



Turnout Surges In Boston

More voters come out in Boston than in any race for Mayor since 1993

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Executive Summary

- A spirited race for Mayor and an 8-way fight for 4 city council seats (including 2 open seats) brought out 31% of Boston's registered voters.
- Communities of color were the key to Mayor Tom Menino's victory. Menino did best in Mattapan, where he won 74.2% of the vote. In addition to Mattapan, his best neighborhoods included Codman Square, with 70.8%, Hyde Park, with 72.2%, Grove Hall and Dudley Square with 71.5%, and Uphams Corner with 67.5%.
- In all, challenger Michael Flaherty won 5 of Boston's 22 neighborhoods, winning 68.7% of South Boston and between 51% and 55% in the Back Bay, Charlestown, parts of Jamaica Plain, and Neponset/Savin Hill.
- Despite leading the city in turnout, the electoral importance of West Roxbury and South Boston is not as dominant as it was in 1993. In 1993, the two communities made up 10.12% and 9.81% of the total votes cast in the city. About 1 in every 5 votes in Boston was cast in either West Roxbury or Southie. By 2009, the communities had decreased their share to 8.77% and 8.39%, or about 1 vote in 6.
- Candidates running in future citywide races should keep an eye on Mattapan. Since 1993, the Mattapan/Franklin Field neighborhood has increased its share of the total vote from 5.57% to 8.05%.
- Competition drives turnout. There were no seriously competitive district races – the most competitive was district 7, where Chuck Turner won re-election with 59% of the vote. Had there been more competition, turnout would have been higher.



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Mayoral Election Analysis
November 4, 2009

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On November 3rd, voter turnout in the City of the Boston was the highest since 1993, when then-Acting Mayor Thomas Menino won his first full term. Yesterday, turnout citywide averaged a healthy 31.2%. Turnout was lifted by two factors: the intense race for mayor and the very competitive battle for the open At-Large seats on the Boston City Council vacated by Sam Yoon and Michael Flaherty. If there had been any seriously competitive district races for City Council, turnout would have been even higher. Unfortunately, Boston's long-term trend of very few competitive district races continued. (This trend of uncontested races is also readily apparent at the state legislative level across Massachusetts).

Mayor Menino did best in Mattapan, where he won 74.2% of the vote. Councilor Flaherty did best in South Boston, where he garnered 68.7% of the vote. In all, Flaherty won 5 of Boston's 22 neighborhoods, winning between 51% and 55% in the Back Bay, Charlestown, parts of Jamaica Plain, and Neponset/Savin Hill. Note: neighborhood by neighborhood breakdowns of voting are always difficult in Boston because precinct lines – which have not been redrawn in 80 years – don't line up at all with neighborhood boundaries.

Mayor Menino won all the other neighborhoods of the city. In addition to Mattapan, his best neighborhoods included Codman Square, with 70.8%, Hyde Park, with 72.2%, Grove Hall and Dudley Square with 71.5%, and Uphams Corner with 67.5%. Communities of color were a stronghold for Mayor Menino.

Ballots Cast in Municipal Mayoral Elections in Boston								
1967	1983	1987	1991	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009
195,624	192,602	63,455	89,885	118,317	67,924	93,452	97,034	111,067

West Roxbury had the highest voter turnout, with 48.1% of registered voters casting ballots, followed by Neponset/Savin Hill at 44.5%, Hyde Park at 43.5%, Roslindale at 39.6% and South Boston at 38.3%. Neighborhoods with large



numbers of people of color, including Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester, varied from about 25% turnout to the low 30's.

Despite leading the city in turnout, the electoral importance of West Roxbury and South Boston is not as dominant as it was in 1993. In 1993, the two communities made up 10.12% and 9.81% of the total votes cast in the city. About 1 in every 5 votes in Boston was cast in either West Roxbury or Southie. By 2009, the communities had decreased their share to 8.77% and 8.39%, about 1 vote in 6. At the same time, the Mattapan/Franklin Field neighborhood has increased its share of the total vote from 5.57% in 1993 to 8.05%.

	Share of City Ballots Cast 1993	Share of City Ballots Cast 2009	Change in Share 1993-2009	Ballots Cast 1993	Ballots Cast 2009
Allston	3.33%	3.49%	0.16%	3945	3880
BackBay-BH	4.57%	4.52%	-0.05%	5405	5025
Brighton	5.00%	3.95%	-1.06%	5918	4385
Charlestown	4.01%	3.67%	-0.34%	4744	4074
Chinatown&BB	1.18%	1.80%	0.62%	1394	1997
Codman Square	1.47%	2.06%	0.59%	1739	2292
EastBoston	6.27%	4.46%	-1.80%	7415	4961
Fenway	2.60%	2.37%	-0.23%	3080	2639
FieldCnr&StMarks	4.18%	4.96%	0.78%	4946	5517
GroveHall&Dudley	4.22%	5.80%	1.58%	4997	6450
HydePark	6.16%	5.20%	-0.96%	7294	5779
JamaicaPln	5.11%	5.84%	0.73%	6046	6494
JamaicaPln-Rox	1.34%	2.02%	0.68%	1587	2249
Mattapan-FranklinFld	5.57%	7.59%	2.02%	6590	8439
MissionHill	1.87%	2.29%	0.42%	2215	2543
Neponset/SavinHill	7.76%	6.47%	-1.30%	9186	7186
NorthEnd	2.51%	2.18%	-0.33%	2972	2428
Roslindale	7.57%	7.16%	-0.42%	8962	7953
SouthBoston	9.81%	8.39%	-1.42%	11606	9320
SouthEnd	3.47%	4.51%	1.03%	4110	5009
UphamsCnr	1.86%	2.49%	0.63%	2195	2763
WestRoxbury	10.12%	8.77%	-1.35%	11971	9741



What's Next?

On December 8, Massachusetts will hold primaries for the US Senate race opened by the passing of Ted Kennedy. On January 19, there will be a final Special Election between the Democratic and Republican nominees to fill that seat. Federal elections have traditionally brought higher turnout from Boston's communities of color, but special elections are notorious for low turnout. It may be an election dominated by habitual voters, including seniors. If that is the case, the pattern of voting from this week, with high turnout in West Roxbury leading the way, may be repeated in December.

MassVOTE will be looking to the 30 coalition partner organizations that helped put together Boston Mayoral Forums to consider the possibilities of holding debates in the Senate race. At the same time, MassVOTE will work with those partners to look at ways of following up with the municipal candidates who won election yesterday, to hold them to their promises to advance issues for the citizens of the Boston.

Statewide, MassVOTE will look to 2010 to begin a conversation about how to encourage competitive, free, fair elections – because without real choices, citizens have no reason to vote.