

ELECTION SUPERVISOR DISCRETION AND TURNOUT IN FLORIDA'S MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

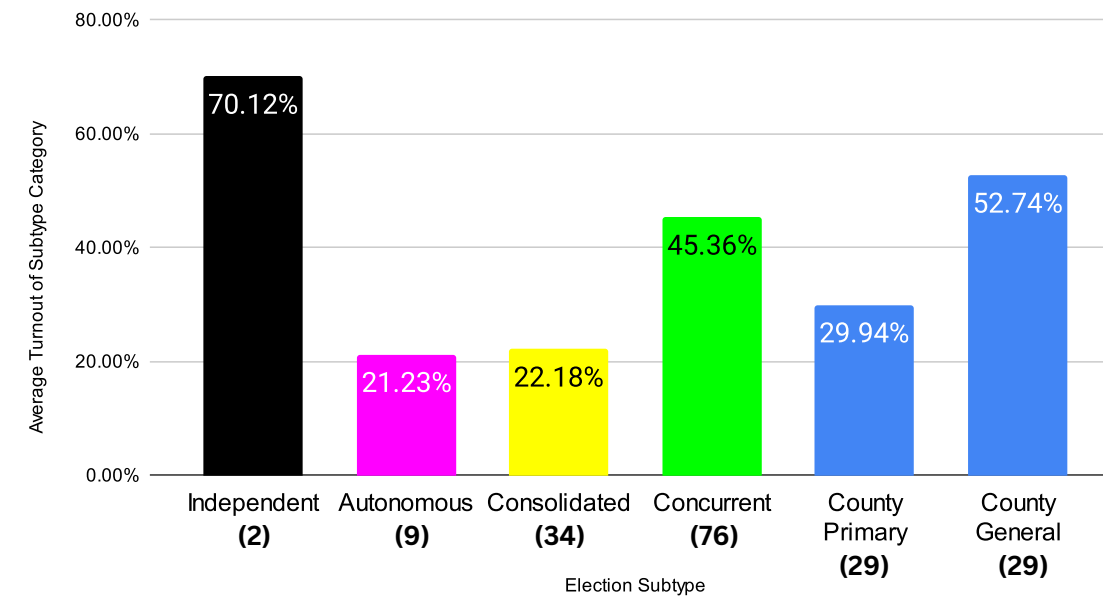
Maxwell Clarke

University of Florida

LITERATURE

- Turnout has less impact in higher-order elections as voter and non-voter preferences are generally similar at state and federal levels (Hajnal)
- Municipal elections see significantly higher turnout when the municipal government is governed more directly by representatives as opposed to bureaucrats or appointed managers (Wood)
- Representatives elected in on-cycle elections are more likely to have views that align with those of their constituents compared to those elected in off-cycle elections (Hartney & Hayes)
- On-cycle elections, particularly those that coincide with presidential elections, are more representative and experience nearly double the turnout rates of off-cycle elections (Hajnal et al)
- Increased outsourcing of municipal services correlates with lower turnout (Hajnal & Lewis)

Average Turnout in Most Recent Election by Election Subtype

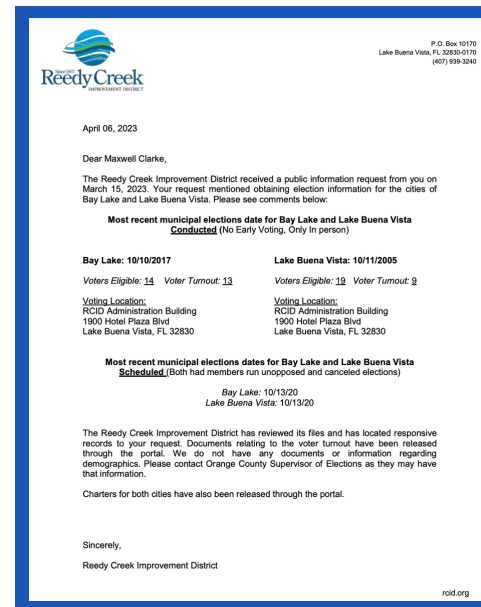


DEFINITIONS

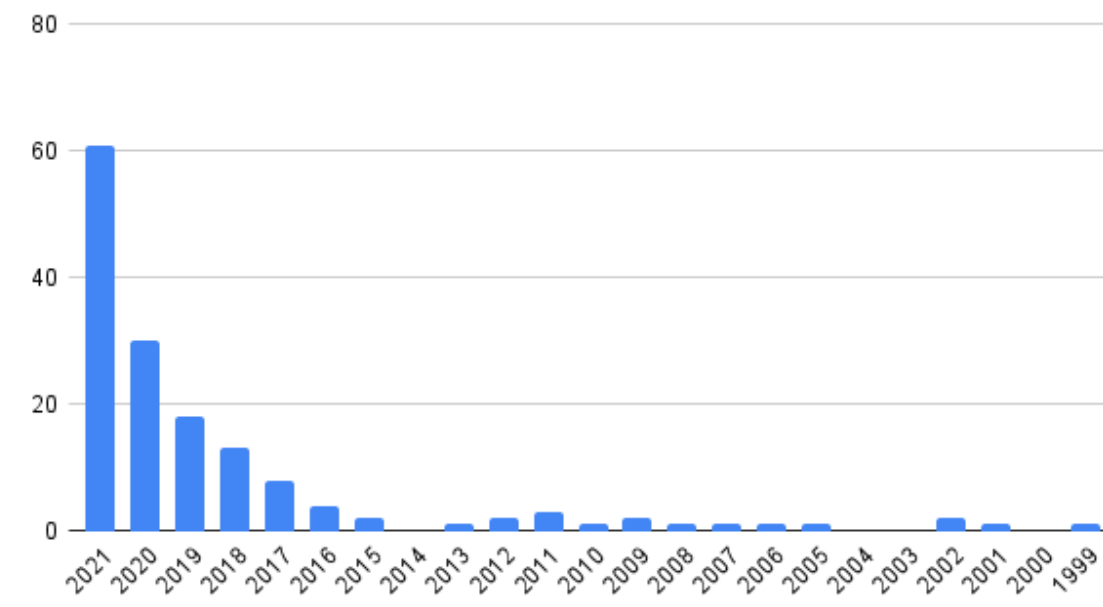
- **INDEPENDENT:** Election conducted with near-zero involvement from higher governments. Only two municipalities in the **Disney special district** apply.
- **AUTONOMOUS:** Election conducted by municipal clerk with minimum possible involvement from county SOE; election runs on its own ballot.
- **CONSOLIDATED:** Election conducted by SOE without county, state, or federal contests.
- **CONCURRENT:** Election conducted by the county SOE on ballot with state and/or federal contests.
- **TURNOUT:** Turnout is calculated as # votes in contest divided by total # votes possible for contest. For a jurisdiction, turnout is the average of the rates of all contests.

DATA COLLECTION

- Data was not necessarily publicly available
- Contacted government officials:
 - 67 Florida supervisors of elections
 - 411 Florida municipal clerks
- Data collected:
 - Demographic and turnout data
 - Voter registration and history data



Year of Most Recently Conducted Municipal Election Before 2023



CONTESTATION DEVIATION

- Significant differences between most recently scheduled elections and most recently conducted elections for a large number of municipalities
- Many municipalities are governed by appointed municipal legislators, depending on the provisions of the municipal charter, rather than elected officials
- Some municipalities are governed by councils made up of members who have NEVER been elected and were only appointed by previous legislators
- Data suggests there is a lack of contestation across the state
- Elections may be scheduled too frequently, or additional factors may influence dearth of candidates such as local powerplayers

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Significant differences in voter turnout depending on election subtype
- Who administers elections and when they are conducted strongly determines participation
- Consolidating, centralizing, or simply standardizing administration may increase turnout
- A huge fraction of regular scheduled elections are cancelled due to lack of contestation

- The State does NOT conduct oversight of municipal elections
- Many municipalities do not use voting systems
- Sharp differences in SOE-Clerk engagement across state
- Concerning differences in interpretation of state law as applied to municipal elections by SOEs and municipal clerks

