



# Democracy Voucher Program



**Seattle**  
Ethics & Elections  
Commission

# Agenda

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- About the Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission
- What is the Democracy Voucher Program?
- Review of 2019
- About the Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund
- What's happening in 2021
- Resources available
- Q&A Session

# About the Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission

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The Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission (SEEC) is a **nonpartisan** and **independent** commission governed by a committee of seven citizen volunteers.

The SEEC administers the Democracy Voucher Program and oversees the following city codes:

- [Ethics](#)
- [Elections](#)
- [Lobbying](#)
- [Whistleblower](#)

# What are Democracy Vouchers?

- How it got started – Honest Elections Seattle (I-122)
- Residents receive four \$25 Democracy Vouchers
- Vouchers can only be used to support candidates running for office in the City of Seattle
- Eligibility for Program
  - Seattle residents
  - At least 18, AND either:
    - A U.S. citizen,
    - A U.S. national, or
    - A lawful permanent resident (“green card holder”)

**Seattle Democracy Voucher**  
**2021 Primary & General Election** **\$25**

I am assigning this voucher to the participating candidate for Seattle City Council whose name is printed here:

**Candidate Name:**  
Print participating candidate's name

I attest that I obtained this Democracy Voucher properly and make this assignment freely and not in exchange for payment of any kind. I am aware that assignment may not be changed and there is no guarantee of availability of funds. Assignment is complete upon delivery to the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, the candidate, or her or his registered representative. Vouchers may only be assigned to qualified candidates.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Find a participating candidate at [www.seattle.gov/democracvoucher](http://www.seattle.gov/democracvoucher)

# What are the goals of the program?

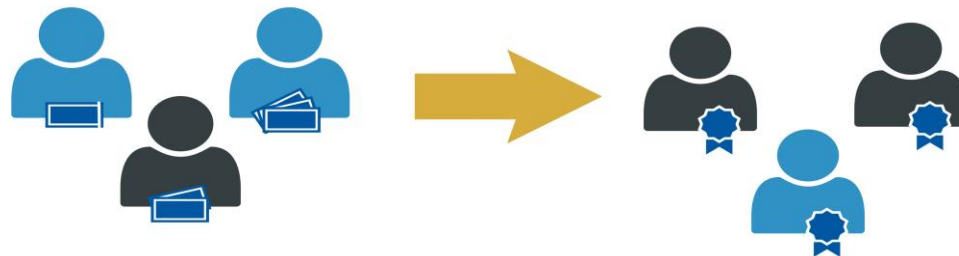
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**Increased civic engagement**

More Seattle residents donating to campaigns

*AND*

More candidates running for office



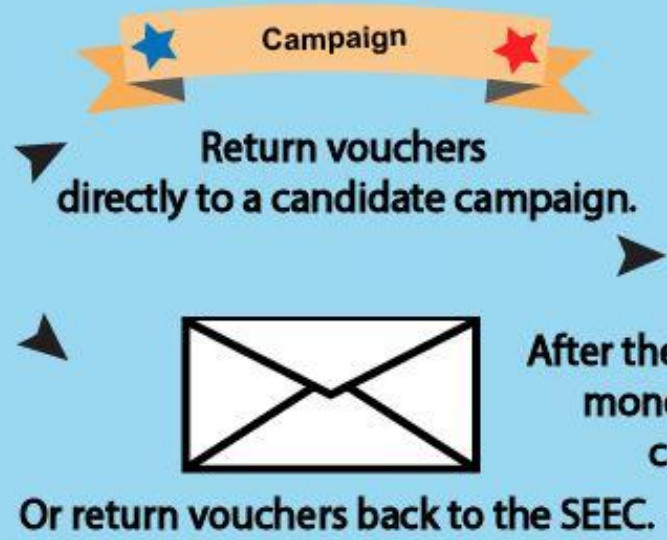
# HOW DOES THE DEMOCRACY VOUCHER PROGRAM WORK?



Program is funded by a \$3 million per year voter-approved property tax.



Assign your voucher to a qualified candidate.



After the SEEC verifies the vouchers, money will be released to the candidate campaigns.

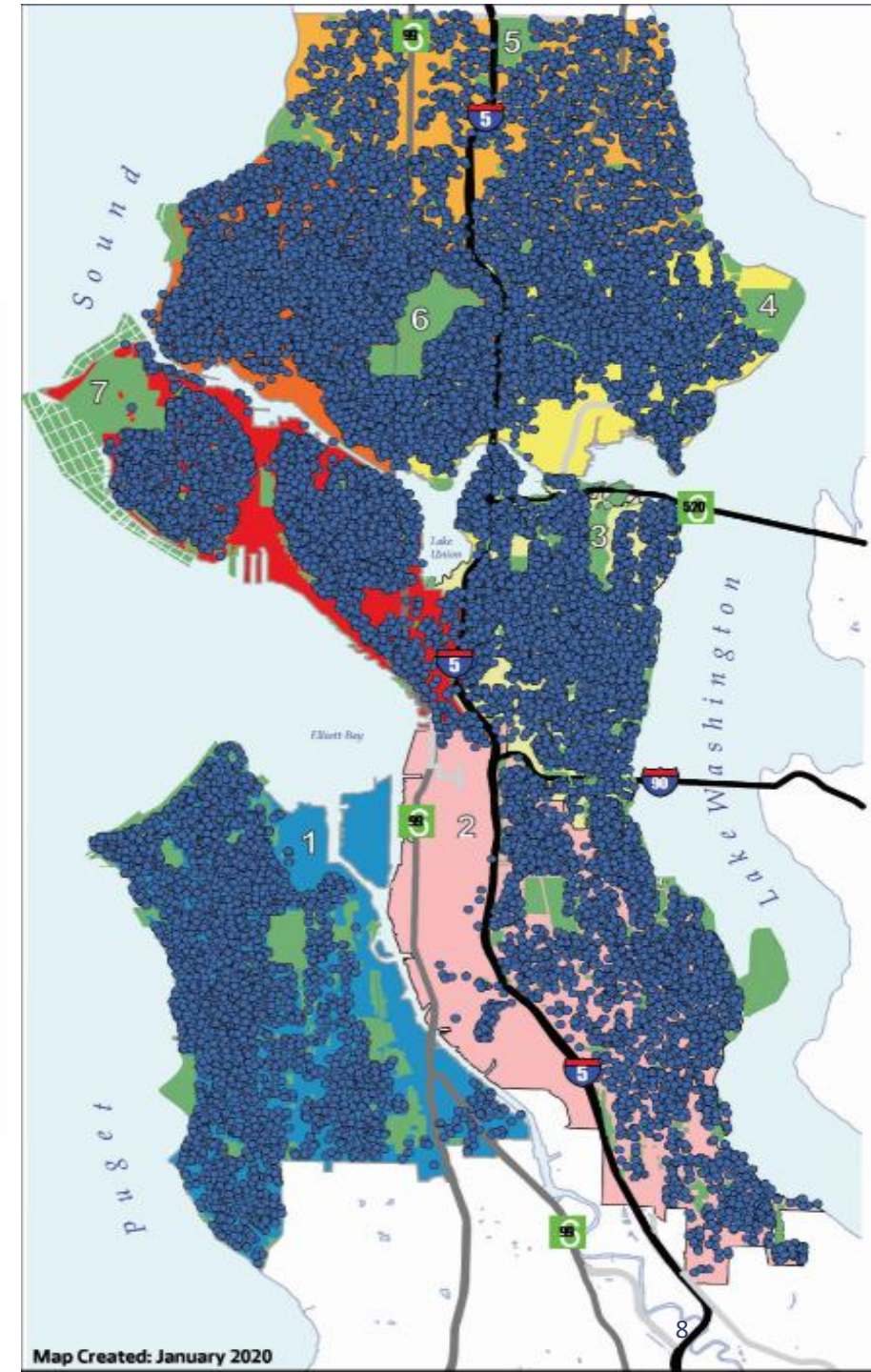
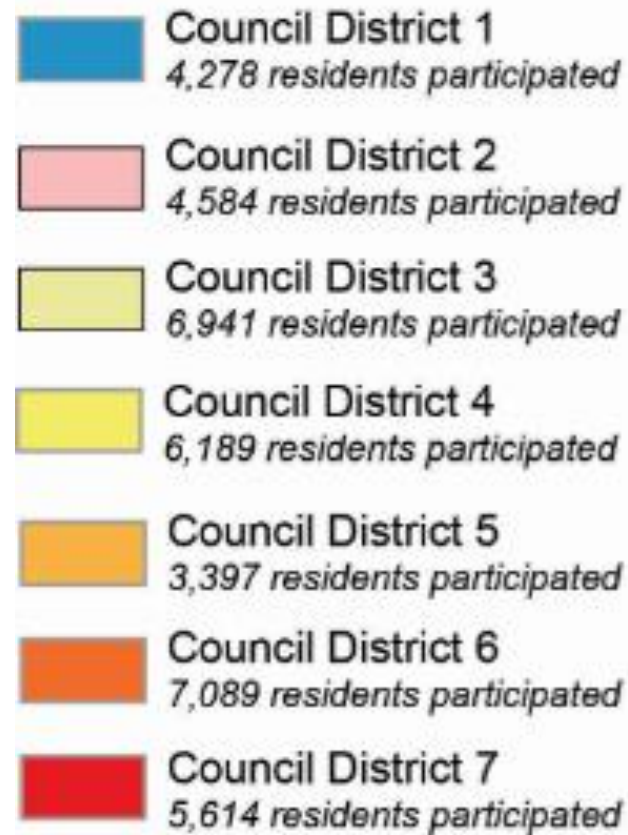
# 2019 Overview – The Numbers

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- Issued vouchers to 476,000 residents
  - 38,092 residents returned vouchers
  - 8% of residents who received vouchers used their vouchers
  - Before the program began, only 1-2% of Seattle residents contributed to campaigns
  - 53/55 city council candidates used the program ahead of the primary



# Vouchers came from all over Seattle

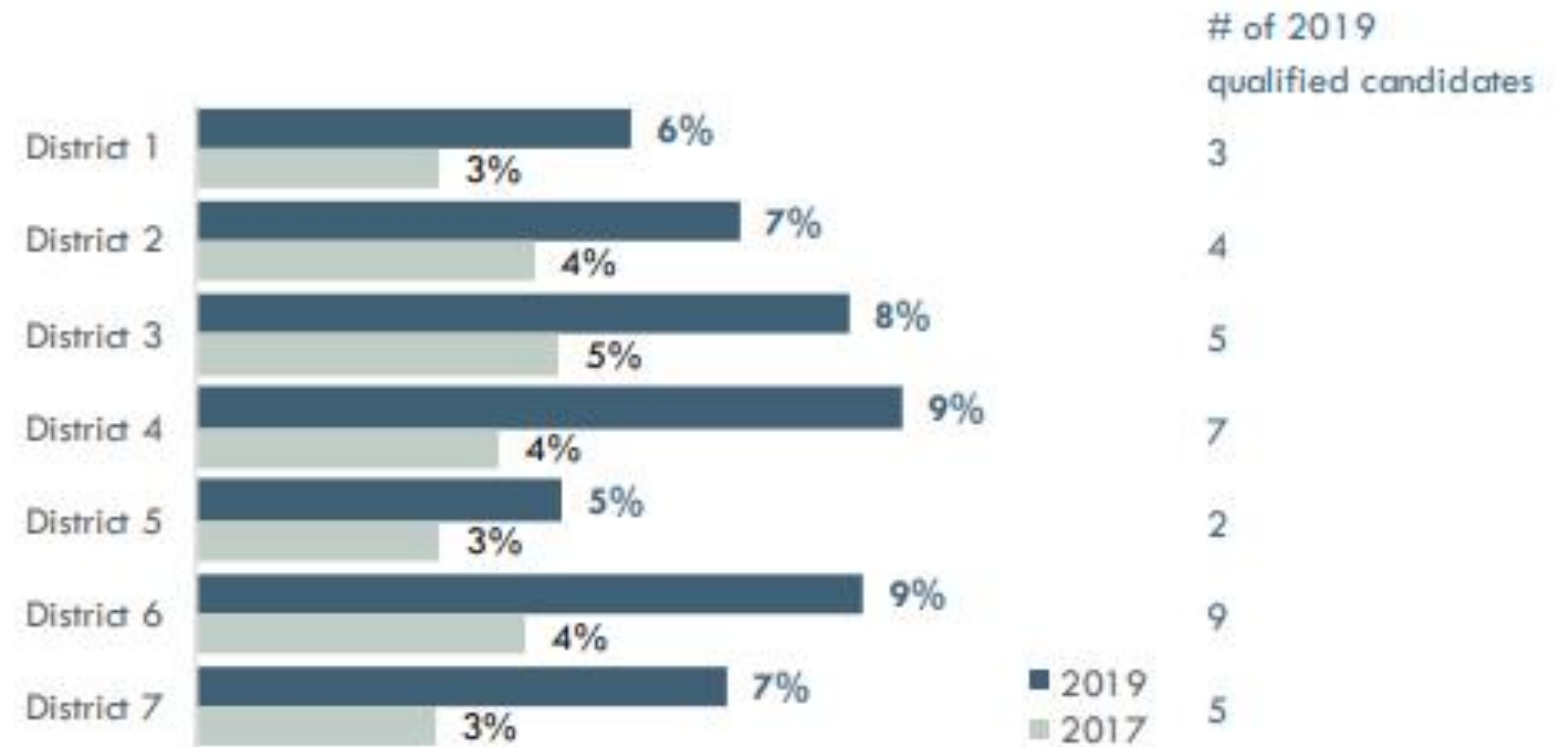




## Exhibit 20. Voucher response rates by City Council district, 2017 and 2019

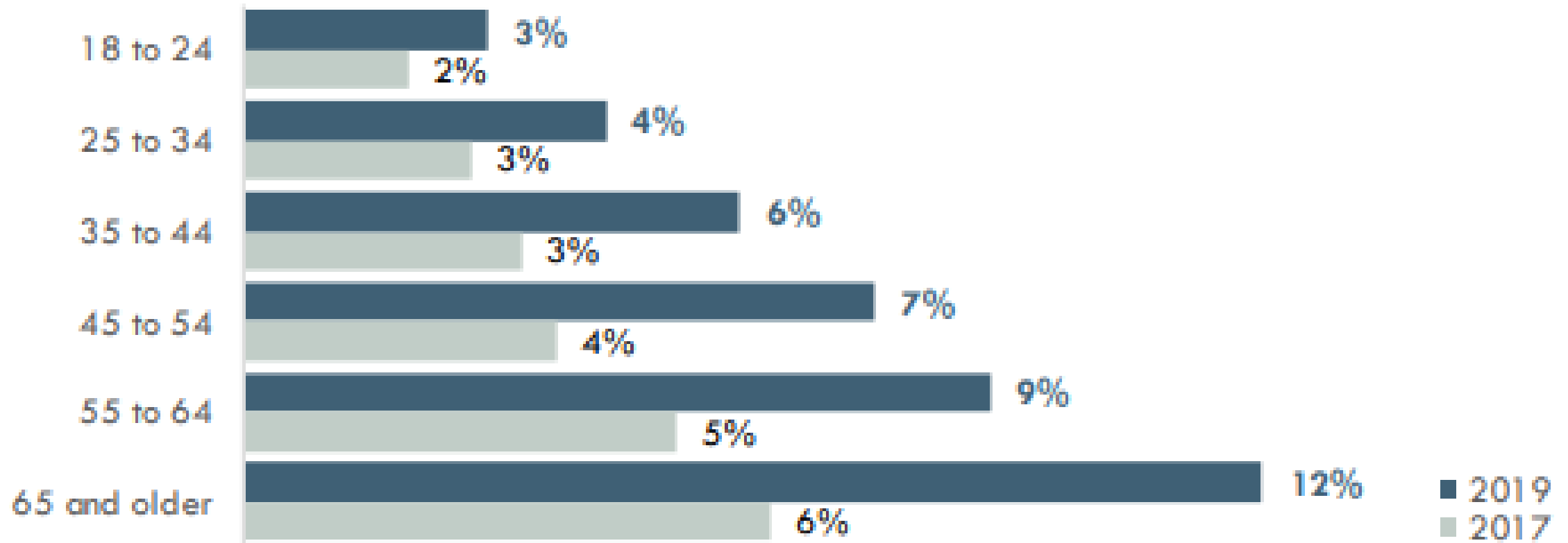


### Percentage of issued vouchers returned to SEEC by District



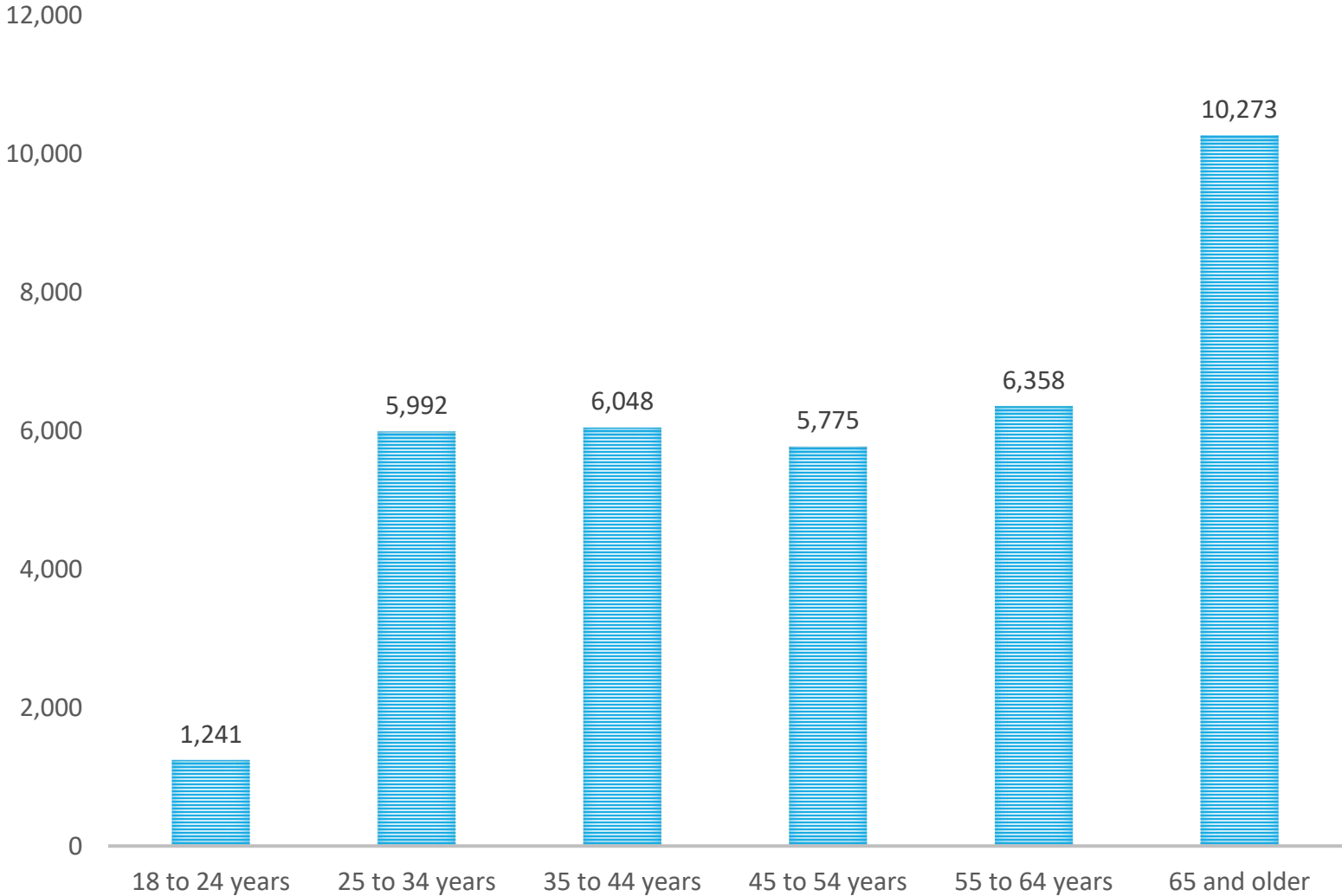
Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020.

## Exhibit 21. Voucher use rates by age group, 2017 and 2019



Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020.

# VOUCHER PARTICIPANTS & AGE GROUPS



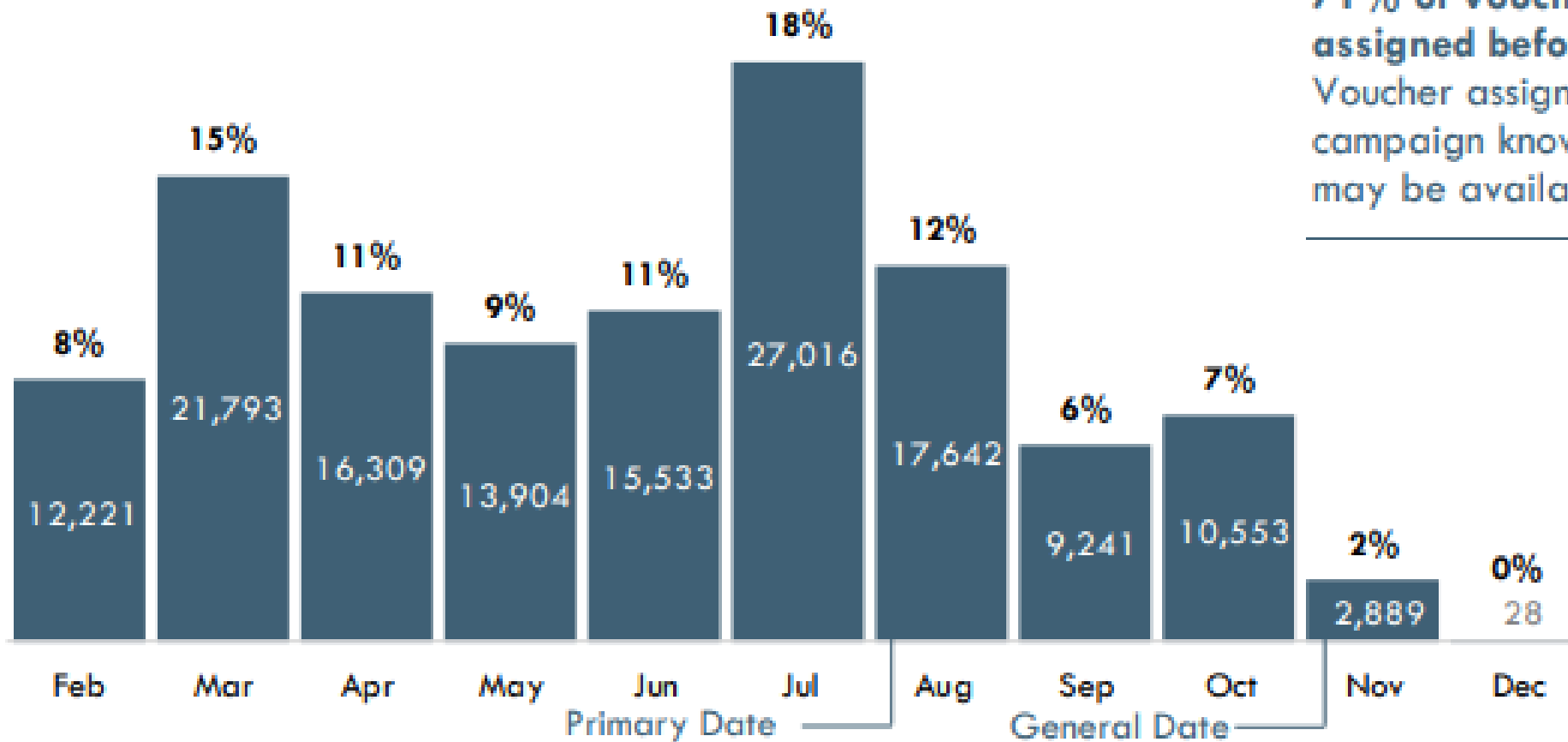
Trends for who uses their vouchers closely mirrored populations who vote.

Less voucher users were between 18-24 years old.

More voucher users were 65+ and older.

## Exhibit 22. Total vouchers received by month, 2019

### 147,129 Vouchers Returned



71% of vouchers were received and assigned before the primary election. Voucher assignment represents when a campaign knows what voucher funds may be available to their campaign.

Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK Consulting, 2020.

# About the Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund

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- Second round the SEEC is offering contracts. Last year the SEEC funded 10 organizations and allocated \$150,000.
- \$225,000 available to 501(c)(3) organizations.
- Two contract types:
  - 1. Education and Enrollment Program**  
Up to \$30,000
  - 2. Community Event(s)**  
\$500-\$5,000
- Proposals due September 18, 2020 at 4pm (email preferred or postmarked by this date)
- Organizations will be notified in early October.

# Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund

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## Goals:

- Promoting civic engagement in underserved communities by educating residents about the Democracy Voucher Program.
- Providing program education and enrollment to lawful permanent residents with a high degree of cultural competency.
- Removing barriers to the program by providing in-language program education and distributing translated program materials.

# 2019 Outreach Fund Accomplishments

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In 2019, the 10 contracted organizations:

- Interacted with 23,756 residents.
- Attended 276 outreach events.
- Provided language services in 18 unique languages.
- Distributed 12,368 pieces of informational material, 76% of which was in a language other than English.
- Sent 2,000 text messages to community members.

# Takeaways from 2019 Outreach Fund

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- **Building community trust is important** - Both in the program and government in general. Residents were often unsure if this unique program was legitimate and expressed a general distrust in government.
- **Barriers to participation** - Barriers to participation include lack of civics understanding, limited English proficiency, varying rates of literacy, and different socio-political experiences from their home country and/or in their current residence.
- **Clarify eligibility** - Legal permanent residents are often uncertain about whether they are eligible to apply for vouchers. For those who are seeking citizenship, there is also concern that applying might put that effort in jeopardy.



# What's happening in 2021

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- Mayor, City Attorney, and the two City Council At-large (citywide) positions will be on the ballot
- \$6.8 million available and budgeted to fund campaigns
- Online Portal Campaign (available in 16 languages)

# COVID-19 Considerations

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- Online Portal
- Online trainings for CBOs / campaigns
- Helping campaigns qualify in a paperless way
- Providing online trainings and resources for candidates
- Electronic content and resources available for CBOs to share in 16 languages
  - Candidate Introductions
  - Resident FAQs and brochure
  - How to use your Democracy Voucher videos

# Resources

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- [How to Use Democracy Vouchers Video](#)
- [Democracy Voucher Application](#)
- [Candidate Introductions](#)
- [Online Voucher Request Form](#) / Replacement Web form
- [Data dashboards](#)
- [BERK Independent Program Evaluation](#)
- [2019 Biennial Report](#)
- Questions from these Info Sessions will be posted on the [RFP announcement page](#)
- 2019 RFP Commission Memos
- Us!

# Connect With Us

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@sea\_elections



@democracyvoucher



@democracyvoucherprogram

# Q&A Session

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Questions?