

# POLICY FOR PROGRESS

Boston Poll Release  
September 3, 2021

@PolicyMass  
PolicyForProgress.org

# AGENDA

## About

- Policy For Progress is a startup policy action lab incubated within ERNA working to elevate issues & leaders to close the gap between our Commonwealth's values & reality

## Format

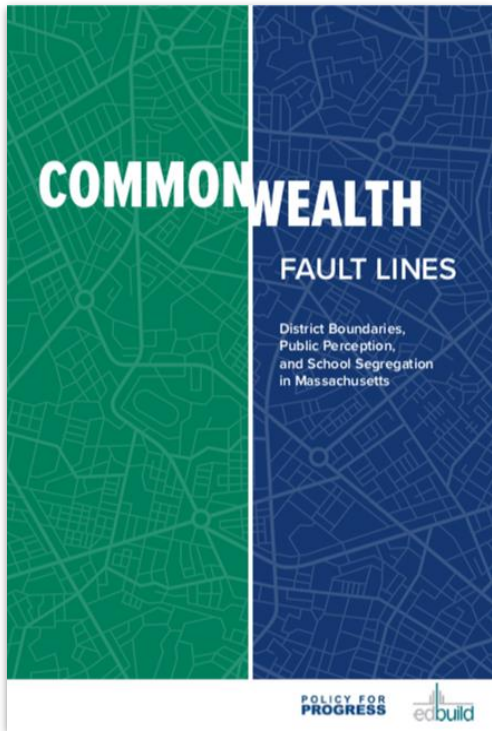
- This is on the record
- 11:00-11:05 – Steve Koczela presents results of policy questions
- 11:05-11:10 – debrief policy questions
- 11:10-11:20 - Steve Koczela presents results of mayoral poll
- 11:20-11:30 – Q & A moderated by Reynolds Graves

## Participation & Connecting

- Introduce yourself & share any resources or connecting opportunities and we can share in a follow-up email
- Please nominate issues, emerging policy researchers, and leaders to join our steering committee at [PolicyForProgress.org](http://PolicyForProgress.org)

# PFP launched in December, elevating critical issues through policy & public opinion research, partnerships, convening & communications

## RESEARCH



**COMMONWEALTH**

### FAULT LINES

District Boundaries, Public Perception, and School Segregation in Massachusetts

**POLICY FOR PROGRESS** **edbuild**

## CONVENING & CONVERSATION



**POLICY FOR PROGRESS**  
**MassINC**  
RESEARCH. COMMUNICATION. ACTION.

### A Conversation For Progress: Five Perspectives on School Segregation in Massachusetts

Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>  
10-11am

- Rep. Chynah Tyler**  
D-Roxbury 7th Suffolk District
- Stefan Lallinger**  
Director, The Bridges Collaborative
- Ben Forman**  
Research Director, MassINC
- Hardin L.K. Coleman, Ph.D**  
Dean Emeritus at Boston University  
Wheelock College, Boston School Committee Member
- Turahn Dorsey**  
Foundation Fellow, Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation

## COMMS



**Boston Sunday Globe**  
DECEMBER 13, 2020

### Ideas

A HUB FOR COMMENTARY, INNOVATION, AND INSIGHT  
EDITOR: MICHAEL KILGORE | DECEMBER 13, 2020

**The new school segregation crisis**

THE BAY STATE HASN'T DEMONSTRATED ANY REAL URGENCY AROUND INTEGRATION IN DECADES. MILLIONS OF CHILDREN HAVE PAID THE PRICE.

By DAVID SCHARPENBERG | GLOBE STAFF

**I**n a still deeper, grayer, colder policy for Progress...  
The Bay State hasn't demonstrated any real urgency around integration in decades. Millions of children have paid the price.

# Democracy another core issue of inequities in full & fair representation in our Commonwealth – impacts echo in this poll

RESEARCH

CONVENING & CONVERSATION

COMMS

ISSUE BRIEF FROM  
POLICY FOR  
PROGRESS

## Our Democracy is Having an Off Day

Why Massachusetts politicians never truly face the voters

Governor Deval Patrick once said, "Massachusetts invented America." Our Commonwealth is a historic birthplace of American democracy, but our practice of democracy faces a huge participation problem in the local elections where vital policy decisions are made. In Boston, turnout in local elections is abysmal—only 16.5% of the voting-age population cast a ballot in the city's 2019 city council contest. This democratic shortfall also deepens existing divides: those who did vote were significantly whiter and wealthier than Boston as a whole. The problem is fairly straightforward: Boston, like many other American cities, holds its local elections in odd-numbered years, or "off-cycle." When Massachusetts voters want to cast ballots for local offices, they must take an extra trip to the polls. Research shows that holding local elections off-cycle depresses turnout, particularly among people of color, and heightens the power of special interest groups.

Today, essentially no elected officials in Massachusetts face the full electorate. Beyond local elections, our state legislative elections are overwhelmingly uncontested and one party holds supermajority control in both chambers. Even elections for statewide offices like governor are held in non-presidential election years, when turnout is far lower.



## OUR DEMOCRACY IS HAVING AN OFF DAY

Local elections determine housing & education policy. They also have low, regressive turnout.

There's an easy fix.



POLICY FOR PROGRESS

### The Problem

"Off-cycle" elections held in odd-numbered years → Low turnout → Voters older, whiter & wealthier, reducing political power of historically underserved groups  
 → Special interest groups hold outsized influence

### The Solution

"On-cycle" elections in even-numbered years, with national elections → High turnout → Turnout is more representative of the population  
 → Reduced political incentive to cater to older, whiter, wealthier voters and to special interest groups

## Bostonians in favor of move for city's elections

Support for aligning with national races

By Danny McDonald  
GLOBE STAFF

Ahead of a diverse and high-profile mayoral race, a new poll shows 61 percent of Bostonians prefer aligning local city elections with presidential and national midterm contests, in a move proponents say would increase turnout and lessen racial disparities in the electorate.

Such a shift would mark a change for the city, which holds its municipal elections in odd-numbered years, or "off-cycle." This year is one of those years and this fall's preliminary election promises to have a crowded mayoral field, with at least six major candidates vying to be city executive.

The survey of 552 registered Boston voters, commissioned by Policy for Progress, a local policy lab, in partnership with The MassINC Polling Group, found that only 31 percent supported keeping the city's elections in odd-

ers have never elected a mayor who is not a white man.

This year's diverse field — all of the city's major candidates thus far identify as Black, Latino, Asian, or Arab American — could see that trend come to an end.

Sophia Acker, a policy fellow at Policy For Progress and student at Tufts University, is among those who say off-cycle elections empower special interests and reduce the voting power of historically underserved groups.

The dynamic amplifies racial disparities of the electorate who turn out for the ballot box, she said. In such elections, the electorate is typically older, whiter, and wealthier when compared to national elections.

She pointed to the last City Council election in Boston, which saw a 17 percent turnout, which she called "strikingly low."

By contrast, the Boston voter turn-

**17%**  
the turnout for the last City Council election in Boston.



# **Boston mayoral prelim and issues**

## **A survey of Boston voters**

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**September 3, 2021**

**Steve Koczela, President of The MassINC Polling Group**

The poll was a collaboration of Policy For Progress, New Democracy Coalition, and Housing Forward-MA with technical support and fiscal sponsorship from Education Reform Now Advocacy

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# Survey Background

- Results based on a survey of 453 registered voters in the City of Boston who voted in the 2020 presidential election.
- Conducted August 25-30, 2021 via live telephone interviewing using the voter file for city registered voters.
- Data was weighted by gender, age, race education, party registration, and geography to represent registered voters in Boston who voted in 2020.
- The poll was a collaboration of Policy For Progress, New Democracy Coalition, and Housing Forward-MA with technical support and fiscal sponsorship from Education Reform Now Advocacy

# A note on methods

- This survey represents registered voters in Boston who cast ballots in 2020. There is a subset of these who are regular municipal voters.
- Findings are drawn from a broader electorate than is likely to show up in September. From this we can identify potential outcomes of different levels and shapes of voter turnout.
- But the overall numbers should be viewed differently than a likely voter poll which only includes one turnout filter, assumption, or model.

# Top issues, by mayoral cycle

- Housing costs now even with COVID as top issue; all others in single-digits.

## COVID, housing costs stand out as top two issues

*% who identify each topic area as the biggest issue facing Boston, by year*

	2013	2017	Jan 2021	Aug 2021
COVID-19	N/A	N/A	43%	25%
Housing costs	5%	23%	14%	23%
Race relations	1%	5%	6%	2%
The economy / development	17%	10%	5%	2%
Public education	24%	11%	4%	5%
Taxes / budget issues	5%	2%	3%	3%
Homelessness	0%	2%	2%	4%
Climate change	0%	2%	2%	2%
Crime/public safety	22%	10%	2%	5%
Opioids	0%	3%	1%	1%
Traffic	3%	3%	1%	5%
Parking	0%	1%	1%	2%
Public transportation	3%	5%	1%	2%
<i>Other (specify)</i>	13%	15%	11%	13%
<i>Don't Know / Refused</i>	6%	7%	2%	4%



# Housing proposal support

- Housing is one of the most important issues in most of our polling these days. Proposals that focus on affordable housing are very often popular, as they are in this poll.

## Affordable housing is a popular proposal, with housing costs at all time highs

*% who say they would support / oppose each idea.*

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know/ Refused
...make it easier and less expensive for builders to construct more affordable housing in the city?	56%	16%	8%	11%	10%
... building more housing in your neighborhood of the city?	41%	21%	9%	22%	7%
...make it easier and less expensive for builders to construct more housing in the city?	38%	18%	14%	14%	16%

# Faneuil Hall changes

- There is stronger support for changing the business mix and adding a statue of Frederick Douglass than for renaming Faneuil Hall.

## About half support the idea of renaming Faneuil Hall

*% who say they would support / oppose each idea.*

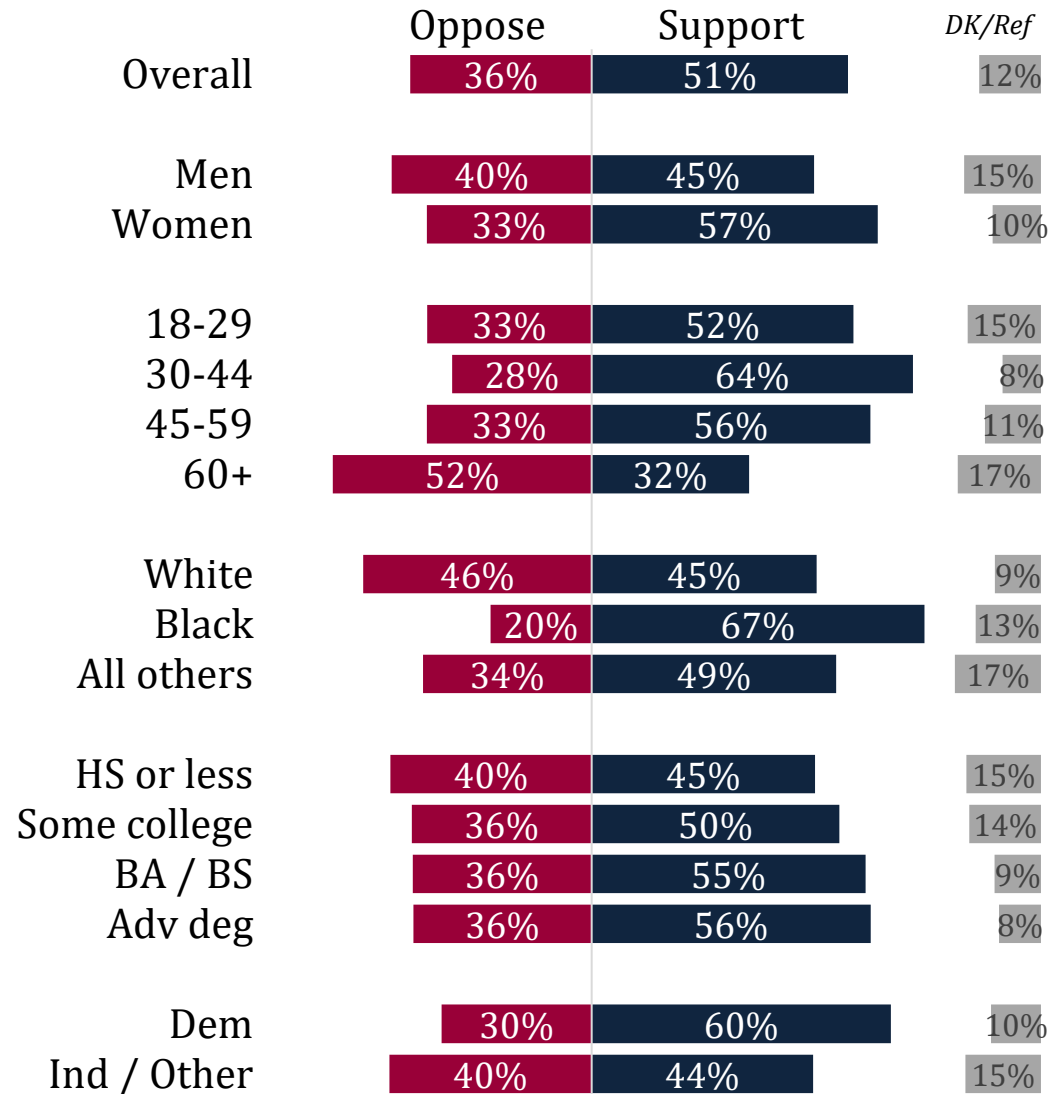
	Support	Oppose	Don't know / refused
Renaming Faneuil Hall	51%	36%	12%
Bringing more Black-owned business into Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market	87%	5%	8%
Putting up a statue of abolitionist Frederick Douglass	72%	14%	14%

# Support for renaming Faneuil Hall

- About half support the idea of renaming Faneuil Hall.
- Support levels vary widely between demographic groups with Black voters, women, and younger voters more supportive.
- White voters are about evenly divided.

## Varied support for renaming Faneuil Hall

*% who say they would support / oppose renaming*



# Elected School Committee

- Boston voter opinion is not clear on the best course for oversight of the school system.

<b>There is little consensus on the best path forward for BPS oversight</b> <i>% of voters who say they would support / oppose each idea.</i>	
Boston should create a new elected body	38%
Mayor and City Council should exercise more oversight	35%
Both / neither / it depends	9%
Don't know/Refused	17%

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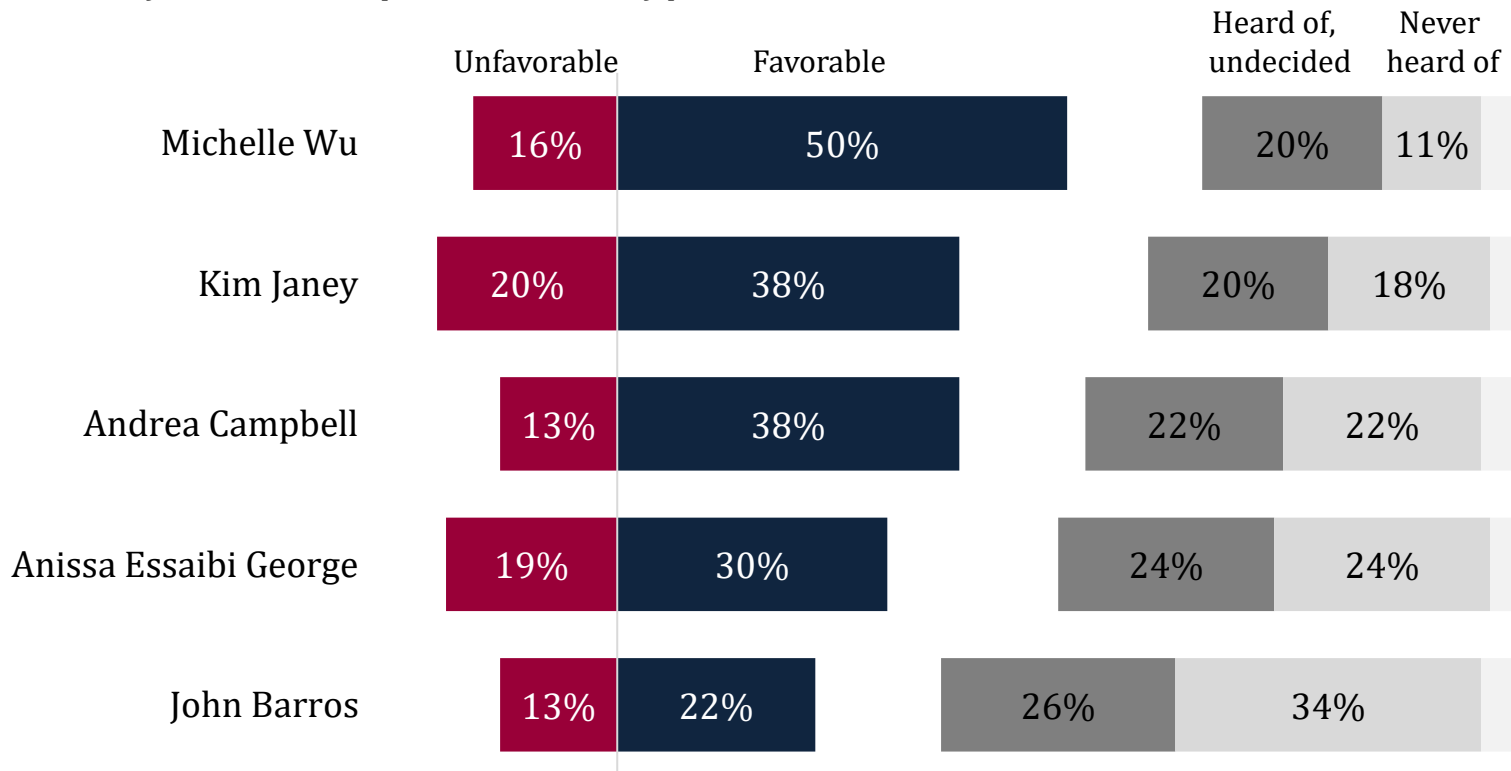
POLICY DEBRIEF

# Candidate favorables

- Michelle Wu remains the best known candidate.
- Voters express net favorable views of all of the candidates.

## Voters view each of the candidates favorably; Wu is best known

*% of voters who express each view of potential candidates.*

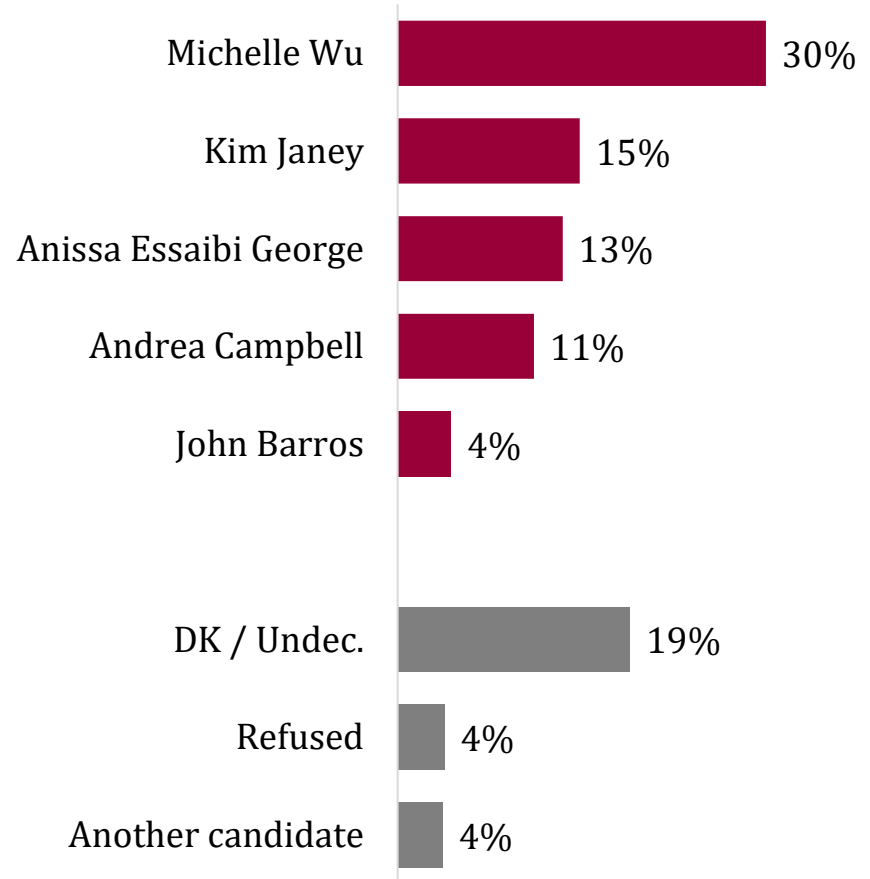




# Wu retains the edge

- There is a cluster in second place. Many outcomes remain possible.
- With 2 weeks left, Michelle Wu remains in a strong position.
- There are plenty of undecided voters left to change the outcome.
- Topline numbers reflect entire sample, not modeled for turnout.

**Wu begins the contest in a strong position**  
*% who support or lean toward each candidate among total Boston 2020 voters*



# Turnout matters to support levels

- There are a very wide range of possible outcomes depending what turnout levels end up looking like.
- Janey and Essaibi George stand to gain or lose the most.

## Essaibi George rises to second with most-likely voters

*% of voter supporting each candidate, by turnout score category*

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Lowest turnout score</b>	<b>Lower turnout score</b>	<b>Higher turnout score</b>	<b>Highest turnout score</b>	<b>Recent municipal voter</b>
Michelle Wu	30%	29%	27%	33%	32%	30%
Kim Janey	15%	15%	19%	16%	8%	12%
Anissa Essaibi George	13%	9%	10%	14%	23%	16%
Andrea Campbell	11%	9%	17%	7%	11%	11%
John Barros	4%	2%	5%	5%	6%	6%
Another candidate	4%	6%	2%	5%	2%	4%
Don't Know / Undecided	19%	25%	17%	19%	14%	17%
Refused	4%	5%	3%	2%	4%	3%

# It all comes down to turnout ... really

- Candidates (other than Wu) are drawing very different demographic profiles.
- Who specifically turns out could make a very large difference in how this race shapes up.

## Candidates are drawing support from different places

*% in each demographic group supporting each candidate*

	Wu	Campbell	Janey	Essaibi George	Barros	Other / Und / Ref
Overall	30%	11%	15%	13%	4%	26%
Men	29%	8%	12%	17%	5%	28%
Women	31%	14%	17%	11%	3%	25%
18-29	30%	12%	12%	13%	1%	32%
30-44	37%	15%	14%	8%	5%	21%
45-59	26%	11%	16%	18%	5%	24%
60+	25%	6%	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>	6%	29%
White	31%	10%	15%	<b>19%</b>	5%	21%
Black	20%	<b>18%</b>	<b>23%</b>	4%	5%	31%
All others	37%	8%	8%	12%	4%	32%
HS or less	23%	9%	16%	<b>20%</b>	1%	31%
Some college	28%	7%	12%	<b>15%</b>	7%	31%
BA / BS	<b>33%</b>	<b>15%</b>	15%	10%	5%	23%
Adv deg	<b>31%</b>	<b>12%</b>	19%	10%	6%	22%
< \$50k	<b>35%</b>	6%	14%	13%	4%	28%
\$50-\$99k	30%	11%	18%	11%	4%	26%
\$100k+	27%	<b>16%</b>	15%	16%	6%	20%
EBos / Ctown / SBos / Dot	23%	11%	10%	25%	3%	28%
DT / B Bay / Fens / A-B	37%	8%	19%	10%	6%	20%
Rox / Mpan / HPark / Dot	30%	14%	16%	5%	6%	30%
WRox / Rosl / JP / M Hill	29%	13%	15%	15%	2%	27%

# Campaign contact and outreach

- Relatively few voters have been contacted by each campaign, with 57% reporting contact from at least 1 campaign.
- White, wealthier voters are more likely to say they have been contacted.

## White, wealthier voters report more campaign outreach

*% who say they have been contacted by each campaign.*

	Overall	< \$50k	\$50-\$99k	\$100k+	White	Black	All others
Michelle Wu	28%	15%	28%	39%	34%	24%	21%
Andrea Campbell	28%	18%	28%	39%	34%	24%	21%
Kim Janey	23%	11%	27%	29%	28%	21%	15%
Anissa Essaibi George	22%	8%	22%	33%	30%	12%	17%
John Barros	17%	5%	17%	26%	20%	14%	15%

# Chart ran by Steve during Q&A on horserace among voters contacted by any campaign

**MAYORAL VOTE WITH LEANERS ^ Has any mayoral campaign contacted you directly, by mail, knocking on your door, calling you, or texting? Crosstabulation**

% within Has any mayoral campaign contacted you directly, by mail, knocking on your door, calling you, or texting?

		Has any mayoral campaign contacted you directly, by mail, knocking on your door, calling you, or texting?			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know/Refused	
MAYORAL VOTE WITH LEANERS	Michelle Wu	29.7%	30.7%	22.2%	29.8%
	Andrea Campbell	15.1%	5.6%	11.1%	11.2%
	Kim Janey	12.7%	16.8%	22.2%	14.7%
	Anissa Essaibi George	13.9%	12.8%	11.1%	13.4%
	John Barros	4.6%	4.5%		4.4%
	Another candidate	3.5%	4.5%		3.7%
	Don't Know / Undecided	17.4%	20.1%	27.8%	18.9%
	Refused	3.1%	5.0%	5.6%	3.9%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



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