



# 2020 Elections Democracy HUBS Impact Report

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# About the Democracy HUBS

The Massachusetts Voter Table, MassVOTE, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, and Asian Pacific Islanders' Civic Action Network identified a need for stronger statewide infrastructure for integrated voter engagement. In 2020, we formed the six regional tables called the Democracy HUBS (Holistically Unifying Blocs of Solidarity), with 38 partner organizations. The six Democracy HUBS across the Commonwealth have an anchor organization, supporting organizations, and emerging organizations. These six Democracy HUBS focus on integrated voter engagement in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, immigrant, and low-income communities.

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# Strength in Numbers

## 2020 Elections Democracy HUBS Impact Report

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# Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic uncovered deep inequities in Massachusetts. These inequities manifested in a lack of testing in Gateway Cities; a tradeoff between joblessness and disposability for many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) workers; and a fatality rate three times higher among Black and Latinx residents than white and Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) residents.

Large disparities in voter participation in the 2020 election by race and income stem from the unequal, unreflective, and unresponsive political system in Massachusetts. In the 279 cities and towns with over 90 percent white residents over 81 percent of residents cast their ballot in the 2020 election, with 44.5 percent of ballots cast by mail.<sup>1</sup> In the Gateway Cities and Boston, only 66.3 percent of residents cast their ballot in the 2020 election, with 35.7 percent of ballots cast by mail.<sup>2</sup>

of 73,159 BIPOC voters to the electorate. In 2020, BIPOC voters made up 20.79 percent of eligible voters but cast only 13.29 percent of ballots.<sup>3</sup> This means that BIPOC voters left 36 percent of their power on the table, down from 46 percent in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

Policy advocacy and grassroots organizing are the keys to continuing these positive trends and breaking the cycle of unresponsive government and community disengagement. After advocating for the passage of mail-in voting and expanded early voting, the Massachusetts Voter Table (MVT), MassVOTE, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition, and Asian Pacific Islanders Civic Action Network (APIs CAN) formed six regional tables, called Democracy HUBS (Holistically Unifying Blocs of Solidarity), as the field, data, and development infrastructure for integrated voter engagement. We raised



Despite these disparities, BIPOC vote share continued to trend upward in 2020. Black, Latinx, and AAPI voters cast 13.29 percent of ballots in the 2020 election, up from 11.34 percent in 2016 and 9.99 percent in 2012. This 32 percent increase between 2012 and 2020 represents the addition

\$515,000 and regranted \$497,000 to 38 community organizations to carry out integrated voter engagement programs.

Through these Democracy HUBS, we contacted 54,504 voters, 71 percent of whom were BIPOC

1 Cities and towns with a minimum population of 500 people  
2 Gateway Cities have a population between 35,000 and 250,000, with an average household income below the state average, and an average educational attainment rate (bachelor's degree or above) below the state average. Brockton, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Springfield, and Worcester are the original Gateway Cities. In 2013, this definition expanded to Attleboro, Barnstable, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Leominster, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, Peabody, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Taunton, and Westfield.  
3 2019 American Community Survey, Citizen Voting Age Population by Race and Ethnicity.  
4 Massachusetts Voter Table. Reflecting Democracy Report. <https://mavotertable.org/reflecting-democracy-report>

voters. These 38 organizations reached out to low-propensity voters, mostly voters of color, in a “target universe,” who turned out at a rate of 50.6 percent. The gap between the total statewide turnout of 76.0 percent and the turnout of our target universe was nearly 26 percentage points. Of voters who we contacted, 55.8 percent of voters cast a ballot, closing the gap by 20.3 percent. Two or more contacts increased the impact on turnout to 7.9 percentage points.

Trusted leaders talking to their neighbors lead to these successful outcomes at every level of the Democracy HUBS. Candidates rarely campaign to win votes from the Haitian community, but when True Alliance Center, a new emerging organization in the Democracy HUBS, contacted every known Haitian Creole-speaking voter in Massachusetts, over 82 percent of their contacts turned out to vote. Spanish-language phone calls by the Latino Education Initiative in Worcester increased turnout to 61.3 percent. In an election that animated Black voters across the country, MassVOTE called all working-class Black voters in Boston, leading to a 69.6 percent black voter turnout and contributing to a historic 21.8 percent vote share among Black voters in the city. MASSPIRG called and texted 2,959 young voters between the ages of 18-24, leading to a 79.3 percent turnout among their contacts.

This impact of integrated voter engagement is replicable and scalable. In the next two years, we are focusing on expanding the reach of the Democracy HUBS in Brockton, Western, and Southeastern Massachusetts and deepening our impact in Greater Boston, the Merrimack Valley, and Central Massachusetts. Integrated voter engagement programs, paired with voting reforms that facilitate voter registration and ballot access, are essential to closing gaps in voter participation and creating a more equitable Commonwealth.

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic escalated the existing crisis of democracy rooted in racial and economic inequality. While white collar professionals worked

from home, Black and/or immigrant service workers faced unemployment and exposure to COVID-19 in their workplaces or in overcrowded apartments. Adjusted for age, the fatality rate for Black and Latinx residents was three times higher than for white and AAPI residents.<sup>5</sup> Many Gateway Cities, where many essential workers live, lacked free testing for months, including during the second wave in fall 2020, even when testing capacity increased in wealthier communities and college towns.

The underrepresentation of BIPOC communities, immigrants, and low-income people in the political system in Massachusetts has led to large gaps in voter participation by race and income. In the town of Carlisle, which is 93 percent white and has a median income of \$176,228,<sup>6</sup> nearly 90 percent of voters cast a ballot, with 51 percent voting by mail, in the 2020 General Election.<sup>7</sup> Ten miles away in Lowell, where BIPOC residents make up a slim majority, and median household income is \$51,714, fewer than 60 percent of voters cast a ballot, with just 35 percent using mail-in voting. For the first time, more voters turned out in Andover than Lawrence in the September 2020 statewide primary, although Lawrence has nearly double the population as Andover.<sup>8</sup>

The lack of responsive government action during the COVID-19 pandemic further deepened cynicism among many BIPOC voters in Massachusetts. For many BIPOC residents, casting a ballot does not seem like a credible way to make improvements in their lives. Low voter turnout decreases the likelihood of response from public officials, leading to continued cynicism among BIPOC residents. Despite demographic change, this cycle of erasure and disengagement has led to underrepresentation.

Policy advocacy and grassroots organizing are the two key strategies to break the cycle and address these systemic inequities in the political system in Massachusetts. We seek to pass policies to expand voting options, with an emphasis on facilitating civic access for historically marginalized communities. In 2020, we passed mail-in voting and expanded early voting. Afterward, to implement these voting reforms and increase civic engagement, we formed six regional tables, called Democracy HUBS (Holistically

5 Boston Indicators, “Across Two Waves: COVID-19 Disparities in Massachusetts,” [https://www.bostonindicators.org/reports/report-website-pages/covid\\_indicators-x2/2020/december/persisting-covid-disparities](https://www.bostonindicators.org/reports/report-website-pages/covid_indicators-x2/2020/december/persisting-covid-disparities)

6 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Race, TableID: B02001; Median Income in the Past 12 Months, TableID: S1903

7 Secretary of the Commonwealth Election Statistics, 2020 Early Voting,

8 13,094 voters cast ballots in Andover while 11,841 voters cast ballots in Lawrence, according to voter data from Catalyst.

Unifying Blocs of Solidarity), as the infrastructure for data-driven voter contact field programs integrated with community organizing.

We formed the Democracy HUBS to create a statewide infrastructure for integrated voter engagement. Much of the civic engagement infrastructure is rooted in Boston, the result of decades of community organizing that began during the Rainbow Coalition. After 40 years of voter engagement combined with community organizing, representatives at the city, state, and federal levels in Boston have become more reflective of Boston residents, and their voting records frequently reflect the will of Boston voters on issues ranging from workers' rights to affordable housing.

However, many BIPOC residents of Boston find themselves displaced from their historic neighborhoods because of gentrification and rising rents. The new infrastructure for organizing and civic engagement remains nascent in many Gateway Cities where BIPOC residents have moved to. Elected officials in the Gateway Cities frequently are unresponsive to the will of the majority of voters and do not reflect demographic change within their districts.<sup>9</sup>

The Democracy HUBS regional model accounts for this gap in capacity in Gateway Cities. Each HUB contains organizations with roles based on track record and capacity. Anchor organizations have demonstrated a strong track record of voter engagement, grassroots organizing, and ability to coordinate among local organizations. Supporting organizations have the capacity to run field programs within a specific geographic area or constituency. Emerging organizations have the potential to run strong field programs within promising but often untapped constituencies in a particular geographic area. Together, the six anchor, 25 supporting, and seven emerging organizations make up each of the six Democracy HUBS (Table 5 in Appendix A).

The Massachusetts Voter Table, MassVOTE, MIRA Coalition, and APIs CAN form the four statewide capacity building groups, with various roles in supporting the Democracy HUBS. Together, we raise resources for regranteeing and make decisions about allocation of funds. MassVOTE is the fiscal agent and drives civic access policy advocacy. The MIRA

Coalition and APIs CAN connect the Democracy HUBS with emerging and supporting organizations in specific constituencies, coordinate field programs, and provide training to organizations rooted in immigrant communities. The Massachusetts Voter Table provides training and technical assistance on field coordination and use of the best available data and tools for voter contact.

This new model for regionally-based statewide organizing, built on a strong field and data infrastructure, showed great potential in the 2020 elections. We have yet to see the potential of the Democracy HUBS in municipal elections, where local voter contact programs have an outsized impact on statewide policy advocacy, but we will measure our impact this coming September and November.

## Statewide Voter Participation Trends

In this section, we will examine statewide trends in voter turnout and vote share. Voter turnout is the percentage of registered voters who cast a ballot in a particular election. Vote share refers to the percentage of ballots cast for any given election. Vote share is a key metric of the power of BIPOC voters.

In 2019, BIPOC voters made up 20.79 percent of eligible voters, or Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP).<sup>10</sup> Assuming BIPOC CVAP stayed similar between 2019 and 2020, BIPOC voters exercised 64 percent of their power in the 2020 general election, leaving 36 percent of their power on the table.

### 2020: A Generational Peak in Statewide Voter Turnout

Statewide turnout in the 2020 general election peaked at a generational high of 76.0 percent. A historic 3,657,972 voters cast a ballot in Massachusetts. When broken down by race, we see continuing disparities between BIPOC and white voters (Figure 1). White voter turnout topped 80

<sup>9</sup> MassINC, MassForward report, January 2020, <https://massinc.org/research/30921>

<sup>10</sup> CVAP from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/voting-rights/cvap.2019.html>

percent while Latinx turnout lagged below 60 percent. For the first time, over 70 percent of AAPI voters cast a ballot, and just under 7 in 10 Black voters cast a ballot.

### Black, AAPI, Latinx and White Statewide Average

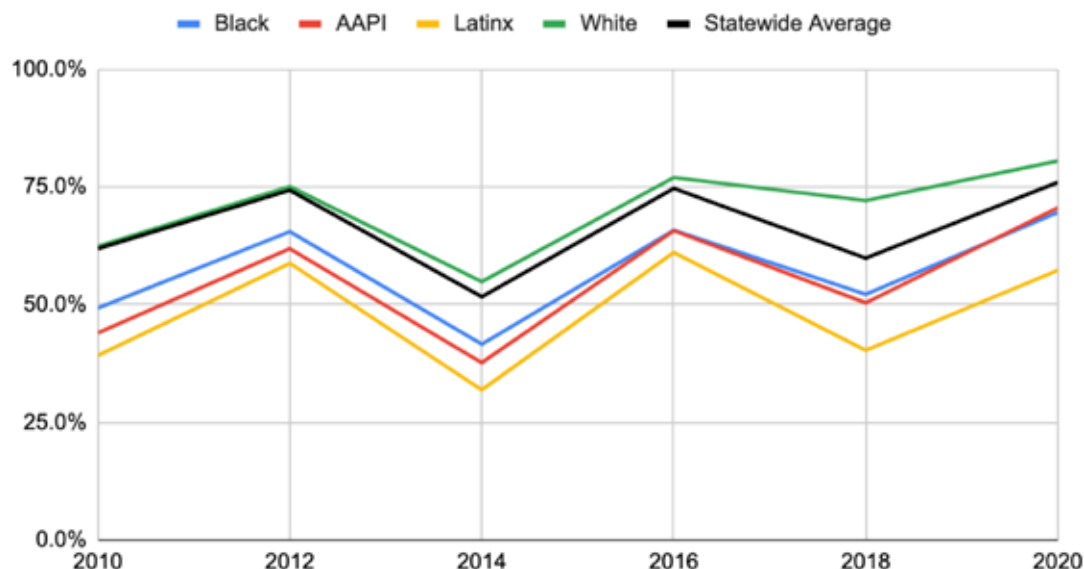


Figure 1: Statewide voter turnout by race, 2010-2020<sup>11</sup>

Across the state, turnout has increased by 2.3 percent from 2012 to 2020 (Table 1). Black turnout has increased by nearly triple the statewide rate at 6.3 percent from 2012 to 2020, with most of the increase occurring between 2016 and 2020. AAPI turnout has surged by 14.1 percent, with a fairly constant rise from 2012 to 2020. Latinx turnout peaked in 2016 but fell by 6.2 percent between 2016 and 2020. This could result from how national presidential campaigns speak to specific types of voters, but these trends also demonstrate how the creation of integrated voter engagement infrastructure in the AAPI community through APIs CAN has led to increased voter turnout over the past eight years. Similar statewide infrastructure for naturalization, registration, and integrated voter engagement in the Latinx community could lead to increased turnout and power across the Commonwealth.

**Table 1: Voter turnout rates by race (data from Catalist), 2012-2020, with 4-year and 8-year percent change.**

Race	2012	2016	2020	4-Year Percent Change: 2016-2020	8-Year Percent Change: 2012-2020
<b>Black</b>	65.5%	65.8%	69.6%	5.8%	6.3%
<b>AAPI</b>	61.9%	65.7%	70.6%	7.5%	14.1%
<b>Latinx</b>	58.8%	61.1%	57.3%	-6.2%	-2.6%
<b>White</b>	75.1%	77.0%	80.5%	4.5%	7.2%
<b>Statewide Average</b>	74.3%	74.7%	76.0%	1.7%	2.3%

<sup>11</sup> Turnout data by race from Catalist. Statewide average from Elections Statistics from the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth.

# Thirty-Two Percent Growth in BIPOC Statewide Vote Share since 2012

Rising turnout and demographic growth fueled the increase in BIPOC vote share, or the percent of ballots cast by BIPOC voters. Black, Latinx, and AAPI voters cast 13.29 percent of ballots in the 2020 election, up from 11.34 percent in 2016 and 9.99 percent in 2012. BIPOC vote share increased by 17 percent over the past four years and 32 percent over the past eight years (Figure 2).

## General Election POC Vote Share

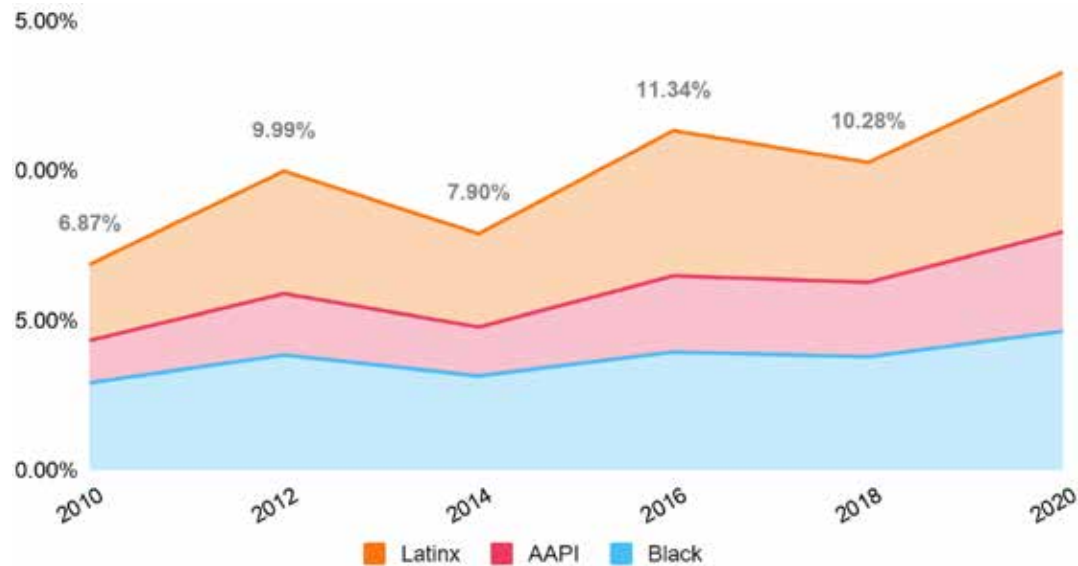


Figure 2: Vote share by race, 2010-2020. Data from Catalyst.

Table 2: BIPOC vote share by county, 2016 and 2020, and percent change.

County	2016	2020	4-Year % Change
Barnstable	1.4%	1.7%	21.4%
Berkshire	2.5%	3.1%	24.0%
Bristol	4.3%	5.0%	16.3%
Dukes	2.3%	2.8%	21.7%
Essex	12.3%	13.7%	11.4%
Franklin	1.6%	2.0%	25.0%
Hampden	20.1%	20.4%	1.5%
Hampshire	4.7%	5.5%	17.0%
Middlesex	11.0%	13.2%	20.0%
Nantucket	7.9%	10.6%	34.2%
Norfolk	10.7%	12.5%	16.8%
Plymouth	6.6%	7.9%	19.7%
Suffolk	34.7%	36.9%	6.3%
Worcester	8.6%	9.8%	14.0%



BIPOC vote share rose in all counties in Massachusetts between 2016 and 2020. In six out of fourteen counties, BIPOC voters cast over 10 percent of ballots in the 2020 election, an indication of increasing power of BIPOC voters across the Commonwealth (Table 2). Black vote share in Boston (Suffolk County) reached 21.8, an unprecedented level. However, vote share among Black and Latinx voters in Hampden County hardly increased between 2016 and 2020, likely linked to the decreases in Latinx voter turnout in the same elections.

Vote share rose among Black, Latinx, and AAPI voters substantially between 2012 and 2020. Black vote share rose by 21 percent in the past eight years, especially between 2016 and 2020 (Table 3). Latinx voting power increased by 30 percent, especially between 2012 and 2016. AAPI voting power surged by 62 percent, evenly across the two presidential cycles. This increase in Latinx vote share is due to population increases, rather than voter turnout increases, which points to the need for stronger programs for naturalization, voter registration and engagement, and base-building.

**Table 3: Vote share by race, 2012-2020, and 4-year and 8-year percent change.**

Race	2012	2016	2020	4-Year % Change: 2016-2020	8-Year % Change: 2012-2020
<b>Black</b>	3.85%	3.95%	4.64%	17.5%	20.5%
<b>AAPI</b>	2.05%	2.54%	3.32%	30.7%	62.0%
<b>White</b>	87.47%	86.94%	85.06%	-2.2%	-2.8%
<b>Latinx</b>	4.09%	4.85%	5.33%	9.9%	30.3%
<b>Total POC</b>	10.04%	11.38%	13.29%	16.8%	32.4%

## By the Numbers: Impact of the Democracy HUBS

Through its national network, State Voices, MVT provides access to voter data from Catalist and the Voter Activation Network (VAN), along with tools that integrate with VAN, to the Democracy HUBS. Partner organizations are able to record their conversations with voters in the shared VAN database. Tracking year-round voter engagement in VAN is a core tactic for building a BIPOC voter bloc.

In 2020, the Democracy HUBS recorded 976,451 attempts in VAN, leading to 74,840 conversations with 54,504 voters. These conversations led to a 5.7 percentage point increase in voter turnout, in a target universe of BIPOC voters, low-income people, and young people (Figure 4).

### Prioritizing Contacts to BIPOC Voters

The Democracy HUBS contacted voters in the New Majority, who are BIPOC voters, low-income people, naturalized citizens, and young people. MVT created a target universe of 530,306 voters, who were 82.6 percent BIPOC, 43.6 percent under 34-years-old, and 46.6 percent with household income under \$75,000. The target universe turned out in the 2020 general election at a rate of 50.6 percent, which was far below the statewide turnout of 76.0 percent.

With 38 partner organizations, we carried out 74,840 conversations with 54,504 voters. 71 percent of the voters who the Democracy HUBS contacted are BIPOC (Figure 3). This is 3.5 times more BIPOC than the all eligible voters (Citizen Voting Age Population), in which 20.8 percent of voters are BIPOC, and over 5 times more than the voters who cast a ballot in 2020.

## % BIPOC

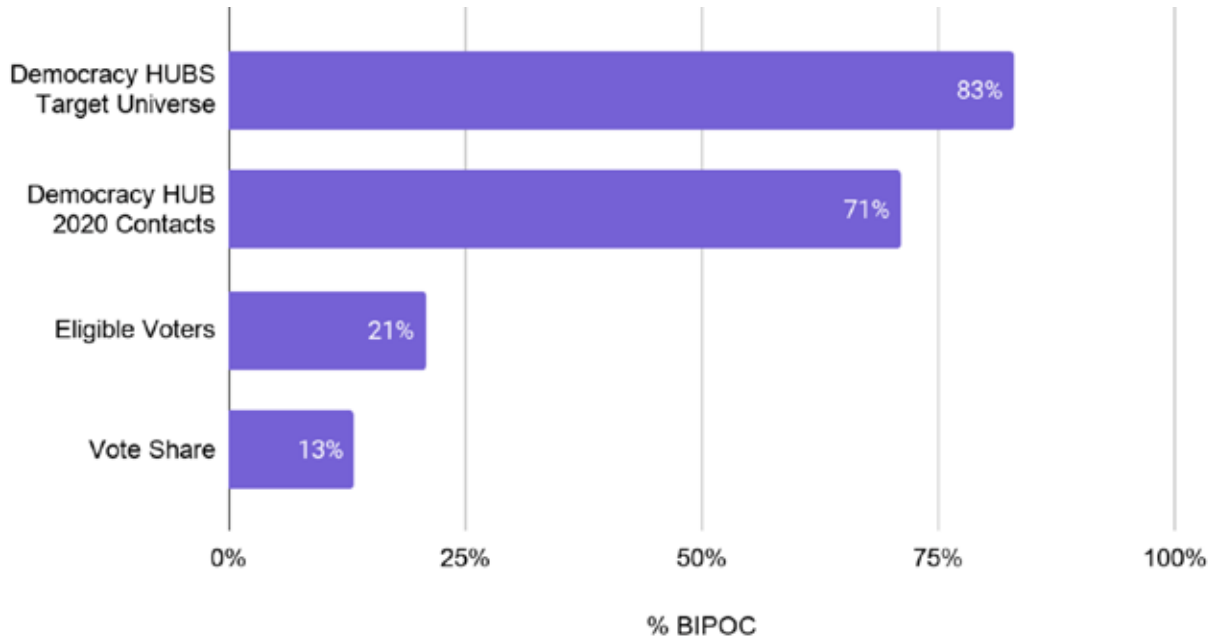


Figure 3: Comparison of percent BIPOC of Democracy HUBS target universe, Democracy HUBS 2020 contacts, Citizen Voting Age Population (eligible voters), and vote share.

These conversations between Democracy HUBS volunteers and leaders and New Majority voters boosted voter turnout of our contacts by 5.7 percentage points, or 10 percent, within this target universe (Figure 4). The impact of two or more conversations (typically one conversation to secure a pledge to vote and one or more Get Out the Vote conversations immediately before Election Day) was substantially higher, at 7.9 percentage points. Field programs with layered messaging for different phases have a greater impact than those that rely on one-off conversations to drive voter turnout. Eventually, we saw diminishing returns with four or more conversations.

## General Election 2020 – Turnout by Number of Contacts

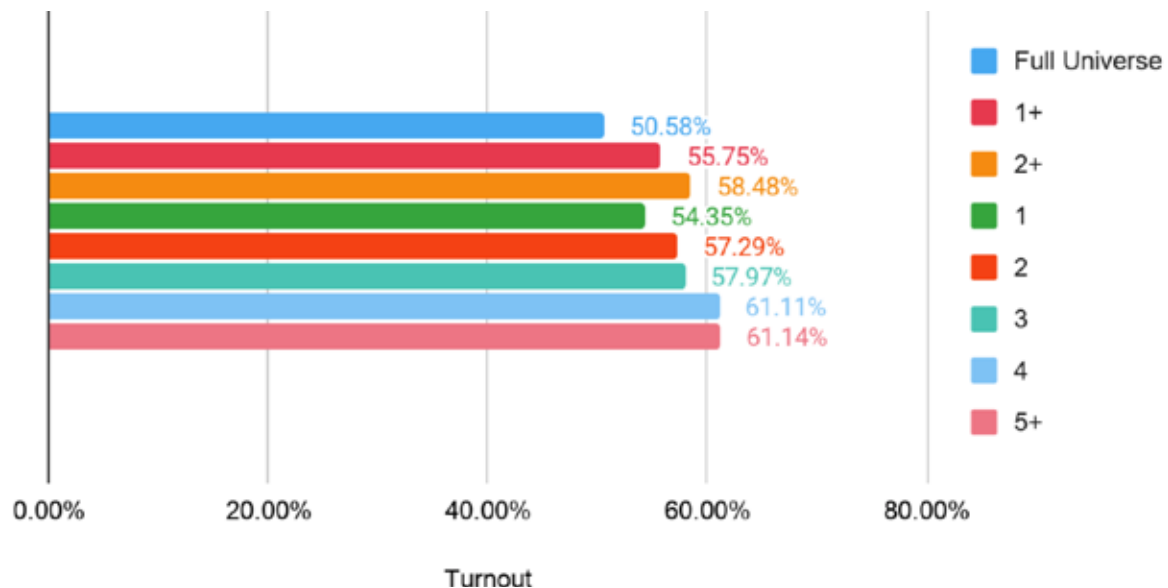


Figure 4: Impact on voter turnout by the number of contact

# Impact of Virtual Tactics during the COVID-19 Pandemic

After Governor Baker’s declaration of the COVID-19 state of emergency, we shifted to virtual tactics. In previous years, about 30-50 percent of our conversations happened virtually, while door knocking accounted for the majority of contacts in the field (Figure 5). In 2020, the Democracy HUBS moved to a field program that conducted 94.3 percent of our contacts by phone or text.

## Voter Contacts by Field Tactic

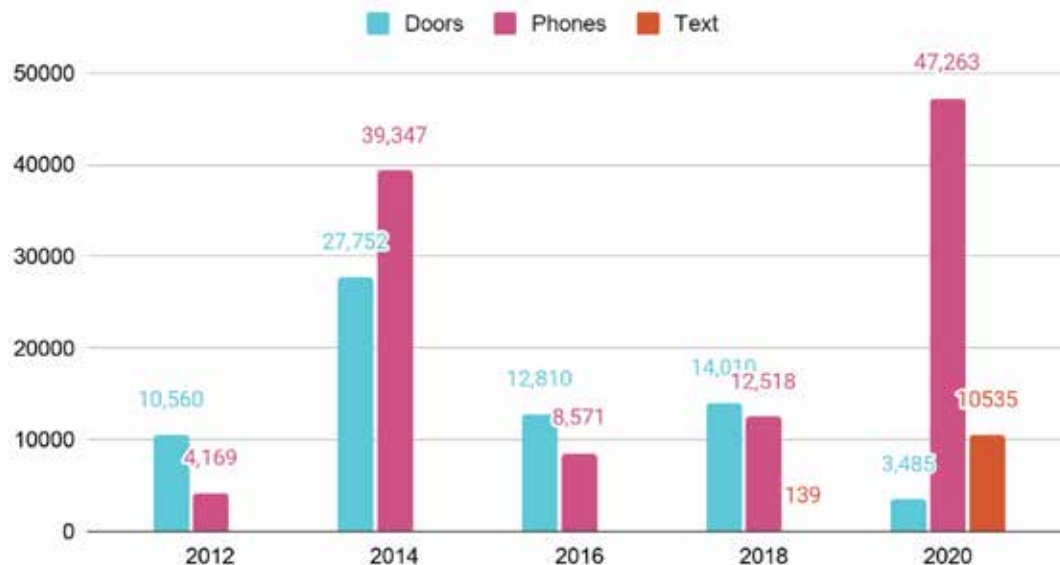


Figure 5: Number of contacts by door knocking, phone banking, and text banking, 2012-2020.

To scale up our virtual outreach, the Democracy HUBS used a predictive dialer to call voters in 2020, in which an automated system places calls and connects volunteers to voters who have already answered the phone call. The automated predictive dialer resulted in many more conversations between volunteers and voters than traditional manual dialing. MVT provided access to ThruTalk, a predictive dialer that can call cell phone numbers, instead of landlines. State Voices (MVT’s national network) purchased an additional 1,046,070 new cell phone numbers for registered voters and 137,685 phone numbers for people who were not registered voters. These data and tools purchases increased the number of conversations that Democracy HUB organizations were able to have with voters.

In addition to using a predictive dialer, the Democracy HUBS sent 269,604 text messages to 184,786 people, which generated text exchanges with 7,561 people for the general election 2020. In 2018, the first year that the MVT offered texting to partner organizations, we only had text exchanges with 139 individuals, and sent 4,838 text messages.

In 2020, MVT helped create an open-source peer-to-peer text messaging program decrease in cost per message. Until 2020, two companies had a duopoly on peer-to-peer text messaging platforms that integrate with the Voter Activation Network (VAN). MVT’s Data and Targeting Director worked with counterparts within State Voices and its national Data Department to create an open-source text messaging tool that integrates with VAN. This brought texting costs down from 10 cents per person in 2018 (Hustle) and 6.6 cents per text message in 2019 (ThruText) to 0.562 cents per message and about \$105 per month in web hosting in 2020. The creation of this open-source text messaging system means that the partner organizations within the Democracy HUBS - and similar community organizations across the country - benefited from a 10.4-times cost savings relative to text messaging costs in 2018.

We found that phone and text banking were effective virtual tactics to get out the vote. Of the 17,024 people who we had conversations with while phone banking, 65.5 percent of

those contacts cast a ballot (Table 4). Of the 7,561 people who had a text exchange with a volunteer from the Democracy HUBS, 70.0 percent of those contacts cast a ballot. When we examine the impact of texts that were sent but not answered and voicemails, we see very similar impacts on voter turnout.

**Table 4: Turnout by contact type. Comparison of live phone calls vs. voicemails and text message exchanges vs. unanswered text messages.**

Contact Type	Contacted	Voted	Turnout
Phone Conversations	17,024	11,151	65.5%
Phone Calls + Voicemails	49,613	28,494	57.4%
Text Exchanges	7,561	5,294	70.0%
Texts Sent	184,786	105,733	57.2%

The contact rate using peer-to-peer texting is very low, at 4.1 percent (Figure 6). Despite the similar impacts on turnout between phone banking and text banking, the low contact rate dampens the impact of text banking relative to phone banking. Fewer people are needed to run a large texting program than a phone banking or canvassing operation. In the future, we may run a higher capacity phone banking and canvassing program while directing a few super volunteers or staff to run a high impact but lower capacity texting program.

### General Turnout Calling Vs. Texting

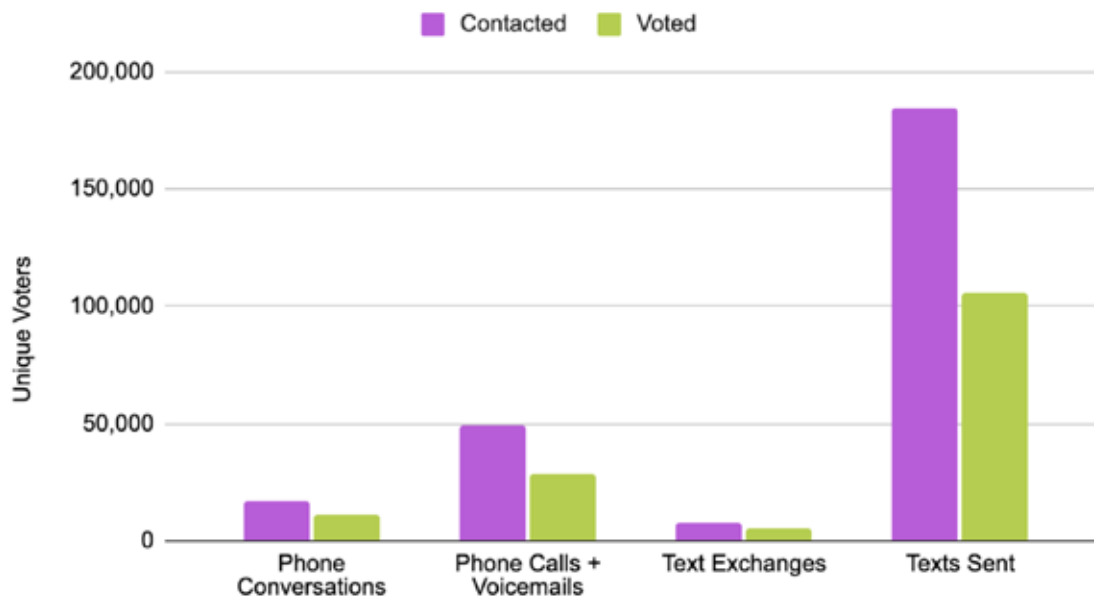


Figure 6: Scale and impact of phone conversations, voicemails, text message exchanges, and unanswered text messages.

# Field Notes: Case Studies on Effective Integrated Voter Engagement Programs

Each data point represents a one-on-one exchange between a trusted leader and a community member. Because the Democracy HUBS focused outreach within a target universe that turned out at 50.6 in a highly anticipated presidential election, volunteers and leaders had the task of inviting each low-propensity voter to cast a ballot. Partnerships between organizations and coordination across geographic areas drove increases in voter participation.

## Wellness to Organizing

COVID-19 posed new challenges to voter engagement in BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income communities. The Democracy HUBS rose to the challenges and were able to meet pre-pandemic expectations in the 2020 General Election. Partner organizations created food pantries, delivered hot meals, helped tenants defend themselves from illegal evictions, and aided residents to file for unemployment. Organizations such as New England United for Justice, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and Neighbors United for a Better East Boston used the voter file to call residents for wellness checks to understand the needs of community members. La Colaborativa used a relational voter engagement tool called Reach to ask people at pop up tables and in the food pantry lines to pledge to vote. When the unemployment insurance application was only available in Worcester Interfaith used peer-to-peer texting and phone banking to promote free testing sites. Lowell Alliance, La Colaborativa, and the Pioneer Valley continued to knock on doors in September and October 2020. They were able to achieve high contact rates of 28 percent on the doors.

Democracy HUBS partner organizations' shift to take care of residents' basic needs demonstrated the true-to-mission care for the community that is at the heart of grassroots organizing and integrated voter engagement. This is the source of the trust that these organizations have built in their communities and the reason why their outreach efforts proved to be successful year after year.

## Demonstrating the Power of Coordination in Lowell

Lowell is a diverse Gateway City with several immigrant enclaves, including the nation's second largest Cambodian refugee community. However, this diversity was not reflected in Lowell's City Council or School Committee by design. Until the results of the 2021 municipal elections take effect, an all at-large system for electing councilors and school committee members has resulted in minority rule. A slim majority of white voters have been able to elect nearly all local offices for decades.

Responding to structural underrepresentation and barriers to civic engagement in communities of color in Lowell, the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, Coalition for a Better Acre, and Lowell Alliance formed Lowell Votes in 2014. Its capacity was limited because each organization had many competing demands.

Aided by Lawyers for Civil Rights, former candidates of color sued the city on the grounds of discrimination. In 2019, a judge ruled the at-large voting system illegally diluted the power of voters of color and ordered the city to put a question on the November 2019 ballot about a new voting system.

In 2019, MVT and MassVOTE selected Lowell Votes as a pilot for a regional integrated voter engagement project, which eventually became the model for the Democracy HUBS. The goal in 2019 was to implement the new election system with as much participation as possible. Lowell Votes built an infrastructure for educating the community about the result of the lawsuit and reaching out to voters about the options they had in a new voting system.

Ultimately, voters selected a hybrid system of electing at-large and district-based seats. Two of the districts are legally mandated to be majority-minority. Lowell Votes created a citywide unity map to increase BIPOC representation. This success in Lowell created a blueprint for parents and students in Worcester, many organized by Worcester Interfaith, the Central Massachusetts Democracy HUB anchor, to take legal action and eliminate the at-large school committee in

2021. These victories in Lowell and Worcester show the potential to eliminate at-large school committees in other Gateway Cities, such as Everett, Lynn, and Haverhill.

In 2020, Democracy HUBS invested \$50,000 in integrated voter engagement re grants to organizations in the Merrimack Valley. This investment allowed Lowell Votes to hire a seasoned organizer (who had previously worked at Lowell Alliance) to manage the coalition. Capacity gained from hiring a coordinator with deep relationships transformed the ability of the coalition to reach voters. The benefits of this change were apparent in the scale of outreach, leading to higher voter turnout rates in 2020.

Over 70 percent of voters who Lowell Votes contacted turned out to vote, compared with just 59.7 percent turnout across the city. The Cambodian Mutual Aid Association, Lowell Alliance, and Latinx Center for Empowerment led voter engagement efforts in 2020. Each organization serves a distinct population but shares a commitment to base-building and building the power of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in Lowell.

## Impact of In-Language Field Programs

Approximately 528,324 Massachusetts residents ages 18 and over speak limited English, self-reporting that they speak English less than “very well.”<sup>12</sup> Massachusetts residents who do not speak English are historically excluded from civic engagement. Voter information is so often in English only and language accommodations at both the state and national level are frequently unavailable. This lack of information in different languages leaves out a large percentage of power among the rising electorate who are often ignored due to language barriers.

Democracy HUBS partner organizations’ passion and dedication to language access led to successful phone banking programs in languages other than English during the fall of 2020. For instance, True Alliance Center, an emerging group, enacted a powerful phone banking program to Haitian voters in Massachusetts to inform them of the upcoming election and how to vote. After calling every known Haitian Creole-speaking voter in the state, over 82 percent of the voters who True Alliance Center spoke to cast a ballot in the 2020 election, the highest rate of any organization in the

Democracy HUBS. This demonstrated the significant impacts that trusted messengers can have on their peers, but the relatively small scale of outreach demonstrates current gaps in identification of likely Haitian voters.

The MIRA Coalition and MVT coordinated Spanish-speaking partner organizations across the state for weekly phone banks leading up to the November 3 election. Volunteers from several organizations, including La Colaborativa in Chelsea, Neighbors United for a Better East Boston, Latino Education Institute in Worcester, and Latinx Community Center for Empowerment in Lowell among others, joined together on Zoom for a predictive dialer campaign, using a model for likely monolingual Spanish-speaking voters. Together, organizations identified 5,944 known Spanish speakers into the shared database (language IDs), making outreach to Spanish speakers more accurate in the future.

The Chinese Progressive Association, Asian Community Development Corporation, Quincy Asian Resources, Asian American Resource Workshop, Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition, and Chinese Culture Connection in Malden came together for a predictive dialer campaign to make calls to Chinese-speaking voters. Similar to the importance of language IDs in the Spanish phone banks, these organizations identified 3,172 Mandarin and Cantonese speakers, which will make future outreach efforts more effective by matching volunteers with voters who speak the correct Chinese language.

## Climbing Vote Share of Black Voters in Boston

Black vote share reached an unprecedented 21.8 percent in Boston. In another successful constituency-based outreach effort, MassVOTE used the predictive dialer to reach out to nearly every working-class Black voter in the City of Boston. Through several days of action with community partners in the Black community, such as Jack and Jill, MassVOTE’s phone banks led to conversations with 1,549 voters (80.5 percent Black voters) about how to use the new voting reforms, including mail-in voting and expanded early voting. 71 percent of Black voters who were contacted by MassVOTE cast a ballot, compared with only 41 percent of Black voters in Boston.

In addition to MassVOTE’s predictive dialer to reach

12 U.S. Census Bureau, 2012–2016 American Community Survey, PUMS, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

working-class Black voters, several Democracy HUB organizations in the Boston to Brockton HUB primarily contacted Black voters in Boston, also driving historic Black vote share in Boston. The Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance called back thousands of alumni of their affordable homebuying classes, leading to 87.3 percent turnout of the 1,571 Black voters who they contacted. New England United for Justice, the anchor of the Boston to Brockton HUB, turned out 73.5 percent of the 1,677 Black voters in Boston who they contacted. Madison Park Development Corporation, an affordable housing provider in Roxbury, developed resident leaders to call their neighbors. This approach increased their scale of voter outreach to their residents by almost a factor of ten between 2018 and 2020. Their outreach led to 59.9 percent turnout of the Black voters who they contacted, most of whom live in Madison Park residences.

## Youth Turnout Surge & Continuing Gaps

In an election that energized young people, 298,823 voters aged 18 to 24 in Massachusetts cast a ballot. By comparison, only 123,710 young people aged 18 to 24 cast a ballot in Massachusetts in 2016.

Despite these gains, only 49.2 percent of young people aged 18 to 24 cast a ballot in Massachusetts

in 2020. To address this problem, MASSPIRG (Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group) contacted 3,327 young people in Massachusetts in preparation for the 2020 General Election, with a 79 percent turnout rate. MASSPIRG organizers used creative tactics to confront substantial challenges in voter registration, which is typically done in-person in high traffic areas on campuses. MASSPIRG registered over 4,000 young voters by leveraging relationships with faculty, making announcements at the beginning of virtual classes, and hosting virtual phone banks with hundreds of volunteers making calls together on Zoom. They used the Rock the Vote app for virtual voter registration as part of the Students Learn, Students Vote national coalition.

In addition to campus-based Get Out the Vote phone banks and voter registration drives, the Democracy HUBS centered youth leadership development among BIPOC young people in high school. Every week, young people from La Colaborativa in Chelsea, La Comunidad in Everett, and Revere Youth in Action came together to make calls to voters from East Boston, Chelsea, Revere, Everett, Malden, and the North Shore. In addition to phone banking, young people from these organizations came together to advocate for the extension of the eviction moratorium. This youth program collaboration began in 2018 as a one-off canvassing challenge but deepened into a voter contact program by 2020.

# Democracy Means We: Our Roadmap for Inclusive & Reflective Governance

## Permanently Expand Civic Access

Currently, only 72.8 percent of eligible voters are registered to vote. This gap is higher in Boston and the Gateway Cities. The ability to pass strong ballot access policies dramatically increases voter registration beyond small-scale organizational voter registration drives.

The Democracy HUBS are involved in the Election Modernization Coalition's efforts to pass the VOTES Act. This bill includes same-day voter registration, solidifying mail-in voting and expanded early voting, and creating on-ramps to jail-based voting. Each policy removes an essential barrier to eligible voters' ability to access a ballot.

Although fewer BIPOC voters used mail-in voting in 2020, the history of early voting may show a positive future for higher uptake. In 2016, the first election with early voting, 22.9 percent of voters cast their ballot early. In 2020, during the pandemic, the Election Modernization Coalition passed the Safe Elections Law, which expanded early voting hours to the weekends. This expansion led to a 0.8 percent statewide increase in early voting rates relative to 2016 (Table 6 in Appendix B). Despite these modest statewide gains, sixteen out of 28 Gateway Cities showed an increase in early voting rates over 20 percent. Early voting rates increased in all but three Gateway Cities, and more than doubled in New Bedford and Springfield from 2016 to 2020. If similar trends hold for mail-in voting, making this a new option for casting a ballot will lead to greater rates in future elections.

Same-day voter registration has long been the most impactful voting reform and the most difficult to pass. The ability to update an address on the day of the election would drastically increase ballot access for New Majority voters. Fears of new voters, particularly students, unseating incumbents has led to legislative inaction. The Democracy HUBS and the Election Modernization Coalition have foregrounded same-day voter registration in the VOTES Act.

Massachusetts residents who are serving time for misdemeanor convictions or are in jail awaiting trials can legally vote, but many are unable to do so because their access to the ballot depends on the whims of the County Sheriff, elected every six years. The inclusion of these provisions in the VOTES Act reflects an increased focus on racial equity in advocacy for civic access. If these provisions do not pass in the VOTES Act, several partners that have been active in criminal legal reform will make jail-based voting an issue in the 2022 sheriff elections.

## Drawing Fair Maps as a Foundation for Representation & Governing Power

Many Democracy HUBS organizations are involved in the Drawing Democracy Coalition, which seeks to increase the representation of BIPOC communities, immigrants, and low-income people. The Drawing Democracy Coalition's goal is to draw a statewide map that keeps communities whole and supports majority BIPOC districts, where BIPOC people make up the majority of residents of the district. The intention is to create districts that ensure communities have authentic representation and open new opportunities for winning governing power.

The Drawing Democracy Coalition's strategy relies on community leaders' participation in map creation. Democracy HUBS partner organizations work in the Gateway Cities and Boston neighborhoods that have been growing most quickly in the past decade, primarily because immigration drives population growth in Massachusetts. To even out population size, many electoral districts at the state level in these BIPOC and immigrant communities likely will decrease in geographic size because of increasing population. This means that many electoral districts in the Democracy HUBS target areas will likely lose 1-2 precincts. Closely monitoring the impact of shifting 1-2 precincts between districts has on the composition of majority-minority districts and influence districts

is a key focus of the partners involved in the Drawing Democracy Coalition and the Democracy HUBS.

A similar effort in 2011 by the Drawing Democracy Coalition led to the creation of twenty majority minority state representative districts. However, after ten years, 11 of these districts are still represented by white elected officials, with 9 represented by white men (Table 7 in Appendix C). This reality points to the need for year-round civic engagement, base-building, and a leadership pipeline to fully leverage the opportunities for BIPOC communities to elect candidates of their choice after the completion of redistricting.

## Broadening and Expanding the Reach of the Democracy HUBS

In the second cycle of the Democracy HUBS, we plan to strengthen the statewide field and data infrastructure for integrated voter engagement. In particular, we seek to develop new emerging and supporting partners in Western and Southeastern Massachusetts and develop a co-anchor based in Brockton. This success of the next cycle will depend on deepening base-building and leadership development as well as the creation of new partnerships with emerging organizations. To ensure that all municipal field campaigns are supported, we have gathered and curated questions from Democracy HUB partner organizations for use in multi-issue nonpartisan voter guides that will cover up to twenty cities.

Converting as many presidential election voters to municipal and primary election voters is a key tactic in moving the statewide agenda and making gains in local representation. For example, BIPOC voters cast 52 percent of ballots in the 2020 general election in Brockton, the city with the highest proportion of Black residents in the Commonwealth, because of relatively high voter turnout of 65 percent. However, in the 2019 municipal election, when turnout was just 28 percent, BIPOC voters made up only 43 percent of voters. Gentrification in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan has driven movement to Brockton, and to a lesser extent to Randolph and Quincy, providing an urgent opportunity to lay the groundwork for integrated voter engagement in Brockton. Our goal is to increase the capacity of Brockton-based organizations, including adding a co-anchor based in Brockton to the Boston to Brockton Democracy HUB, currently anchored by New England United for Justice.

Springfield frequently has the lowest rates of voter



turnout in the Commonwealth, including in the 2020 General Election. Meanwhile, Hampden County legislators, especially in the towns surrounding Springfield and Holyoke, often vote against legislation that would advance economic justice or racial equity. Higher voter participation among BIPOC voters in Springfield is a necessary step to address the disconnect between the legislators and general public in the region. Our goal is to develop at least three new emerging partner organizations in the Western Massachusetts HUB, anchored by Neighbor to Neighbor. The examples of constituency-based outreach in other Democracy HUBS serve as successful models for increasing voter participation and can prove even more impactful in low-turnout elections than in a presidential election.

Southeastern Massachusetts has a high density of working-class white voters, frequently immigrants from Portugal and the Azores. Voters face a similar disconnect with legislators. Developing and deepening partnerships in the region is critical to addressing these problems. The Coalition for Social Justice, the anchor organization in the South Coast Democracy HUB, is appealing to everyday issues such as childcare and housing to reach unlikely voters. United Interfaith Action, a supporting organization, is deepening the reach of their field program by starting with an “in-reach” program within member congregations and then door knocking in geographic areas adjacent to congregations.

## Organizing for a Just Recovery

As billions of dollars flow into the Commonwealth from the American Rescue Plan Act and previous federal stimulus programs, the state legislature, the governor, mayors, and city councilors will be able to allocate funds with a high level of discretion. Organizations such as La Colaborativa have exerted pressure to ensure that the communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic receive a greater share of federal funding for recovery efforts.

Continued advocacy to state and local policymakers on the allocation of the recovery funds can improve economic mobility and reduce racial inequities in the next few years - and perhaps even the next generation. We can ensure that BIPOC communities have a say in how the state allocates the American Rescue Plan Act funds by mapping which organizations in the Democracy HUBS have a base of members and voters in the districts of statehouse

leadership and key committees, educating residents about the potential use of funds, and coordinating grassroots advocacy. The 2022 gubernatorial election will also create avenues for influencing how funds are spent in the coming years.

City-level executives will exercise influence on how federal funds are spent locally. Many incumbent mayors are not running for re-election, creating opportunities to build relationships with new city-level executives. Ensuring high levels of voter participation in the municipal elections is essential to shaping the future of BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income communities in the aftermath of the pandemic. The wellness to organizing programs position the Democracy HUBS to exercise power in the allocation of these federal funds.

## Seizing Electoral Opportunities in 2022 and Beyond

Massachusetts is a battleground state in 2022. BIPOC voters have the potential to change the dynamics on Beacon Hill for a generation. Every statewide constitutional office (governor, attorney general, secretary of state) may be contested, legislators must run for election in new districts after redistricting, and district attorneys and sheriffs appear on the ballot in the same year for the first time since 2010. Voters will have a chance to make the tax system fairer through a constitutional amendment, while gig economy apps will seek to undermine labor rights through a ballot initiative.

These major opportunities for determining who governs the Commonwealth in 2022 presents the urgent necessity to create a shared multi-issue platform across the Democracy HUBS. Demonstrating the key differences between candidates, based on the issues that working-class BIPOC voters care most deeply about, will be an essential tactic in voter education that drives turnout. Meanwhile, the development of a platform that covers issues ranging from the criminal legal system to fair taxes means that the Democracy HUBS will lead to a visioning process for more equitable political, economic, and social systems in the next generation. These efforts will lay the foundation for continued integrated voter engagement efforts that build power and community organizing that wins governing power.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Democracy HUBS Partner Organizations

Table 5: Partner organizations by role and regional Democracy HUB.

Organization	Role	Democracy HUBS
Massachusetts Voter Table	Statewide Capacity	N/A
MassVOTE	Statewide Capacity	N/A
MIRA Coalition	Statewide Capacity	N/A
APIs CAN	Statewide Capacity	N/A
Chinese Progressive Association	Anchor	APIs CAN
New England United for Justice	Anchor	Boston to Brockton
Cape Verdean Association of Boston	Emerging	Boston to Brockton
Reclaim Roxbury	Emerging	Boston to Brockton
North American Indian Center of Boston	Emerging	Boston to Brockton
Black Economic Justice Institute	Supporting	Boston to Brockton
True Alliance	Supporting	Boston to Brockton
Quincy Asian Resources, Inc.	Supporting	Boston to Brockton, APIs CAN
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative	Supporting	Boston to Brockton
Asian American Resource Workshop	Supporting	Boston to Brockton, APIs CAN
Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance	Supporting	Boston to Brockton
Massachusetts Alliance of HUD Tenants	Supporting	Boston to Brockton
Vietnamese American Initiative for Development	Supporting	Boston to Brockton, APIs CAN
Brockton Interfaith Community	Supporting	Boston to Brockton
Madison Park Development Corporation	Supporting	Boston to Brockton
Worcester Interfaith	Anchor	Central Mass
Latino Education Institute	Emerging	Central Mass
Southeast Asian Coalition of Massachusetts	Supporting	Central Mass
La Colaborativa	Anchor	East Boston to North Shore
Revere Youth in Action	Emerging	East Boston to North Shore, APIs CAN
La Comunidad, Inc.	Emerging	East Boston to North Shore

Organization	Role	Democracy HUBS
Asian Community Development Corporation	Supporting	East Boston to North Shore, APIs CAN
Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition	Supporting	East Boston to North Shore, APIs CAN
Neighbors United for a Better East Boston	Supporting	East Boston to North Shore
Lowell Votes	Anchor	Merrimack Valley
Coalition for a Better Acre	Supporting	Merrimack Valley
Lowell Alliance	Supporting	Merrimack Valley
Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association	Supporting	Merrimack Valley, APIs CAN
Merrimack Valley Project	Emerging	Merrimack Valley
Latinx Community Center for Empowerment	Emerging	Merrimack Valley
YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts	Emerging	South Coast
United Interfaith Action	Supporting	South Coast
Coalition for Social Justice	Anchor	South Coast, Boston to Brockton
Neighbor to Neighbor Education Fund	Anchor	Western Mass
Berkshire Immigrant Center	Emerging	Western Mass
Pioneer Valley Project	Supporting	Western Mass

## Appendix B: Early Voting Uptake from 2016 to 2020

Table 6: Early voting rates in Gateway Cities and Boston, 2016 and 2020, and 4-year percent change. Data from the Secretary of the Commonwealth Early Voting Election Statistics.

City/Town	2016	2020	4-Year % Change
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
ATTLEBORO	20.8%	24.3%	16.9%
BARNSTABLE	21.4%	20.4%	-4.6%
BOSTON	11.6%	18.8%	62.5%
BROCKTON	17.1%	23.3%	35.9%
CHELSEA	10.3%	15.4%	49.0%

<b>City/Town</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>4-Year % Change</b>
CHICOPEE	9.6%	11.9%	23.6%
EVERETT	15.4%	22.1%	43.1%
FALL RIVER	7.4%	11.8%	59.1%
FITCHBURG	17.6%	20.8%	18.4%
HAVERHILL	16.7%	19.5%	17.0%
HOLYOKE	10.9%	12.0%	10.1%
LAWRENCE	13.1%	16.8%	28.4%
LEOMINSTER	21.1%	27.2%	29.1%
LOWELL	12.4%	17.5%	41.0%
LYNN	13.5%	18.3%	35.5%
MALDEN	15.2%	17.0%	12.4%
METHUEN	21.8%	24.3%	11.4%
NEW BEDFORD	7.3%	15.4%	111.5%
PEABODY	20.3%	20.9%	3.1%
PITTSFIELD	13.0%	17.4%	33.5%
QUINCY	14.3%	17.5%	22.4%
REVERE	14.3%	21.9%	53.2%
SALEM	22.4%	22.1%	-1.3%
SPRINGFIELD	7.0%	14.4%	106.6%
TAUNTON	17.6%	21.3%	20.7%
WESTFIELD	18.7%	18.9%	1.4%
WORCESTER	15.6%	20.3%	29.9%

## Appendix C: Majority-Minority District Elected Officials

Identifying the race and ethnicity of elected leaders in state government is challenging. To gauge the racial and ethnic makeup of legislators representing majority-minority districts, a two-person team from the Massachusetts Voter Table searched for racial and ethnic identity in biographical references and publicly available photographs.

**Table 7: Race of legislators representing the 23 majority-minority state legislative districts drawn during redistricting in 2011.**

Chamber	District	% Black	% Asian	% Hispanic	% Minority in 2010	% Minority in 2019	Current legislator	Year elected	Race of legislator
House	5th Suffolk	51.8%	5.1%	24.1%	94.1%	92.7%	Liz Miranda (D)	2019	Black
House	6th Suffolk	68.5%	1.6%	22.3%	91.9%	92.2%	Russell Holmes (D)	2011	Black
House	16th Essex	8.0%	2.4%	76.0%	81.6%	86.2%	Marcos Devers (D)	2019	Latino
House	10th Hampden	19.0%	3.0%	61.2%	81.5%	84.7%	Carlos González (D)	2015	Latino
House	12th Suffolk	64.7%	3.3%	9.6%	79.2%	80.4%	Brandy Fluker Oakley (D)	2021	Black
House	9th Plymouth	35.2%	2.1%	12.2%	68.6%	78.9%	Gerard Cassidy (D)	2017	White
House	11th Hampden	37.3%	1.7%	35.0%	73.9%	73.8%	Bud Williams (D)	2017	Black
House	10th Essex	13.9%	6.7%	36.0%	56.9%	70.8%	Daniel Cahill (D)	2016	White
House	17th Essex	5.6%	4.3%	56.3%	64.0%	68.0%	Frank Moran (D)	2013	Latinx
House	11th Suffolk	36.4%	2.9%	30.9%	69.7%	66.6%	Elizabeth Malia (D)	1998	White
House	14th Suffolk	37.0%	2.3%	21.5%	61.3%	66.5%	Rob Consalvo (D)	2021	White

Chamber	District	% Black	% Asian	% Hispanic	% Minority in 2010	% Minority in 2019	Current legislator	Year elected	Race of legislator
House	1st Suffolk	4.5%	3.3%	52.9%	62.8%	66.1%	Adrian Madaro (D)	2015	White
House	7th Suffolk	32.0%	8.5%	16.6%	58.3%	63.6%	Chynah Tyler (D)	2017	Black
House	11th Essex	12.3%	7.8%	31.0%	51.7%	60.8%	Peter Capano (D)	2019	White
House	18th Middlesex	6.9%	30.6%	17.2%	57.8%	59.4%	Rady Mom (D)	2015	Asian
House	2nd Suffolk	7.2%	4.9%	44.3%	57.0%	58.8%	Daniel Ryan (D)	2015	White
House	5th Hampden	4.7%	1.0%	48.4%	53.2%	58.7%	Patricia Duffy (D)	2021	White
House	13th Suffolk	24.3%	19.5%	9.8%	58.0%	56.7%	Daniel Hunt (D)	2014	White
House	9th Suffolk	19.5%	13.5%	17.1%	51.3%	55.1%	Jon Santiago (D)	2019	Latino
House	15th Worcester	13.6%	6.6%	31.9%	54.3%	53.8%	Mary Keefe (D)	2013	White
Senate	2nd Suffolk	34.8%	5.7%	24.5%	65.0%	69.8%	Sonia Chang-Diaz (D)	2009	Latina & Asian
Senate	1st Suffolk	39.5%	8.0%	13.5%	61.1%	66.1%	Nick Collins (D)	2018	White
Senate	Hampden	17.6%	2.7%	37.3%	57.5%	62.8%	Adam Gomez (D)	2021	Puerto Rican





Massachusetts  
Voter Table

MassVOTE  
Educate. Participate. Activate

MIRA  
Massachusetts  
Immigrant & Refugee  
Advocacy Coalition

APIs CAN!  
Asian Pacific Islanders Civil Action Network