

## 5.2 Voter Turnout

### The Importance

Voter participation is a cornerstone of democracy. Voter behavior is an indicator of community awareness and public involvement. It also measures the voting public's belief that their votes make a difference. Increasing voter turnout is not simply a matter of getting people to the polls on the first Tuesday in November. It is a process of engaging the public in the political process and creating interest in how government affects and can affect our lives.

### About this Indicator

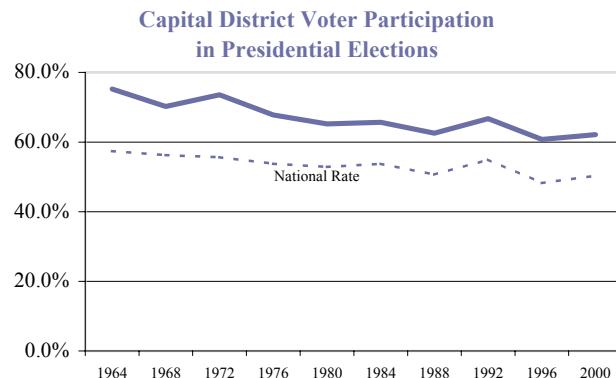
This indicator measures the Capital District's Presidential election and mid-term election voter turnout. It compares the Regional voter turnout to the National voter turnout from 1962 through 2000. Voter turnout is defined as the percent of people of voting age who voted.

### Sources for this Indicator

- Statistical Abstract of the United States, US Census Bureau
- New York State Board of Elections

### Voter Participation in the Capital District

Although it has dropped significantly since the 1960's, voter participation in the Capital District is still well above the national average. The Capital District's current level of voter participation is well above the National participation rates from the 1960's, indicating a high level of community involvement and strong identification with the functions of government.



During the 1960's and early 1970's, the Capital District's voter participation was well over 70% in presidential elections. At the same time, nationwide voter participation was below 60%. The Regional voting trends have followed the National trends, staying approximately 10% higher than the National rate. The Capital District's voter participation dropped to almost 60% in 1996 and was slightly higher in 2000. At the same time, the National voting rate dropped to approximately 50% in the past two presidential elections.

## 5.2 COMMUNITY LIFE

Participation in the mid-term elections has declined significantly more than in the presidential elections. Presidential election turnout in the Capital District dropped from 75% in 1962 to 62% in 2000, a 13% drop. In 1962, 69% of eligible voters voted in the mid-term elections and by 1998, only 49% voted, constituting a 20% drop.

The Nation did not experience the same drop in mid-term voter turnout as the Capital District, although national mid-term participation is so low that it does not have far to drop. National mid-term participation dropped from 43% in 1962 to 32% in 1998. Much like the Presidential elections, the Capital District's current mid-term participation rate is much higher than the national rates from the 1960's.

