

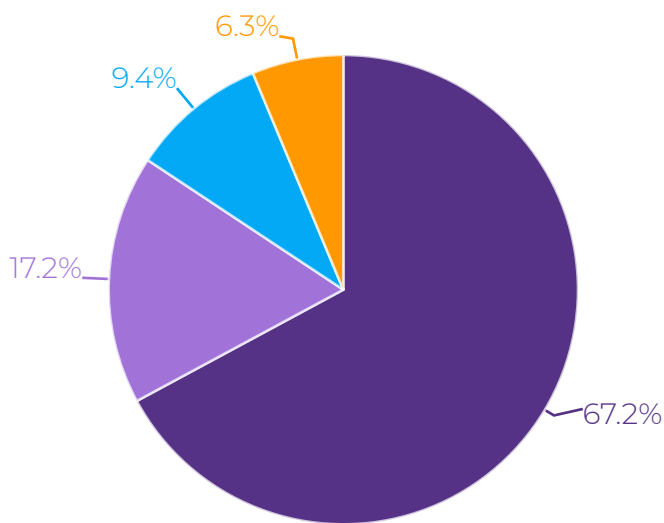
# Santa Fe Voters Support Ranked Choice Voting and Have High Confidence in City Elections

## *Exit Survey Analysis from March 6, 2018, (Released March 14, 2018)*

Santa Fe's first use of ranked choice voting in its March 6, 2018 mayoral and city council elections contributed to higher-than-expected voter turnout and civil, substantive campaigns. Results from a high and representative response exit survey conducted by FairVote New Mexico with the advice of UNM professor Lonna Atkeson demonstrate that voters understood and liked the new system and would like to expand its use. Among more than 1,300 respondents who had voted in an election with more than 20,600 voters overall, the survey found a series of positive impressions stemming from the voters' first experience with ranked choice voting.

### Reaction to and use of Ranked Choice Ballot

#### How Understandable Respondents Found the RCV Ballot

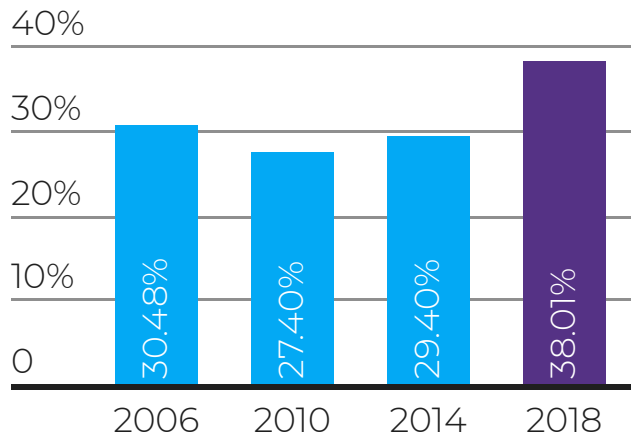


- Not at all confusing
- Not too confusing
- Somewhat confusing
- Very confusing

The City of Santa Fe committed to using ranked choice voting (RCV) in December 2017, less than three months before these March elections. Voters ended up using RCV effectively, including: 99.9 percent of voters in the mayoral race casting a valid first choice; 99.7 percent of all voters at the polls deciding to vote for mayor; 96 percent of those voters choosing to rank enough choices on their ballots to have their vote count for a candidate in the final "instant runoff" after the elimination of three candidates who collectively had earned more than 38 percent of mayoral votes; and far fewer voters skipping the two contested RCV city council races with three candidates than the one contested non-RCV race with two candidates. Findings in the survey included:

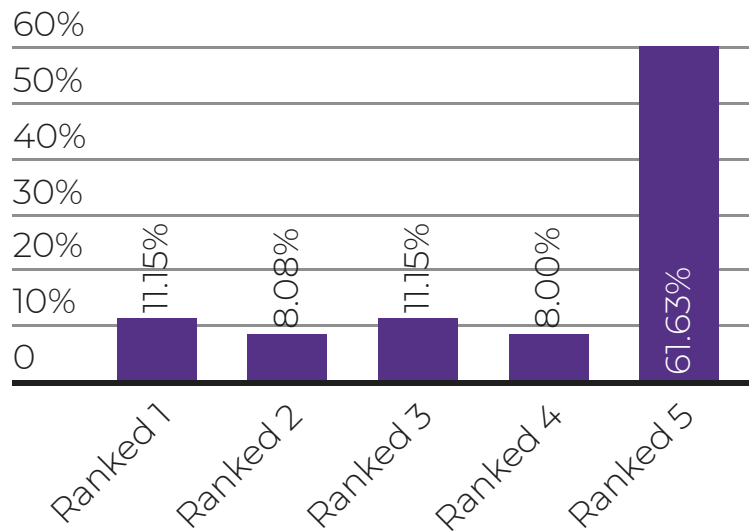
- More than 55 percent of respondents said they liked using the ranked choice voting ballot as compared to just under 24 percent who did not like it
- More than 67 percent of respondents said the ballot was "not at all confusing", as compared to only 6 percent who found it "very confusing"
- More than 61 percent of respondents reported that they chose to rank all five candidates, more than 80 percent reported ranking at least three candidates, and more than 88 percent reported ranking at least two;

## Turnout\* in Santa Fe Mayoral Elections over Time



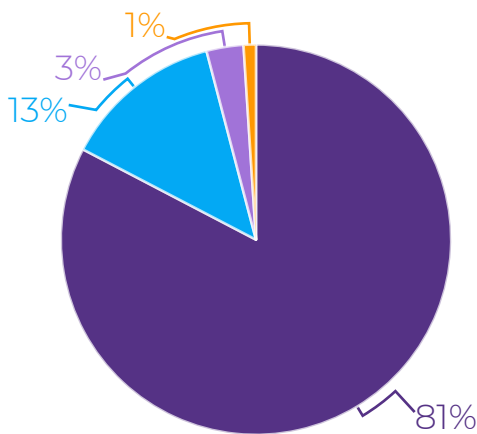
\*Percent of registered voter turnout in mayoral election

## How Many Candidates Respondents Said They Ranked



## Confidence in elections in Santa Fe

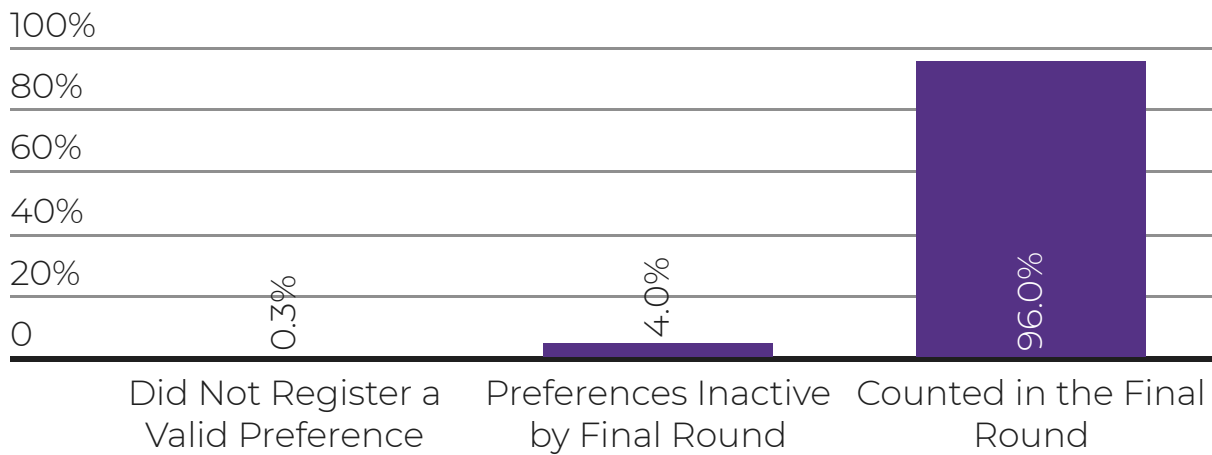
### How Satisfied Respondents Were with their Voting Experience



A vitally important measure of the success of a system is voters' confidence in the elections overall. In the 2016 presidential election, a University of New Mexico exit survey found that barely 55 percent of voters reported that they were "very confident" their vote was counted as intended. The much higher percentage in this exit survey shows how effectively Santa Fe elections staff created an Election Day experience for voters that established confidence and how voters seem to feel better about ranked choice voting elections that provide them with a more expressive way to vote. Relevant findings

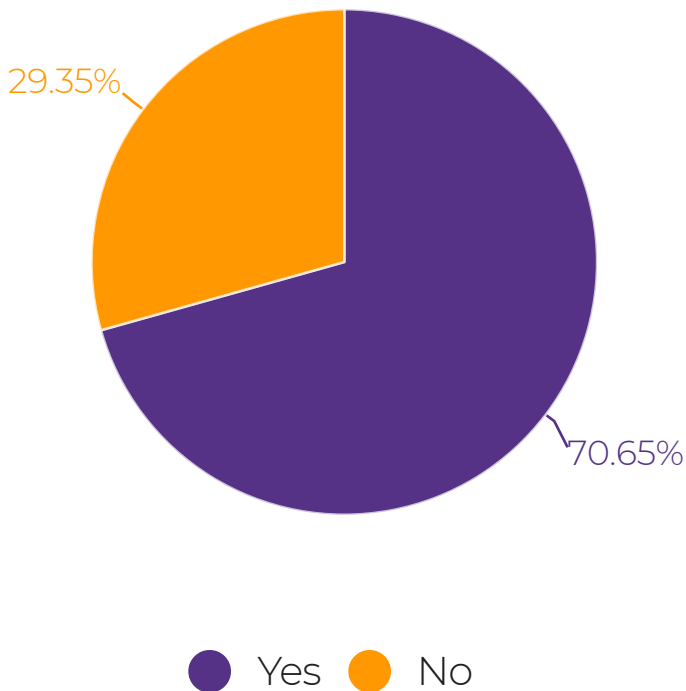
- More than 70 percent of voters said they were "very confident" their vote was counted as they intended, as compared to 55 percent in the November 2016 survey in New Mexico
- More than 94 percent of voters said they were satisfied with their voting experience.

## How Ballots Counted in the Mayoral Election



### Support for ranked choice voting in Santa Fe elections

## Support for Using Ranked Choice Voting in Future City Elections



Ranked choice voting was approved by 65% voters in Santa Fe in March 2008. With a changed electorate a decade later, support for RCV has apparently grown.

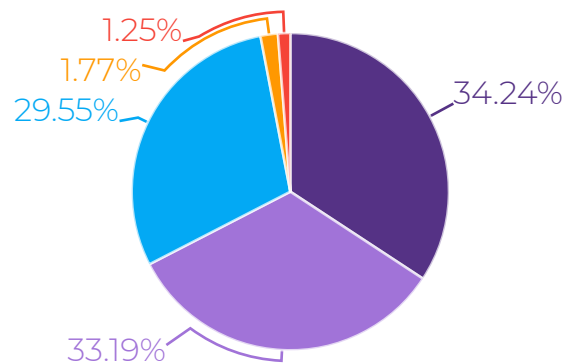
More than 70 percent of respondents said they thought RCV should be used in future city elections for mayor and city council.

### Effect on Candidates

Ranked choice voting rewards candidates who reach out positively to voters rather than running a barrage of ads smearing their opponents. Because ranking second and later choices can never hurt a voter's first choice, campaigns gain nothing by telling voters to rank only them. The survey results demonstrate that the campaigns understood these facts and campaigned well under the new system:

- More than 76 percent of voters had a candidate or campaign ask to be a second or third choice;
- More than 95 percent of voters reported that no campaign asked them to only vote for one; and
- More than 69 percent of voters reported that the candidates spent "very little time" or "none of the time" criticizing their opponents.

## Tone of Candidate Campaigns Compared to Previous Mayors Races



- Much more positive
- Somewhat more positive
- About the same
- Somewhat more negative
- Much more negative

### **Comment from FairVote New Mexico Director Maria Perez:**

"We at FairVote New Mexico are pleased to have the findings confirm our perception that Santa Fe voters like ranked choice voting and made effective use of their rankings to express their views and have their vote count. It also shows that the city, in partnership with us and many other community groups, conducted an effective voter outreach and education campaign."

"Our work is not over, of course. We will be active heading into the 2020 elections in Santa Fe to keep these numbers rising and working in partnership with city election officials toward that goal. Furthermore, with New Mexico using the same voting machines statewide, other cities will have an opportunity to give voters this same positive experience, with reduced negative campaigning, increased voter engagement, more civil and substantive discourse, and with certainty that winners earn a majority of the final round vote."

### **Methodology**

The surveys were collected from voters leaving the polls on Election Day, March 6, 2018. Twenty-seven volunteers covered eight voting centers for the entire polling day and two for a half-day each. Respondents participated at random. Surveys were then collected and provided to Dr. Yury Bosin, who was responsible for data entry and returning data to FairVote New Mexico. FairVote New Mexico then worked with FairVote staff in generating the survey results.

For more information, please contact Maria Perez at FairVote New Mexico, [mperez@fairvote.org](mailto:mperez@fairvote.org) and (505) 550-0647.