

The Rockville Voter List

Roald Schrack 24 Apr, 2011

Rockville holds a municipal election on the odd numbered years and publishes a list of registered voters who can vote in the election. You can get a copy of the list, free, from the city. The list actually comes from the county. Everyone registered in the county to vote for partisan elections on the even years is also qualified to vote in city non-partisan elections on the odd years.

Rockville also maintains a small list of people who don't want to register with the county but do want to vote in city elections. This is to accommodate people that are here temporarily and want to maintain a residence in some other state. The city elections this year will be held on Tuesday, November 8. Registration closes on October 10, but you may register and vote on election day.

The city just released a voter list that covers registrations up until February 3, 2011. As more people register until October 10, new voter lists including these new names will become available. For electioneering purposes the recently released list is adequate because only about 6% of new registrants who have not previously voted will actually vote in the 2011 election. The released list shows the voting record of all those who were registered for the 2009 election. . Although the current list covers only changes in the voter list in the last 18 months, we can estimate what changes will still occur in the next 6 months.

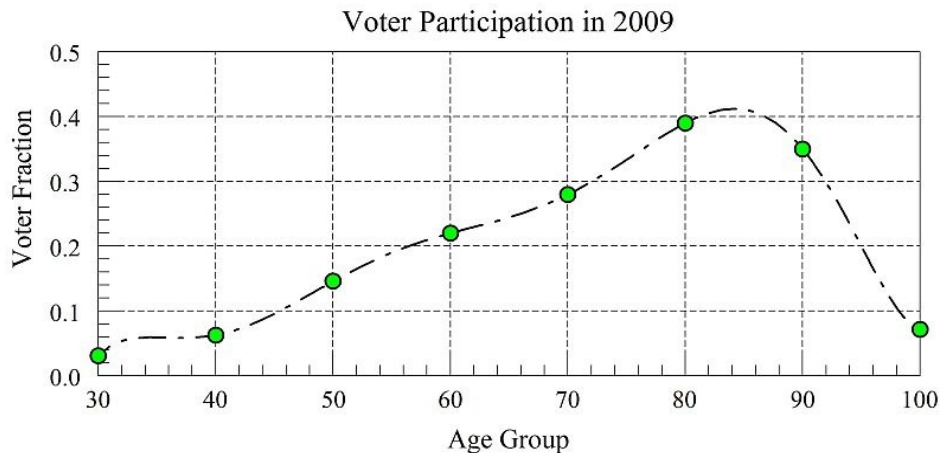
There were 4112 new voters added in the first 18 months for an average of 228 new voters per month. There will be six months until the close of registration so if we assume that new voters are added at the same rate of 228 voters per month there will be an additional 1371 voters.

Current registration as of February 3 is 34911, so the predicted registration by November = $34911 + 1371 = 36282$. The following table compares the 2009 figures with the predicted 2011 values.

Year	Registration	New Voters	Previous Voters
2009	36840	7893	8969
2011	36282	5483	9366

Previous voters are those registered voters who have voted in at least one of the last four elections. The number of new voters tend to be less on those years when there was not a presidential election the previous year. Overall, the coming election seems to have pretty much the same type of electorate as in 2009. There were 6406 ballots cast in 2009, only 17% of the registered voters cast a ballot despite fully contested races. At this point few candidates have announced so it is not possible to guess the turnout in 2011.

The graph below shows the probability of voting as a function of age.



The age is indicated for the data top of a bin, thus the data at 60 means the average probability of voting from ages 51 to 60 is 22%. The outcome of elections in Rockville is heavily determined by senior citizens. In the last election the average voter age was 61.

Not everyone is registered to vote in Rockville although the “motor-voter” law catches more people than before. Being registered to vote is now almost automatic when one deals with the Motor Vehicle Administration to renew your driver’s license. The population of voting age in Rockville is about 75 % of the total population, or about 46,000 people. If our final registration in the city is 36,282 then $36282/46000 = 79\%$ of the city is registered. This is a very high number. In 1990 and 2000 only about 66% of the residents of the city were registered voters.

Interest in municipal elections is low in most suburban communities. In Gaithersburg it has historically run about 10%. It is particularly low for renters and those that who live in apartment houses. These residents do not have the direct impact of taxes nor the dependence on city services that the homeowner does. There are 11,391 single family detached homes and 11% of them are rentals so one might expect a hardcore of about 10,000 households in Rockville that would be interested in municipal affairs. The reason that participation falls short even among the homeowners is probably contributed to by two factors:

- 1.) The city is well run with an excellent staff, every two years the city carries out a citizen satisfaction survey. This year 93% of the respondents said they felt that the quality of life in Rockville is excellent or good. There is really very little that needs political intervention.
- 2) The political system is non-partisan with no enduring cadre of political workers dedicated to getting out the vote. Most residents have no fixed political affiliation but respond to the appeals of candidates that for the most part are civil and reasoned.

Rockville has profited over the past 50 years with this system that, while not exciting high participation at the polls has nevertheless provided residents with responsive and effective government.

Careful study of the voter list can reveal a goldmine of information about the city without disclosing any information about an individual voter. In the next report the list of new voters and lost voters (registered for the last election but missing in the current list) will be examined in detail for what it tells about our constantly changing population.