



Data Sources: Public Document No. 43, Massachusetts Election Statistics, Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; City of Boston Election Department; Analyze Boston

Voter Participation in the 2016 General Election

The vote is one of the most important tools that can be exercised in a democratic society. Voting patterns during the 2016 U.S. general election, however, reveal that voter participation rates vary widely across Greater Boston, with registered voters in wealthier suburbs participating at higher rates than those in the inner core. Research has long found correlations between voter participation and median household income or median age—a relationship that we find rings true for the MAPC region. But why?

According to a national survey by the Pew Research Center, half of nonvoters in the 2016 election did not vote because of a feeling their vote

wouldn't make a difference (15%), conflicting schedules (14%), illness or disability (12%), registration issues (4%), transportation problems (3%), or inconvenient hours or polling locations (2%). These issues are less likely to affect older voters or those with higher incomes, who often have more residential and economic stability, and more evidence of their influence on political decision making, than young voters, voters of color, and low-income voters.

While outreach efforts and policies such as early voting have tackled some of these issues, more work is needed to address the remaining difficulties that disproportionately limit turnout in the region's core.