OVERVIEW

Participating in our democracy is something worth celebrating. When We All Vote’s Party at the Polls program is a proven strategy to increase voter participation. Throughout October and November of 2022, partners and volunteers hosted celebrations at or near polling locations across the country to increase voter turnout. These parties bring communities together to make their voices heard at the ballot box and celebrate with music, food, and fun activities for the whole family.

Why is Party at the Polls important?

- **Research shows that when voting is a fun, celebratory event, voter turnout increases.** Party at the Polls encourages voters to make their voices heard early in elections.

In 2022, When We All Vote, in collaboration with Dr. Donald Green, designed experiments to continue evaluation of the efficacy of the Party at the Polls model.
ABSTRACT

When We All Vote used a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effects that a “Party at the Polls” event has on turnout within a community. In the 2022 midterms, state and local organizations and volunteers were awarded grants to host events in specific geographies randomly selected during the early voting period. This experiment focuses on 69 parties that were held in target geographies in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Michigan during the 2022 federal midterm election.

The results suggest that Parties at the Polls have a positive impact on voter turnout within our target communities. There is evidence that this impact is pronounced in communities that are accustomed to voting early. There is also some evidence that this method is more effective at increasing turnout among voters of color over 25 years old, as well as those more recently registered at their current address.

In order to maximize the impact of these parties, it is crucial to give enough time both for When We All Vote’s strategic implementation of the program as well as ensure that hosts have enough time to thoughtfully plan and advertise their event. When We All Vote should also continue their strategy of outreach and coordination with community and corporate partners as these relationships are key to hosting parties.
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Quantitative Findings

- Across all three states, there is evidence that Party at the Polls events at early vote sites have a substantial impact on individual voter turnout among young voters and voters of color. An individual in our target demographic living within a community in which a party was held had an estimated +2.7 percentage point (pp) increase in the probability of voting.

- There is also evidence of even greater impact in NC (+4.5pp), a state with a history of early voting* and strong compliance with (greatest adherence to) the experimental design.

- Additionally, there is evidence of this strategy being more effective for voters over the age of 25 (+3.3pp), as well as those more recently registered (+4.7pp) at their current address.

Qualitative Findings

- Existing relationships and dedicated, consistent outreach to community and corporate partners yielded successful recruitment of party hosts in targeted communities who were able to engage both their communities and small businesses to host successful early vote events.

- More lead time is needed to promote grants for a turnout program of this scale and to collect and approve grant applications. Deadlines did not give grantees enough time to apply and adequately plan for events nor did it allow enough time to ensure compliance.

*Note: Early Vote in NC as it operates today was first established in 2007 as compared to no-excuse absentee voting established in 2018 for MI and 2020 for PA.
INTRODUCTION TO
WHEN WE ALL VOTE

- When We All Vote is a nonpartisan initiative of Civic Nation on a mission to change the culture around voting and to increase participation in each and every election by helping to close the race and age gap. Civic Nation is a 501(c)(3) home for changemakers who inspire, educate, and activate people around the issues that will define this generation.

- Co-chaired by Michelle Obama, When We All Vote brings together individuals, institutions, brands, and organizations to register new voters across the country and advance civic education for the entire family and voters of every age in order to build an informed and engaged electorate for today and generations to come.

- Civic Nation began to study the impact of party at the polls in 2016 in partnership with Dr. Donald Green through the #VoteTogether initiative. In 2020, When We All Vote adopted the program, and partnered with dozens of local and national partners to conduct over 200 socially distanced early voting parties at the polls.
Previous studies conducted by Civic Nation and Dr. Donald Green have found indications of substantial effects from parties held at early voting sites.

When We All Vote’s Parties at the Polls program (or voting festivals) has received growing attention from organizations looking to mobilize voters, particularly in communities with historically low turnout.

Parties turn voting into a community celebration to make voting more appealing and accessible. In this way, events and celebrations at early voting centers in advance of Election Day have the potential to be more effective than traditional voter contact methods (mail, SMS, phones, doors) and targeted TV and digital ads alone.

This randomized control trial (RCT) design helps to ascertain the impact that parties have on voter turnout by randomly assigning geographies to treatment and then working with local organizations and volunteers to stand up parties in these communities.

This experiment examines the impact of 69 Parties at the Polls held in October and November of 2022 across 52 target geographies in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Michigan.

The audience of interest in this experiment is comprised of voters under the age of 35 and voters of color of any age.

In 2022, When We All Vote held over 200 Parties at the Polls across the country, conducting multiple experiments therein. In addition to our work in PA, NC, & MI, we will be analyzing the impact of volunteer-led parties, and zooming in on parties held during early vote in GA.
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Targeting communities:</strong> This analysis looks specifically at turnout among voters under the age of 35 and voters of color of all ages.</th>
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<td><strong>Exclusive focus on hosting parties during early vote (EV):</strong> This allowed the comparison of impact of parties in states with established EV (NC, MI) and a state with more recent/restrictive EV opportunities (PA).</td>
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<td><strong>Individual-level data:</strong> The use of state voter files enabled conducting analysis at the individual level instead of relying on precinct-level turnout.</td>
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<td><strong>Geography-first approach:</strong> The approach identified zip codes of interest to When We All Vote and randomly selected a subset for treatment, before recruiting community organizations and volunteers in these treatment geographies. This led to parties being concentrated in three states as opposed to spread out across the country.</td>
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INTERVENTION: What is a party and who was invited?
The intervention for individuals in treatment is, “the combined effect of advance advertising and the festivals themselves” (Green & McClellan 2017).

The treatment group received multiple layers of encouragement to turnout for this election including:

1. **A Party at the Polls** near an early voting site put on by community hosts
   
   Hosts received grants to pay for the cost of the party and were encouraged to advertise the festival across their networks. Depending on the host, grants disbursed were either to community organizations ($2,500/party) or volunteer hosts ($250/party).

2. **Communication** via postcards, phone calls, and text messages sent directly to voters inviting them to these voting celebrations (as well as raising their awareness of the upcoming election)
The **New PA Project Education Fund** hosted 3 parties at the polls using When We All Vote grant funds in Montgomery, Delaware, and Northampton counties, with more than 150 attendees combined. Event organizers partnered with the League of Women Voters and their local NAACP chapter, using the grant to book a local DJ, food truck, and provide a lunch catered by Wawa. Arts and crafts were provided as well for voters with children. One event organizer even dressed up as a ballot drop box to entertain the crowd!

The above describes one grantee's parties, but it is important to note that parties took different forms depending on the host. A core feature of our strategy is to encourage local organizations to use their own creativity and expertise to set up events that are unique and culturally relevant to their community.
WHO WAS INVITED?

Parties were open to everyone in a community!

Party hosts were given a grant that included money for advertising their party throughout the community (as well as funding to put on the party itself).

When We All Vote used voter file data to provide additional, targeted coverage to publicize these events to those in treatment. All voters targeted were under the age of 35 or voters of color. This outreach included postcards, text messages, and phone calls directing community members to resources where they could find details and RSVP to a party near them.
To maximize the impact of our voter contact with finite resources, individuals in treatment zip codes had to meet the following criteria:

- Lived in areas with a higher concentration of the audience of interest (voters under the age of 35 and voters of color)
- Had high-quality contact information (phone number and mailing address)

*Note: Due to When We All Vote’s prioritization of precincts with a high concentration of the audience of interest, some members of precincts who received voter contact were in control.

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<tr>
<th>Assigned Experimental Condition</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach attempted</td>
<td>751,000 (73%)</td>
<td>52,000 (1%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No outreach attempted</td>
<td>279,000 (27%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We sent postcards to approximately 60% of all treatment households (those with good mailing addresses) inviting them to a Party at the Polls near them.

We used a QR code to direct individuals to nearby parties, which enabled us to continue recruiting hosts and standing up events as the early vote period progressed.

Postcards were mailed to voters* the week of October 17th, 2022 and marked the beginning of voter outreach.

*Note: Since party hosts were still being recruited when mail dropped, a subset of communities (9.8%) received a mail piece but had no nearby party to attend.
25% of our treatment group received text messages from When We All Vote at 5 days and 2 days out from the party near them. The link directed them to our event website, which used geolocation to recommend the party nearest them. Those with landlines received a phone call with party details.
HYPOTHESES
Parties increase turnout in our target demographic

When a voting festival or “Party at the Polls” occurs during the early vote period, the probability of voting for eligible voters in the immediate geographic area and in the audience of interest (voters under the age of 35 and voters of color of all ages) increases.
The effects on turnout are greater among certain groups. Tests were conducted for several other heterogeneous effects:

- Parties will have a reduced effect in states that do not have an established culture of early voting. Early voting culture will be defined at the state-level and require that a state has a history of access to voting before Election Day. In this experiment, only PA is considered to have a limited history of voting before Election Day.

- Parties will have a smaller effect on turnout among prospective voters under the age of 25 (Generation-Z voters).

- Parties will encourage greater turnout among “transient voters.” Transient voters are defined here as individuals who have been registered at their current address for less than 4 years (after the last midterm election).
Goal: Estimate the impact that parties have on community voter turnout.

Zip codes were first randomly assigned to treatment, then state and local community partners were recruited to ensure that each treatment zip code had an early vote party.

A block-randomization approach was used so that locations of high programmatic importance to When We All Vote had a greater probability of being included in treatment.

Access to state voter files created the opportunity to conduct analysis at the individual level, with standard errors clustered by zip code.
In order for a zip code to be included in this experiment, it had to align with When We All Vote’s programmatic priorities, as defined by meeting all 3 of the following criteria:

1) At least 5,000 registered voters under the age of 35 and voters of color of all ages,

2) At least 30% of registered voters were in the audience of interest,

3) And at least one of the 4 following benchmarks:
   a) Zip code turnout in 2020 less than 66%
   b) Zip code turnout in 2018 less than 50%
   c) New voter registrations in zip code since 2020 greater than 15%
   d) New voter registrations in zip code since 2018 greater than 35%

A total of 450 zip codes across the 3 states met these criteria.
block randomization was used to give high-priority locations a greater probability of inclusion in treatment without compromising experimental rigor.

To accomplish this, an index was created to prioritize zip codes:

- 1 point was awarded for each of the benchmarks on the previous slide
- The sum of these points was then scaled by population
- Higher scores on this index represented greater importance to When We All Vote
Within each state, zip codes were ordered by this priority index and 10 blocks (A-J) were created per state—each block containing locations with similar index scores.

Zip codes in block A had the highest probability of treatment. The likelihood of selection into treatment descended with each subsequent block down to block J.

Block probabilities were chosen such that the number of expected parties summed to a predetermined number for each state. The number of parties was determined based on (1) the feasibility of finding hosts based on existing When We All Vote partnerships in that area and (2) availability of funds for grants in specific states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Desired Number of Parties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once geographies were randomized and assigned, an individual level dataset needed to be compiled.

- The final dataset contained voters under the age of 35 and voters of color of all ages who were registered to vote by September 15th, 2022 in all of the 450 zip codes in this experiment.
- The state voter files allowed access to individual-level data for:
  - Age
  - Registration Date
  - Voted 2022
  - Voted 2020
  - Voted 2018

### DATASET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Control</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61 Zip Codes</td>
<td>389 Zip Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~1,030,000 Individuals</td>
<td>~4,590,000 Individuals</td>
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Note: While race is a valuable variable in this analysis, a lack of self-reported race in the voter file for PA, NC, and MI and a hesitancy to rely on modeled race led to its exclusion. Modeled race was used to broadly identify the sample and for some heterogeneous effects, but not the primary hypothesis.
Compliance in this context is evaluated at the zip code level and reflects whether a party was held in a geography in alignment with its treatment assignment.

An individual lives in a “compliant treatment zip code” if their zip code was assigned to treatment and a party was held there which received both funding and voter contact from When We All Vote. Likewise, an individual lives in a “compliant control zip code” if that zip code was assigned to control and no party was held there.

Due to limitations in monitoring and data collection, compliance in treatment indicates that party hosts informed When We All Vote about their party plans post-grant. There is no insight into parties held without communication to When We All Vote.

Note: Compliance is not determined by voter contact alone, but rather by the occurrence of a party in combination with some voter contact. Due to imperfect data, it is estimated that about 1.2% of individuals in control received a mail piece or a text message. However, this does not affect compliance or the design as the impact of contact without a party is assumed to be insubstantial.
Approximately 63% of the subjects in the treatment and 96% of subjects in the control received the treatment that had been assigned to them.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Actual condition</th>
<th>Assigned Experimental Condition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Treatment: ~650,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Party</td>
<td>Treatment: ~380,000</td>
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</table>
RESULTS
REGRESSION APPROACH

**IPW:** The reliance on block randomization means that all regressions include Inverse Probability Weights (IPW) which are defined as:

![Formula]

**ITT:** The intent-to-treat effect (ITT) is the estimated difference in the probability of voting based on treatment assignment, which was calculated using IPW to account for block randomization.

**CACE:** The complier average causal effect (CACE) was also determined using IPW instrumental variable regression to estimate the effect of a party on individuals living in a treated location. The instrumental variable is assignment to treatment, and the endogenous independent variable is whether a Party at the Polls actually occurred in that individual's zip code. The exclusion restriction for this approach assumes that turnout is affected only by the occurrence of a party and that mail + texts alone did not substantially influence turnout.

**Outcome:** Voting behavior in the 2022 midterm election.

**Covariates:** To increase precision, covariates for age, age², vote status in the 2018 midterm election, and vote status in the 2020 presidential election were also included. If vote history is not available for an individual, it is assumed that the 2022 election is their first election voting at that address.
**First Stage:**

\[ \hat{\text{party}} = \hat{Y}_1 + \hat{Y}_2 \text{voted}_{2020} + \hat{Y}_3 \text{voted}_{2018} + \hat{Y}_4 \text{age} + \hat{Y}_5 \text{age}^2 + \hat{Y}_6 \text{state} + \hat{Y}_7 \text{treat} \]

**Second Stage:**

\[ \text{turnout}_{2022} = B_1 + B_2 \text{voted}_{2020} + B_3 \text{voted}_{2018} + B_4 \text{age} + B_5 \text{age}^2 + B_6 \text{state} + B_7 \hat{\text{party}} + e \]
KEY RESULTS

OVERALL EFFECT

On average, living in a community with an early voting party increases the probability of voting by +2.7pp for voters under the age of 35 and voters of color of all ages.

★ This was determined using the IV-IPW specification above, and arriving at a pooled estimate of +2.7pp (p-value: 0.098)*.

When looking at the results by state, the results in NC are especially encouraging: the estimated the impact of parties on voter turnout to be around +4.5pp (p-value: 0.0316).

★ The success of parties in NC is likely due to a combination of a more established early voting culture in the state along with a relatively high rate of compliance, as compared to PA and MI.

*Footnote: All p-values are reported as one-sided with Ha: treatment estimate > 0
Exploration of the results in PA shed light on the effectiveness of parties in states that have a less established culture of early voting, with the hypothesis that this strategy will be less effective.

- CACE estimates for PA: +2.5pp (p-value of 0.2716)
  Not significant: p-value > 0.1

- Compared to a state like NC with established early voting, results in PA suggest an estimate of party impact that is a bit lower. Of course, given the p-value, these results are not conclusive and more research is needed to identify a more precise impact of early vote parties in PA.

- These results lend tentative support to the hypothesis that turnout in locations with newer early voting laws is less affected by parties during the early vote period.
Analysis was conducted to understand the impact of parties on voters under the age of 25, a key demographic cutoff in many voter engagement efforts. The hypothesis was that the impact on turnout for this population would be lower.

- **Under-25**: +1.8pp (p-value of 0.2825). Not significant: p-value > 0.1
- **25+**: +3.3pp (p-value of 0.0475)

CACE estimate shows no evidence that parties are significantly associated with higher turnout in this demographic. By looking at the non-Gen-Z portion of the sample, there is evidence for the other side of this hypothesis; this strategy is more effective for voters over the age of 25 in our sample.
This hypothesis suggested a greater impact of Parties at the Polls on transient voters (those registered at their current address for less than 4 years). This reflects the impact of a party for individuals voting in their first midterm at an address.

★ Transient Voters: +4.7pp (p-value of 0.0696)
  ○ Results indicate some effect of parties on the voting propensity of individuals who have never voted in a midterm at their current address.

★ Stationary Voters: +2.0pp (p-value of 0.1378)
  Not significant: p-value > 0.1
  ○ As a complement to the above analysis, voter turnout among non-transient (stationary) voters is not significantly impacted by parties.
The theory behind the party at the polls approach relies on the combined effect of advertising and the party itself to increase turnout. Existing meta-analysis from the Analyst Institute on the topic states that mail + text alone would only have resulted in an approximate increase in turnout of < +0.5pp. This experiment does not attempt to disentangle the effects of parties from the voter contact, but it does show that the pairing of a party with contact creates an effect which is substantially above what we would expect from voter contact alone.

★ Mailed Voters: +3.8pp (p-value of 0.055)

The estimated effect of a party on individuals who received mail* is a +3.8pp increase in the probability of voting as compared to folks in control who would have been mailed.

While the pooled regression shows the overall effect of this program across communities to be +2.7pp, these results are evidence that the effect is even greater among the folks who received a personal touch from WWAV.

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<th>Assigned Experimental Condition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual outreach/ Hypothetical outreach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual: 751,000 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothetical: 3,370,000 (72%)</td>
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*Note: While voters also received phone calls and text messages from WWAV, that outreach strategy took a dynamic approach to meet the needs on the ground. Therefore, this analysis is limited to those who received mail as all mailers went out at a single point in time and provide a clear cutoff that is consistent across treatment and control.
CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK
Previous work had established that Parties at the Polls have a substantial and positive impact on voter turnout. The 2022 results of the Party at the Polls program show the continued impact of the program and the need to grow.

Across 3 states and 450 experimental zip codes, our ITT estimate suggests that we turned out at least an additional 12,566 voters in our treatment group of over 1 million registered voters. We estimate the magnitude of this effect to be around +2.7pp in places parties were held.

Our ITT estimate is calculated across the entire treatment group and not just zip codes where parties were held. Additionally, the observation is just among voters under the age of 35 and voters of color; it’s likely that parties had some effect on voters outside this demographic.
More lead time is needed to promote grants for a turnout program of this scale and to collect and approve grant applications. Deadlines did not give grantees enough time to apply and plan for events, nor did it allow enough time to ensure consistent compliance.

**QUALITATIVE CONCLUSION**

- **Existing relationships** and dedicated, consistent outreach to community and corporate partners yielded successful recruitment of party hosts in targeted communities who were able to engage both their communities and small businesses to host successful early vote events.

- Buy in with partners relied on leveraging the celebratory mood associated with Parties at the Polls to promote turnout. The idea of voting as a community activity resonated deeply with volunteers, partners, participants, talent, and When We All Vote’s digital audience.

- More lead time is needed to promote grants for a turnout program of this scale and to collect and approve grant applications. Deadlines did not give grantees enough time to apply and plan for events, nor did it allow enough time to ensure consistent compliance.
# SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

## Programmatic recommendations

- **Longer timelines:** This program was executed on a very short timeline. Ideally in the future, When We All Vote will have a longer runway to ensure resources and partnerships are in place to host parties in all treatment areas in order to increase compliance and ensure alignment on programmatically significant geographies.

- **Increase resources for simultaneous experiments:** In 2022, When We All Vote was simultaneously executing multiple Party at the Polls experiments during the same election, which compounded the challenges experienced in execution and analysis. While it is certainly not impossible to execute multiple tests of a strategy in the same election, appropriate time and capacity needs to be allocated to ensure it is done successfully.

## Research recommendations

- **Expand data capture:** In the future, the inclusion of data capture methods to track additional host details would be valuable to test a hypothesis around whether the demographics of a party host results in a turnout effect among voters who share demographic traits.

- **Test impact of advertising:** Additionally, while there isn’t a future where parties are held without advertising them, some priority geographies should be withheld from voter contact to test the impact of the advertising component (less the elements about the parties themselves) alone to isolate and quantify the impact of the parties themselves.
Thank you!

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