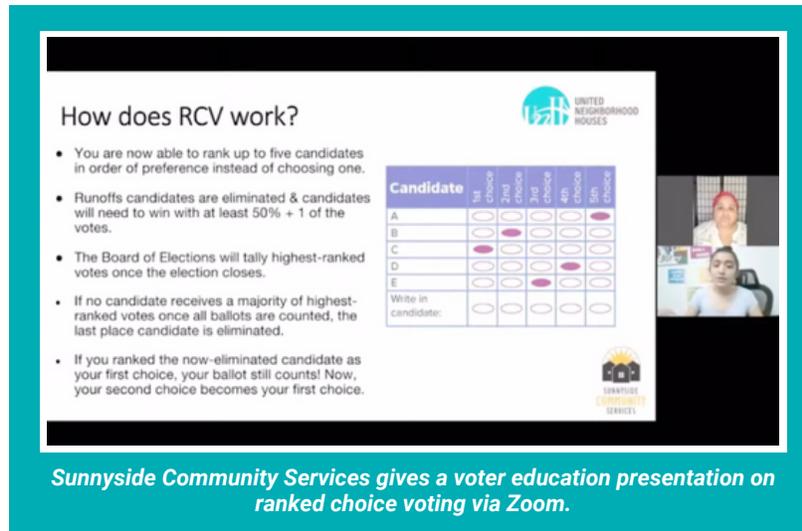
Hamilton Madison House Lower East Side outreach efforts

- 4 East Side House Settlement created a civic advocacy curriculum that was shared with frontline staff at Bronx Haven High School and Mott Haven Community High School to reach young adults. The curriculum highlighted the civil rights movement, the history of enfranchisement, and the importance of voting.

- 5 Queens Community House worked in Jackson Heights, Corona, and Forest Hills to incorporate voting-related workshops into ongoing adult literacy classes, partnering with program staff to integrate voting information into lesson plans both leading up to and following the elections. QCH also implemented an email blast strategy which was calendared out around important dates and deadlines leading up to the primary and general elections. Emails going out to the full staff list included links to online voter registration forms, polling site locators, candidate information and ballot proposal education.
- 6 University Settlement hosted on-site tabling at program locations on the Lower East Side, speaking to dozens of program participants and community members about voting. Staff and volunteers set up tables with voter registration forms, pledge cards, and other election materials at multiple community events and program sites, including Village View's annual NORC fair, their senior center during the Older Adults lunches, Campos Plaza during student afterschool pick up, and during their early childhood program pick-up.

In addition, a large focus for settlement houses was to educate voters on NYC's new ranked choice voting system (RCV) that was being used for the first time citywide in the June 2021 primaries. Some examples of this include:

- 1 Educational Alliance in the Lower East Side ran an event called "Get the Scoop on Ranked Choice Voting" which gave out ice cream and provided community members with information on how to fill out an RCV ballot. Leading up to the primary election, staff also organized two City Council candidate forums, followed by a Mayoral candidate forum focused on access to technology, which allowed for an open dialogue between community members and candidates.
- 2 Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation in Far Rockaway, Queens held hybrid Voter Education events, incorporating Zoom meetings into in-person programming to educate NYCHA residents about RCV. Multiple RCV informational sessions were held in OBCDC's Women of Empowerment Group weekly meetings, which allowed staff and community members to educate and inspire their neighbors to vote using the new ranked choice voting system.
- 3 Sunnyside Community Services in Sunnyside and Elmhurst, Queens held two candidate forums for local city council races, which reached over 1,000 potential voters and included short trainings about RCV. Staff at SCS livestreamed the forums on Facebook and Zoom with simultaneous Spanish translation.



- Grand St. Settlement reached voters in Brooklyn by including content about the importance of voting during monthly resident association meetings at NYCHA Bushwick-Hylan. Staff working at Bushwick-Hylan followed up these meetings with roundtable discussions that were open to other community members and provided training on RCV and the upcoming elections.
- University Settlement brought RCV education to donors and supporters during a 2021 Spring Virtual Gala event in the form of a short “advocacy bootcamp,” where staff did an RCV demonstration and answered questions from participants about the new voting format.

Methods

All analysis that follows was performed using the Voter Activation Network (VAN), an online tool used by political campaigns, labor unions, and 501c(3) nonprofits with the goal of analyzing and contacting voters on the voter file. VAN’s database contains voting history, contact information about voters from when they registered, and activist codes, which are tags that UNH can use to track constituency groups’ voting behavior across multiple years based on settlement house interaction with voters through pledge cards, phone calls, and text messages.

Settlement houses primarily used pledge to vote cards (PTVs) as their main tactic in increasing voter turnout in 2021. Research has shown that PTVs increase voter turnout by about 4%,¹ a larger effect than standard get-out-the-vote activities such as tabling or posting signage typically have.

PTVs have dual purposes: first, they communicate important election information such as deadlines to register, instructions for how to vote absentee, and key election dates; second, PTVs capture an individual's contact information, allowing for settlement houses to build a universe of voter contacts and provide the basis for further conversations about voting between settlement house staff and community members. Settlement houses collected a total of 3601 pledges to vote (PTV) throughout the 2021 cycle. Of those 3601, UNH was able to match 1136, or roughly 31%, to the voter file. This means that UNH was able to identify around 31% of the voters that settlement houses contacted when comparing that data to the voter file. This 31% rate may seem low but can be explained by the inclusion of contacts who did not have an active voter registration in the voter file and unstandardized data collection processes (described later in this report).

Other tactics utilized by settlement houses include targeted phone calls to the voter file through VAN. In these Virtual Phone Banks (VPBs), callers are given a list of targets who they call one by one to share information about voting and then ask for a pledge to vote in the upcoming election. Compiling these lists of targets is done based on scores assigned to each potential voter on the voter file that are provided by Catalist, a data vendor used by the New York Civic Engagement Table (NYCET). The main scores used for this purpose were propensity scores. Propensity scores are generated through machine learning algorithms and indicate how likely a voter is to turnout based on commercial data that Catalist has purchased, as well as publicly available data such as past voting history.² These scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating a person who is very unlikely to turn out to vote and 100 indicating a person who is very likely to turn out to vote. In keeping with traditional targeting methods, our typical calling list included people who had propensity scores between 25-75. The primary logic behind this range is that it excludes people who likely will not turn out, as well as people who always turnout. A phone call is unlikely to change outcomes for either of these groups.

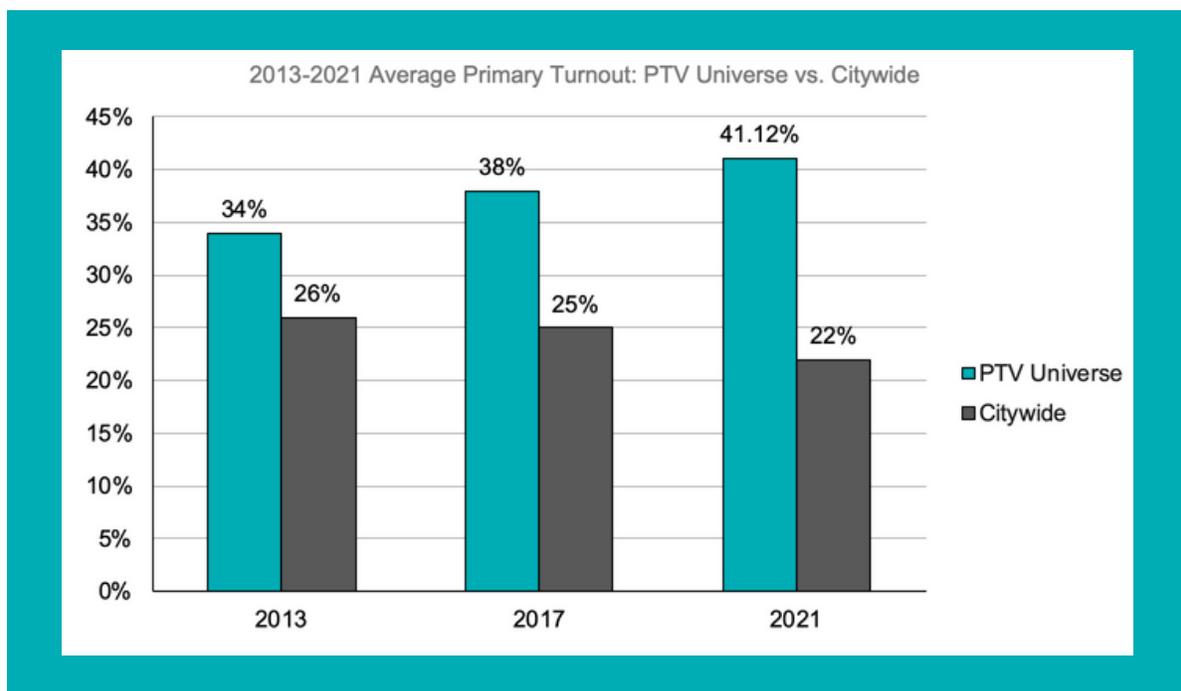
In addition, one other tool that settlement houses worked with to increase turnout was peer-to-peer texting. Peer-to-peer texting (P2P) is a method for sending large numbers of texts to cell phone users. A typical P2P app auto-generates a message and asks the user to repeatedly tap a button to send texts they have been assigned. They then respond to questions and requests for more information from those texts. This tool is especially useful because it allows the user to have several conversations at one time. It is also useful for improving the quality of pre-gathered lists which may include wrong numbers and people who have moved. UNH used a tool called Spoke for this purpose, which was provided free of charge by NYCET.



Results

Primary Election Outcomes:

Looking first at the primary, the chart below represents turnout rates for the population of voters that settlement houses collected pledge-to-vote (PTV) cards from in 2021, and tracks these same voters in 2017 and 2013 to compare their behaviors over two previous election cycles where there was not an organized settlement house GOTV program. Turnout rates from the three most recent municipal election cycles in NYC are used as a comparison for how effective settlement house outreach was in 2021 versus previous local election years.

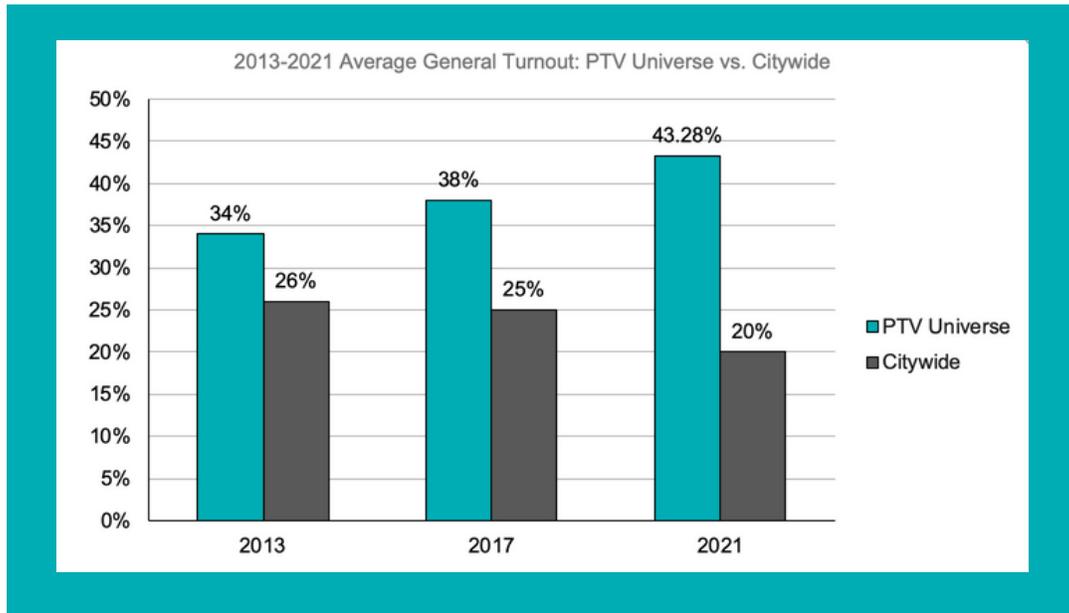


Takeaways:³

- 1 In the 2021 primary, voters who pledged to vote with settlement houses were nearly twice as likely to vote (41%) versus average citywide turnout (22%).
- 2 2021 had lower citywide turnout than past mayoral primaries dating back to 2013. However, voters who pledged to vote with a settlement house turned out at a higher rate than in past years with higher citywide turnout.⁴

General Election Outcomes:

When looking at similar data for the 2021 General Election, the turnout data is even more indicative of the difference between being contacted by a settlement house and not. The chart below represents turnout rates for the past three general mayoral elections in NYC:

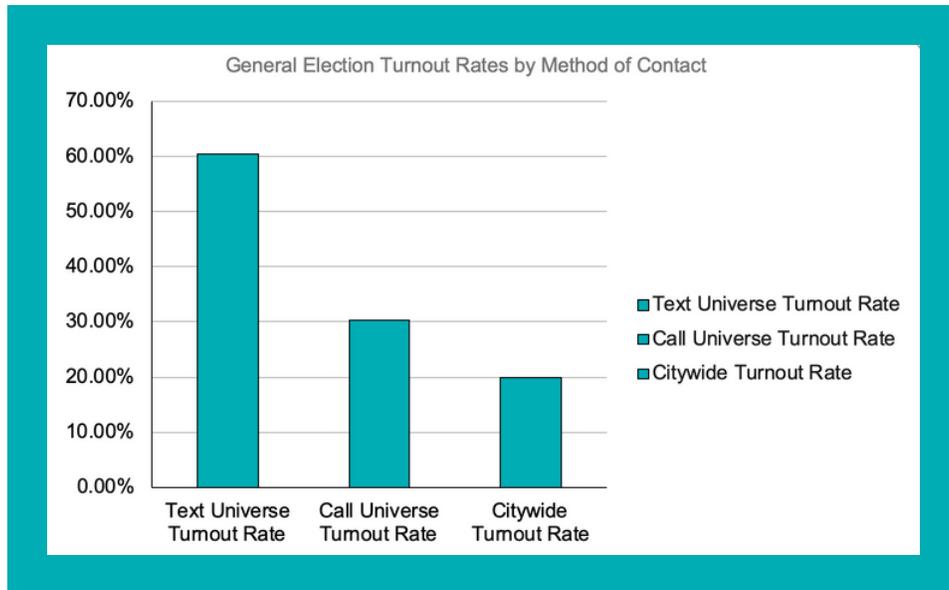


Takeaways:

- 1 In the 2021 general election, voters who pledged to vote with settlement houses were again twice as likely to vote (43%) versus average citywide turnout (20%).
- 2 Voters in the 2021 general election were more than twice as likely to turn out to vote if they were pledged to vote by a settlement house.

Voter Contacts:

Voters who received a contact from a settlement house that was not a pledge to vote card were also more likely to turn out. The chart below compares turnout rates for individuals who were contacted by a settlement house via text, via phone, and average citywide turnout for the general election.



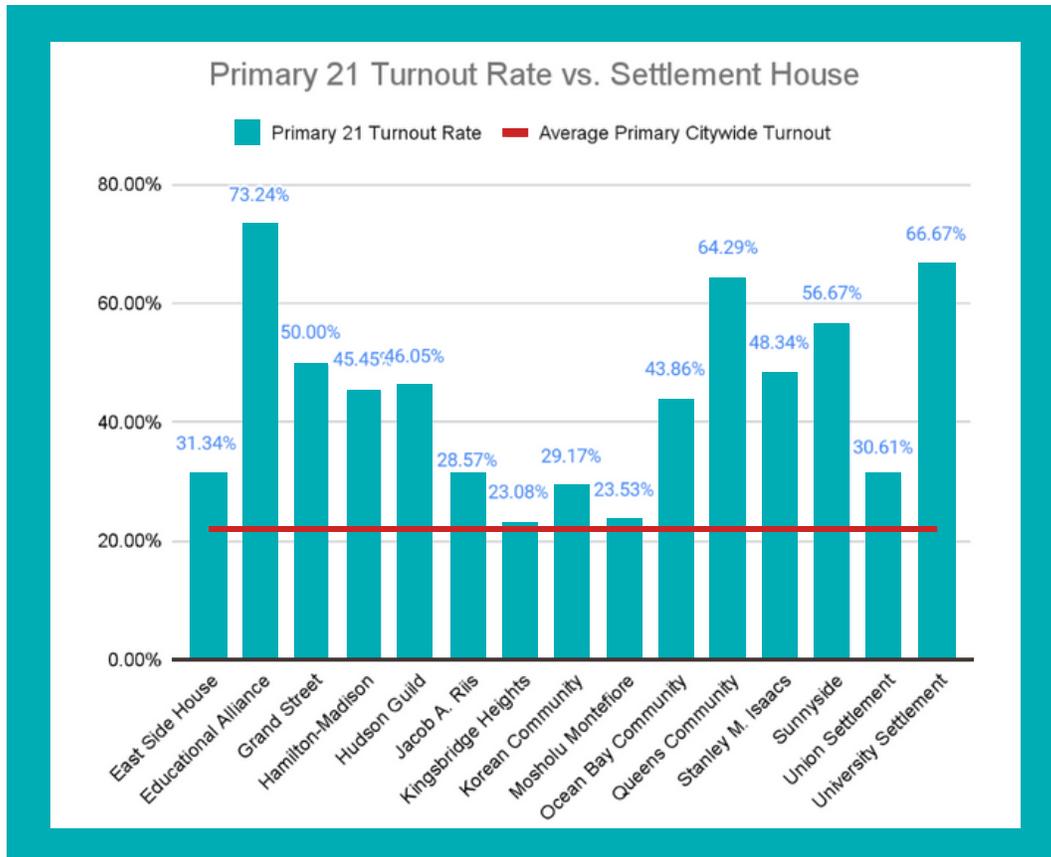
Takeaways:

- 1 Texting voters in target zip codes had the highest impact on turnout rates although the sample size was only 1586 voters compared with 3399 voters who received a phone call.⁵ This would generally indicate that a higher focus on texting is warranted. However, restrictions on peer-to-peer texting are increasing and its efficacy as a contact method will likely decrease as this trend continues.
- 2 All phone calls and texts were made to targeted lists of registered voters in NYC. This was a separate universe from people who filled out a pledge to vote card with UNH with almost no overlap.

Results by Settlement House:

Turnout rates by settlement houses for the 2021 primary are shown in the chart below. These turnout rates are calculated using the number of matched PTVs, since unmatched PTVs may not be eligible to vote and would reflect a much lower turnout percentage than is accurate. This data must be qualified with a statement about the quality of the data. A settlement house's match rate indicates the percentage of pledges who could be identified (or matched) to the voter file. A higher match rate indicates better data quality. In general, UNH found a correlation between match rates to the voter file and turnout rates for each settlement house. A high turnout rate indicates that the settlement house was able to collect more contact information from an individual voter to be able to match them to a voter file, and thus determine if they voted.

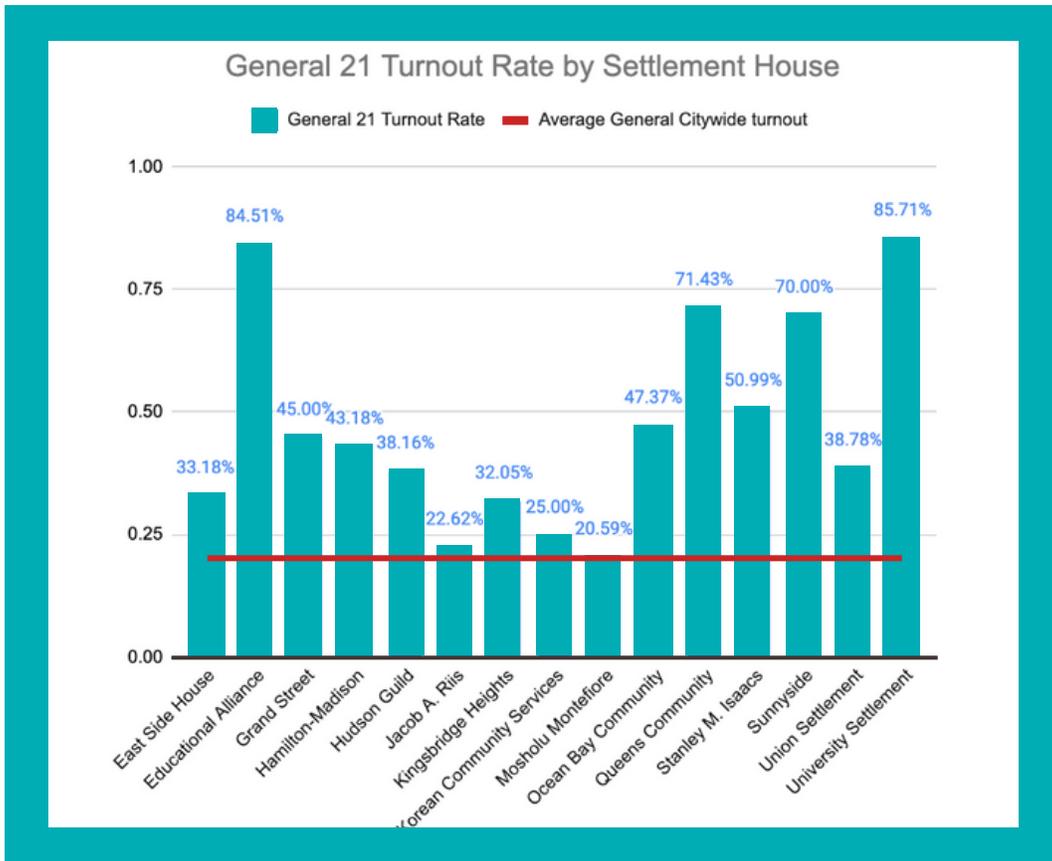
A lower turnout rate might indicate that the data provided by the voter was less reliable. A low match rate is not unusual if using paper PTVs, and does not necessarily mean that voters that were contacted didn't vote. The settlement house just was not able to match a high number of them in the voter file. This typically means more contact information is associated with that individual record, such as phone number, address, and zip code. Things can get lost when transcribing data from the paper pledge card to the VAN. If anything is off, we don't have a voter file to match to that individual.



Takeaways:

- 1 Citywide turnout was 22% for the primary. Every settlement house exceeded that average turnout figure in the primary election.
- 2 In the primary election, the difference between the settlement house pledge to vote universe and average citywide turnout was 19%.

Turnout rates by settlement house for the general election are below. They are largely similar to turnout rates for the primary election but are slightly higher in the aggregate.



Takeaways:

- 1 Citywide turnout in the general election was 20%. All settlement houses exceeded that turnout percentage in the general election.
- 2 In the general election, the difference between the settlement house pledge to vote universe and average citywide turnout was 23%.

Recommendations and Best Practices

UNH’s analysis of 2021 settlement house GOTV efforts demonstrate that settlement houses are effective at getting people to the polls. Because settlement houses are deeply-embedded, trusted, neighborhood-based organizations that employ staff from the neighborhoods they serve and offer multiple services across multiple generations, they are ideal places to house GOTV efforts. Due to their deep ties in their neighborhoods and ability to connect with people on local issues of importance, these organizations (and other local nonprofit organizations) are worth investing in when it comes to increasing voter turnout in New York City and beyond.

Based on the research findings and experiences of working with settlement houses via the GOTV Working Group, below are recommendations for settlement houses and other nonprofit organizations who wish to start or expand existing GOTV efforts. Overall, UNH recognizes that it can be challenging for nonprofit organizations to embed GOTV work into their day to day operations. This work is often unfunded, and can fall to staff who already have other roles and responsibilities within the organization. However, it is crucial for nonprofit organizations to engage in this work. Not only is it important for the community members of the settlement house to make their voices heard at the ballot box, it also strengthens the nonprofit's political power.

Start In House

If an organization has never done GOTV work before, it is important to foster a culture of voting and civic engagement within the organization. Organizations should be committed themselves to voter education and outreach in order for community outreach to be effective. This can start by sending all-staff emails reminding people to check their voter registration and to make a plan to vote, and to continue with reminders through Election Day. Organizations should also make it easy for staff to vote during work hours if that is what is best for their schedule. Ultimately, community outreach work will fall to staff, so it is important to encourage voting and to have their buy-in to implement a successful program. Community outreach activities can also be simple to start, and include hanging posters about voting in common areas, tabling at community events, or giving short reminders about the importance of voting and upcoming elections in programs and activities. For settlement houses, many of these activities were iterative and were built on year after year, creating a strong foundation for GOTV work after only a few years.

Have A Designated Staff Person

Organizations should have a designated staff person (or committee) who is responsible for driving the work forward. This person does not have to have "civic engagement" in their title; it can be anyone at the organization who is passionate about voting and inspiring others to vote. Some settlement houses have designated government affairs staff, but others have designated receptionists or program staff who lead GOTV efforts. Others have set up a committee of staff from multiple programs to have a wide reach within the organization. The designated staff person should have the support of the organization's leadership to do the work, as well as access and connections to staff and programs to plan GOTV efforts.

Set Goals for your GOTV Work

Goals are important for creating benchmarks for success and holding your organization accountable to this work. These goals should be realistic and attainable and can include: targeting a number of individuals to register to vote, educating your community on the importance of voting by holding a certain number of outreach events, disseminating a certain number of pledge to vote cards, organizing a phone bank, etc.

Goals shouldn't be so high that they are unreachable and can be a way to try new tactics to determine what works best for your community and organization. For example, setting a goal of one phonebank before a primary election will not be difficult to reach but will give staff a reason to try phone banking if they haven't already and compare to other outreach methods.

Leverage Social Media

Incorporating content with graphics and voter information across social media accounts is another tool for encouraging voter engagement, as it gives another contact to the universe of people an organization is trying to turn out. If these can be coordinated across a network, where different entities post similar graphics on the same day, they will have an even greater reach. This could be facilitated by providing example posts and a shared calendar. It is also important for organizations to understand their audience on a given social media platform. If the main audience is program participants, be mindful of translating information into relevant languages. If it is funders or board members, messaging might be tweaked. This also cannot be a tool used in isolation, but should be paired with other GOTV activities.

Make Sure Your Data Is Standardized

In order to increase the quality of data, it is best to use a standardized data entry form when collecting pledge to vote cards. It should include Name, Address, Zip, Phone, and Email. This makes the process of matching data to the voter file much easier and allows for the creation of automated tracking systems as data comes in. These systems can be supported with training for staff on how to collect data well, including responses to common reticence to give information. Having good data that can be matched to the voter file is crucial for evaluating your program in terms of who actually showed up to vote. Standardizing data in a Google Form can help separate information by date, so that specific impacts for general and primary elections can be assessed more accurately.

Create Clear Reporting Systems

It's important to have all data fed into an easy-to-understand reporting system. This is key for stakeholders to quickly be able to understand how the program is doing and be able to draw conclusions about outreach efforts at the end of the cycle. Google Sheets and Google Data Studio are free tools and great places to build these types of reports. In addition, links to resources (such as scripts, procedures, guides, etc.) can be placed in this document for ease of access for stakeholders.

Relational Voter Program

Relational Voter Programs (RVPs) are based on the concept that the most successful voter mobilization efforts are those in which individuals organize their own personal networks through pre-existing relationships with friends, family, neighbors, and their extended networks. These programs are typically run through applications such as Reach, VoteWithMe, or Impactive; alternatively, RVPs can be organized in-house with just a spreadsheet and a dedicated staff member to track conversations with voters.

While RVPs take time and resources to build, they are more effective than traditional GOTV tactics like phone banking and canvassing, and would help settlement houses leverage existing relationships within their communities to obtain higher turnout results.

Foster Civic Engagement Year-Round

Because elections in New York happen almost every year, it is crucial for nonprofit organizations to foster and sustain a culture of civic engagement year-round. Not only does this make it easier to restart GOTV work once an election approaches, but it also gets staff and community members thinking about ways to improve their communities beyond just voting. Examples of civic engagement can include testifying at local City Council hearings, joining a Community Board, or hosting neighborhood town halls about exploring solutions to challenging issues.

Celebrate Success

Building a GOTV program takes time and consistency, and it is important to celebrate success along the way. It is easy to get caught up in small details of a program, but taking time to step back and recognize the importance of GOTV work is important.

References

Glossary

Activist Code: Custom tags created by users on VAN to track constituency groups and their voting behaviors.

Contact Lists: User-created groups of voters in VAN based on selected criteria such as geographic location or voting status. Lists are commonly assigned to a phone bank or canvass, and can also be saved, shared, and exported.

GOTV: An acronym for get out the vote. Any sort of activity aimed at increasing voter turnout. On political campaigns, this more commonly refers to turning people out in the final days of the election season.

Match Rate: Indicates the percentage of pledges who could be identified via the voter file. Higher quality data is closely correlated with a higher match rate. Match rates can be improved with more information about a voter. Zip code, first name, and last name are essential. Address and phone number are extremely helpful in matching.

NYCET: New York Civic Engagement Table. A group of 501c3, nonpartisan entities that assists in GOTV efforts in NY. NYCET provides access to VAN.

Peer-to-Peer Texting: Peer-to-peer texting, commonly abbreviated to P2P text is a form of SMS that allows a user to quickly send out texts to big groups of voters and then have two-way conversations between the sender and recipients.

PTV: Pledge to Vote. Shorthand for how many pledges to vote have been collected.

RCV: Ranked Choice Voting.

SH: Settlement house.

VAN: Stands for Voter Activation Network. A customer relations management database used by political campaigns, labor unions, and nonprofits. VAN provides access to the voter file and can be used to keep track of who settlement houses have pledged to vote.

Virtual Phone Bank: A list of voters in VAN given to a caller who gives information to those contacted and asks for commitments to vote in the upcoming election.

Voter File: Public record of registered voters – accessible through VAN – that contains all the information that has been collected about each voter, including contact info, polling place, and contact history.

Voter Registration: (VR) Shorthand for how many voter registration forms have been collected.

Voter Propensity Score: A number provided by a data model, usually sold by a data firm (in this case, Catalist) which indicates the likelihood out of 100 that a given person will turn out to vote. This modelled score comes largely from data purchased by the firm about the people in question such as magazine subscription, browsing data as well as data from the voter file such as past turnout, age, sex, etc.

Footnotes

- 1 <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0197066>.
- 2 Targeting data is by no means perfect. For example, in weighing voting history, younger voters are often deemed less likely to turn out than they actually are because they do not have much of a voting history. While scores are not perfect, they are better than simply calling a list of completely random voters.
- 3 Our PTV universe is 1136 voters versus a citywide population of 4,992,792 active registered voters.
- 4 UNH does not have access to the data of other organizations to verify that these voters were not contacted by another organization.
- 5 These numbers indicate total attempts, regardless of whether there was a successful contact. Replies to text messages and phone calls that resulted in a voter being canvassed were far less than the total attempts.

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United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing 45 neighborhood settlement houses, including 40 in New York City, that reach over 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers.



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