

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Benenson Strategy Group
RE: Democratic Primary Electorate Snapshot
DATE: April 28, 2021

Key Takeaways

In the context of a mayoral primary race that is still wide open, Democratic primary voters have broadly positive views of public charter schools. Large majorities of Democratic primary voters say that charter schools are mostly good for their students and that new charter schools should be allowed to open if parents want them—with even stronger support among Black and Latino primary voters. These favorable views create room for mayoral candidates to win the support of Democratic primary voters by embracing a positive role for public charter schools as part of a broader vision for education in New York City.

Detailed Findings: State of the Mayoral Primary

- The June Democratic primary for Mayor of New York City is still very much up for grabs, with no candidate securing first-choice support from even 25% of likely primary voters.
 - Andrew Yang holds a narrow lead with 22% of first-choice votes, but Eric Adams is running close behind at 17%, and he draws double Yang’s support among Black voters.

Democratic Mayoral Primary HR: 1st Choice Vote

	Total	Black voters	Latino voters
Andrew Yang	22	17	22
Eric Adams	17	34	7
Scott Stringer	11	5	9
Maya Wiley	8	8	5
Ray McGuire	8	11	5
Dianne Morales	7	2	10
Shaun Donovan	7	5	11
Kathryn Garcia	5	4	10
Someone else	1	1	2
Don't know	14	13	19

- While a simulation of the ranked-choice voting procedure eventually concludes with a narrow win for Yang, it takes seven rounds of reallocation to get there, as shown below—a further sign of how wide open the race is at this stage.
 - Each round of reallocation benefits multiple candidates in the remaining field, highlighting the complex preferences that voters are bringing to the new ranked-choice voting system.
 - With nearly two months left before the primary, it is a mistake to make easy assumptions about which candidates stand to benefit from the reallocation of votes as candidates are eliminated. The first-choice votes for any given candidate are far from monolithic.

Democratic Mayoral Primary HR: Ranked-Choice Voting Simulation

	1st Round	2nd Round	3rd Round	4th Round	5th Round	6th Round	7th Round
Andrew Yang	26	27	30	32	36	43	56
Eric Adams	20	21	22	23	27	31	44
Scott Stringer	12	14	16	18	20	26	-
Maya Wiley	10	11	12	15	18	-	-
Ray McGuire	9	10	11	12	-	-	-
Dianne Morales	8	9	10	-	-	-	-
Shaun Donovan	8	8	-	-	-	-	-
Kathryn Garcia	6	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Undecided voters and write-in candidates were removed to simulate the ranked-choice voting procedure

Detailed Findings: Perception of Charter Schools

- Democratic primary voters' overall views of public charter schools in New York City are positive**, with 54% saying they are favorable to them. Just 29% are unfavorable.
 - Views are **even more positive among Black and Latino primary voters**, as 58% of each group say they are favorable to public charter schools.
- This broad favorability toward charter schools reflects widespread sentiment that they're **working well for the students who attend them**. After hearing an information statement¹ describing how charter schools work in NYC, large majorities pointed to positive impacts.
 - Primary voters overwhelmingly (80%) say that charter schools are mostly good for their students**, with only 16% seeing them as mostly bad for their students.
 - This recognition of charter schools' benefits for their students is even more widespread in the communities of color that charter schools most heavily serve. **84% of Black voters and 81% of Latino voters say charters in NYC are mostly good for their students.**
- In line with these positive perceptions of charter schools, Democratic primary voters believe that **more charter schools should be allowed to open if parents want them**.
 - After hearing an explanation² of the current cap on charter schools, **70% of voters say that we should allow new charter schools to open if parents want them**, while just 29% say we should continue blocking all new charter schools from opening.
 - Once again, support is higher among voters of color: **73% of Black primary voters and 75% of Latino primary voters say new charter schools should be allowed to open if parents want them.**

¹ Information statement: As you may know, charter schools are independently managed public schools that are open to all students, with no tuition or admissions tests. They have flexibility to set their own curriculum and are supervised by city and state authorities to hold them accountable. Families decide whether they want their kids to attend a charter school, and if there are more students than available seats, they hold lotteries to assign the seats fairly. Today, 90% of the students who've chosen to attend charter schools in New York City are Black or Latino.

² Explanation of charter school cap: As you may know, the state has set a cap on the number of charter schools allowed to open, and New York City has reached that limit. That means that no more charter schools can be authorized to open, even if parents want them and the schools go through a rigorous review process.

- Mayoral candidates can appeal to this favorable sentiment among Democratic primary voters with a message that embraces a positive role for charter schools as part of a broader vision for the school system in New York City.
 - Primary voters in this poll were presented with **a potential message from a mayoral candidate**: *Suppose that a candidate for Mayor said that their focus would be on the district schools that serve most kids in New York City, but that they believe high-quality charter schools also play a positive role in the school system because families should be able to choose the right option for their children's individual needs.*
 - After hearing this message from a pro-charter mayoral candidate, 55% of primary voters say they would be **more likely to vote for that candidate**, including **61% of Black voters**. Less than a quarter say they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate.
- For mayoral candidates who support charter schools, **there is room to talk about this issue in a positive, nuanced way that appeals to key segments of the likely primary electorate.**

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Methodology: On behalf of StudentsFirstNY, Benenson Strategy Group conducted 1,558 interviews from April 16-21, 2021 among likely Democratic primary voters in New York City. In addition to the citywide sample, the poll oversampled registered Democratic voters in the following city council districts: CD-08, CD-09, CD-16, CD-17, CD-36. The survey was conducted using a multi-modal methodology. Participants were recruited using a combination of landline dialing, SMS interviewing on cell phones, and online panels. The margin of error for the dataset overall is +/- 2.48% at the 95% confidence interval. It is higher among subgroups. Due to rounding, displayed answer choices may not always add up to 100%.