

# Older New Yorkers Played an Important Role in the 2020 Election

In a year filled with so much uncertainty, social distancing and sheltering at home, the 2020 Election turned out to be the election with the highest voter turnout in U.S. history. And many of those who cast their ballots were older adults.

COVID-19 has changed so many different aspects of our daily lives, including the way we vote. Unlike previous years, 43 states offered early voting, which was essential to help citizens, especially older adults, safely participate in this year's election. Necessary precautions were also put in place to help voters avoid crowded polling places and maintain adequate social distancing.

Older adults are historically the most reliable voters. It is estimated that more than 70% of people 60 and older vote during presidential elections. This year was no different. Older New Yorkers waited in line, sometimes for hours, to cast their vote. We, older adults, take voting seriously because elected officials



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help shape the future of the communities we helped build, we care deeply about the policy and issues that affect us, our children, our grandchildren and extended family, and, most of all, because we know that voting is a not only a privilege, it is a civic duty.

The 2020 election was especially unique as it coincided with the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote and the passage of the 19th Amendment. On Election Day, we heard of New York centennial women, who were born before this

constitutional right was granted, defy expectations and COVID-19 to exercise this right, including [107-year-old Delia Garces of Washington Heights](#). Accompanied by her granddaughter, she traveled to her local polling site on Election Day and voted, telling a reporter that she has voted in every presidential election and was not going to let anything keep her from voting this year!

Although older adults are the most committed and largest voting age group, they continue to be overlooked in

most elections. Our nation continues to have an ageist mentality that drowns the civic engagement, activism, and contributions of older adults. With COVID-19, there has been a resurgence of ageist stereotypes. [The NYC Department for the Aging](#) is focused on changing pervasive attitudes and stereotypes about aging. We have long advocated for older adults in New York City, and plan to launch an anti-ageism campaign in the coming new year that reminds New Yorkers that older adults are a valuable asset who have much to contribute. And let's not forget that the two candidates in this year's presidential election were older than 70. But it is exactly what our country needs right now – a leader with the wisdom and experience that many older adults have.

While the election took most of our attention this month, I do want to recognize that November is National Caregivers Month. It takes place in the same month as

Thanksgiving, which I find very fitting as we should give thanks to all the wonderful caregivers who support and care for their older parents, siblings and loved ones. We know that caregiving is an everyday effort, and we appreciate all that you do.

I hope everybody enjoys the start of the holiday season. Let us be thankful for our everyday blessings and continue to stay connected to one another.



***NYC Department for the Aging Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez***