FAIRVOTE MINNESOTA

Ranked Choice Voting
By the Numbers

2021 Key Election Findings: **Bloomington**

77% of voters found Ranked Choice Voting **simple to use**

61% of voters **like and want to continue using** Ranked Choice Voting

10 points higher than when the measure was passed

70% of voters **ranked their ballots**

87% of voters were **satisfied with their candidate choices**

RCV saved Bloomington taxpayers **more than $80,000** in 2021.

By every measure, Ranked Choice Voting was a success in the 2021 municipal election. The numbers tell the story and underscore voters' support for RCV.

SUMMARY

- 77% of voters found RCV simple to use
- 61% of voters said they like and want to continue using RCV
- 70% of voters ranked their ballots
- 87% of voters were satisfied with their candidate choices
- Increased diversity of candidates
- Fewer than 10% of voters felt candidates spent most of their time criticizing opponents
- Range of political diversity

KEY FINDINGS

- Turnout was **15,503 (26.06%)** – slightly higher than 4 years earlier, the last municipal election without a mayoral race.
- Incumbent candidates Nathan Coulter and Patrick Martin earned first, second and third-choice support to win. They picked up **38%** and **34%**, respectively, of reallocated ballots.
- Two of the three races went to a runoff (or reallocation).
- There was a slight increase of 1 percent overall in citywide turnout from 2017 to 2021, with the greatest increase in the two districts with competitive council races:

Race	2017 Turnout	2021 Turnout
District 3 City Council	27%	28.80%
District 4 City Council	17.90%	20%

- **77% of polled voters said they found RCV very simple, or somewhat simple to use**, according to an exit poll by Edison Research.
  - While younger voters aged 18–34 (**84%**) found RCV simple to use, **70%** of voters aged 55 and older said they found it simple to use as well.
  - Income and education did not impact ease of RCV use:
    - **81%** of voters with a college education and 70% of voters *without higher education* found RCV to be simple to use.
    - **83%** of voters of color found RCV to be simple to use, underscoring-once again—that voters of color understand RCV and are adept at using it.
- **73% of polled voters across all age, income, education and ethnic groups said they were familiar with RCV before going to the polls**. This demonstrates the importance

and success of the outreach and education efforts undertaken by FairVote Minnesota, the City of Bloomington, candidates and the media to prepare voters for Election Day.

- **87% of voters were satisfied with their candidate choices**. RCV improves voter satisfaction by decreasing incentives for negative campaigning, encouraging issue-focused campaigns, and enabling a broader slate of candidates.

- **Increased diversity:** More than half of the candidates were women or people of color, and voters elected a woman and the first openly gay member to the open seat on the Bloomington City Council. By eliminating low-turnout, unrepresentative local primaries, RCV encourages a broad and diverse spectrum of candidates to run and build winning coalitions.

- *Voters like it:* **61%** of all voters want to continue to use RCV in future municipal elections, 10 points higher than when the RCV ballot measure passed in 2020.

  - High levels of support for RCV in Bloomington exist among nonwhite, lower-income and less educated voters (people whom critics claimed wouldn't understand or like RCV) with **70.4%** of people of color desiring RCV for future use.

- **Fewer than 10% of voters felt candidates spent most of their time criticizing opponents.** While we don't have polling from previous elections to compare this to, the fact that more than 90 percent of voters this cycle believed that candidates didn't spend most of their time going negative on their opponents is hopeful in a time of hyper negative campaigns, and we hope to see it repeated in the next cycle. RCV helps combat negative campaigning because candidates must reach beyond their base for second- and third-choice votes and campaign toward a majority of voters. Indeed, this year, Bloomington voters saw competing candidates campaign together, ask for second-choice votes from their opponents' supporters, and temper their negative campaigning.

- **There was a range of political diversity** and nuance not often seen in recent municipal elections. The candidates spanned the political spectrum, from progressive to moderate to conservative. Voters ranked candidates as second or third choices who differed from their primary political beliefs but who they found acceptable. The opportunity to express non-binary political nuance in this way is why RCV is showing the promise of mitigating the kind of polarization that is hindering our democracy.

Prepared by FairVote Minnesota Foundation, December 2021

Sources:

Secretary of State Election Results

Edison Research in-person exit poll among 631 Bloomington voters in wards 3 and 4 using a weighted design to ensure an accurate representation of election day voters. The margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level for the full Bloomigton sample of voters is +/-4.