

Voter Turnout in San Francisco's Four-Year Election Cycle 1972-2012

San Francisco has an election every November in which local issues can be placed before the voters (and, since the passage of run-off elections for Supervisors and Mayor in 1973, nearly every December, but no issues can be placed on the ballot in these elections). Who votes in each election changes dramatically depending upon which point in the "four year cycle" the election falls.

Elections in even numbered years alternate between local elections coinciding with either the statewide Governor election or the nation wide Presidential elections. These elections have the most voter interest and participation due to the campaign spending and media attention given these races. The Supervisors run in these elections, with five seats contested in the Governors election and six seats up in the Presidential election. All other local officials are elected in odd year elections.

Elections in odd number years alternate between the Mayor's election, which occurs in the year preceding the Presidential election, and the minor local offices (City Attorney, Assessor, Treasurer). These elections have lower voter participation with the fewest votes cast in the odd numbered year, "minor office" election.

Average Voter Turn-Out SF Elections

Election	% TO
Presidential	71%
Governor	57%
Mayor	49%
Mayor Run-Off	51%
Minor Office	38%

Source: SFIC compilation based on SF Department of Elections final reports of the vote.

Presidential Elections

Year	Turn-out
1972	74%
1976	73%
1980	66%
1984	70%
1988	67%
1992	69%
1996	62%
2000	67%
2004	74%
2008	81%
2012	73%

Governor Elections

Year	Turn-Out
1974	57%
1978	57%
1982	63%
1986	61%
1990	57%
1994	55%
1998	56%
2002	45%
2003 Recall	59%
2006	61%
2010	61%

Mayor Elections (November)

First Place Finisher	Turn-Out
1975- Moscone	73%
1979- Feinstein	55%
1983- Feinstein*	46%
1987-Agnos	51%
1991-Jordan	48%
1995- Brown	52%
1999- Brown	45%
2003- Newsom	46%
2007-Newsom	36%
2011- Ed Lee	42%

*more than 50% of vote, no run-off

Mayor December Run-Off

Year	Candidates	%TO
1975	Moscone/Barbagallta	66%
1979	Feinstein/Kopp	52%
1987	Agnos/Molinari	40%
1991	Jordan/Agnos	51%*
1995	Brown/Jordan	47%
1999	Brown/Ammiano	49%*
2003	Newsom/Gonzalez	49%*

* turn-out in run-off greater than in general election

Minor Office

Year	Turn-Out
1973	60%
1977	52%
1981	25%
1985	27%
1989	45%
1993	37%
1997	30%
2001	30%
2005	53%*
2009	23%

* Statewide Special Election