

# new york minute

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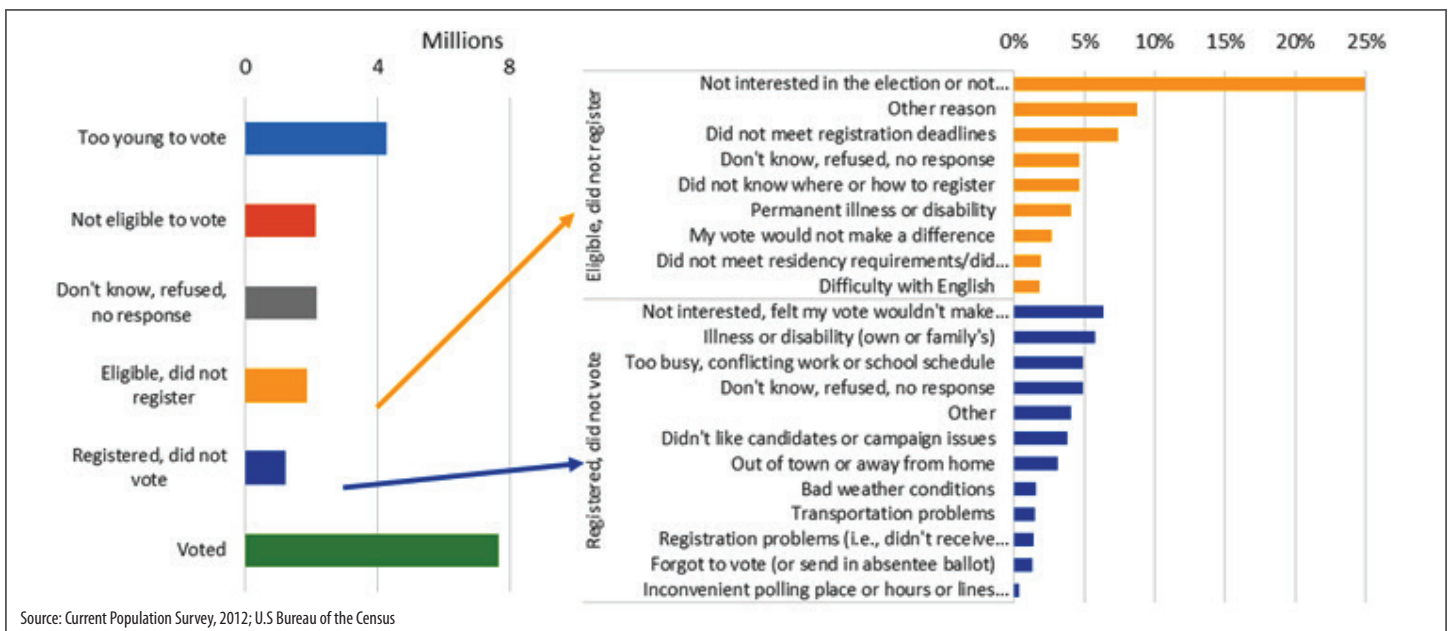
## Why Some New Yorkers Don't Vote

by Jan Vink and Robin Blakely-Armitage, Cornell University

The 2016 U.S. Presidential election has attracted an enormous amount of attention, both positive and negative. But it remains to be seen whether this attention will translate into action, i.e. voting. Americans have notoriously low voter participation rates compared to citizens of many other democracies in the world.<sup>1</sup> Even though voter turnout is highest during presidential election years, only 56.5% of eligible voters actually cast a ballot in the last cycle (2012). A recent article in the NYTimes explains that what separates voters from nonvoters is not as straightforward as demographics, although income, race and age certainly play a role. Rather, the decision to vote or not is motivated by a combination of factors.<sup>2</sup>

In New York State (NYS), voter turnout was a bit higher than the U.S. as a whole (58.7%), but why do the other 40+% of eligible

New Yorkers *not* vote? After each presidential election, the Census Bureau surveys the population to ask whether or not they voted in the election, and if not, why. Of the 10.7 million NYS self-identified eligible voters in the 2012 presidential election, 1.9 million did not register and 1.2 million, although registered, did not vote. The main reason given for not registering, although eligible, is lack of interest in the election or not being involved in politics. Those registered who didn't vote cite lack of interest, not feeling that their vote would make a difference, illness or disability, too busy, or "other" as the major reasons for sitting out. For those who *are* interested, the deadline for registering to vote in the November 8<sup>th</sup> election is October 14<sup>th</sup>. More information can be found at: [www.elections.ny.gov/VotingDeadlines.html](http://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingDeadlines.html)



Source: Current Population Survey, 2012; U.S. Bureau of the Census

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/02/u-s-voter-turnout-trails-most-developed-countries>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/09/13/us/politics/what-separates-voters-and-nonvoters.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/09/13/us/politics/what-separates-voters-and-nonvoters.html?_r=0)

### Additional Resources (click on title for link)

The Definitely Messy, Probably Solvable Reasons American Don't Vote, by Michael Keller and Yvette Romero, April 4, 2016

The Diversifying Electorate – Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections). U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Thom File, Issued May 2013, P20-568.



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