



Key Facts about the Use of Ranked Choice Voting in 2014 in California's Bay Area *Released April 2015*

In November 2014, **24 offices** in four cities in the Bay Area, California, were elected using ranked choice voting (RCV). Here are key facts and figures from those elections.

Voter Turnout: In elections using RCV in the Bay Area, voter turnout decline was less than in other parts of the state and voter turnout was generally higher than past non-RCV elections.

- Across California, 42.2% of registered voters voted, almost a 30% decline from the 59.6% of registered voters who turned out in the 2010 gubernatorial election.
 - In San Francisco, 53.0% of registered voters cast a ballot, down only 13% from 2010. In Oakland, 46.1% of registered voters cast a vote for mayor, which is 21% less than in 2010 when 58.7% of registered voters cast a ballot for mayor.
- Before the introduction of RCV of Oakland, 44.7% of registered voters turned out in the June 2006 mayoral election; and only 35.5% did so in the March 2002 mayoral election. In Oakland's first RCV elections in 2010 and 2012, 16 of 18 offices elected using RCV were won with more votes than in the last non-RCV election for each office in 2006 and 2008.
- Only 43.5% of registered voters cast a vote in the highly competitive 2014 mayoral runoff in San Jose, which is 2.6 points less than the turnout at the Oakland mayoral election. In the November 2012 presidential election, by contrast, turnout in San Jose (77.6% of registered voters) was higher than in Oakland (76.4%).
 - San Jose candidates often win in June primaries, where turnout is even lower. In 2010, for example, only 34.9% of registered voters cast a vote in the decisive June mayoral election—less than three-fifths of the voter turnout in Oakland's mayoral race that year.
- In Oakland, 97.2% of voters at the polls in November 2014 cast a valid vote in the RCV mayoral race. In 2010, 97.7% of voters at the polls cast a valid vote in the RCV mayoral race. In the last non-RCV mayoral election, which was a contested open seat election among June 2006 primary voters, 97.1% of voters cast a valid vote in the mayoral race.
- In San Francisco's 10th supervisorial district, 92% of voters voted in Supervisor Malia Cohen's re-election under RCV. This is a continuation of the trend in the 10th District, in which fewer and fewer voters skip their local race: in 2010, 88% of voters cast ballots in the Supervisor race. In 2000, the last election in the district before RCV, 83% of voters voted in the Supervisors race in November — and barely half as many voters turned out for the runoff election that December.

Voters have embraced additional choices offered by the RCV ballot.

- Three-quarters (74%) of Oakland voters ranked three different mayoral candidates (the maximum allowed). Another 11% of voters ranked two. In the 11 Alameda County RCV races with three or more candidates, 63% of voters ranked three candidates, and 76% ranked at least two.
- In the five-way contest for San Francisco's 10th Supervisor District with a strong incumbent, only a third of voters ranked just one candidate – and only 8% of these were bullet voters (2% of all voters in the 10th District race) voted for a candidate who failed to reach the final round.

Winners, in RCV elections, had broad support among voters, and were highly representative.

- In eight of the 24 Bay Area races using RCV, no candidate won a first round majority and so vote counting continued to a second round. On average, winning candidates gained the support of 34% of the backers of defeated candidates before the final round of the RCV tally.
- Libby Schaaf was elected to mayor of Oakland with more than 70% of the vote in the final “instant runoff” against second-placed candidate, Rebecca Kaplan. Schaaf was ranked first, second or third by a full 56.5% of voters. Indeed, Kaplan voters preferred Schaaf over many of the other candidates on the ballot: 41.2% of Kaplan voters ranked Schaaf in second or third. By contrast, Kaplan was ranked first, second or third by only 41.9% of voters.
- In San Francisco's Board of Supervisors 10th District, Cohen was ranked on 68.8% of voters' ballots. In a paired contest with her nearest rival Tony Kelly, Cohen secured 64% of the vote.
- Women won a majority of RCV seats up for election in 2014. Of 52 offices elected by RCV in four Bay Area cities, 46 are held by women or people of color.

In each of the 24 RCV elections held in November 2014, over 99% of voters cast a valid ballot.

- In the 16 candidate mayoral race in Oakland, 99.2% of voters cast a valid ballot. In the average RCV contest in the Bay Area with fewer than five candidates, 99.8% of voters cast a valid ballot. By contrast, in the first use of the Top Two primary in June 2012, 4.5% of voters who cast a ballot for U.S. Senate in Oakland, and 4.6% in San Leandro, invalidated their ballots in the primary.
- In San Francisco in 2014, levels of invalidity under RCV (0.4%) in November were lower than levels of invalidity in the June 2014 gubernatorial Top-Two Primary (0.5%).

For more information on ranked choice voting in the Bay Area, visit FairVote's webpage on [Bay Area RCV elections](#), [San Francisco Better Elections](#) and [Oakland RCV](#).

Data from Alameda County, San Francisco County and Santa Clara County Statement of Votes, and ballot image data compiled and analyzed by Chris Jerdonek.

FairVote.org // Tweet @fairvote // (301) 270-4616 // info@fairvote.org

