

**Ranked-Choice Voting in San Francisco:  
Assessing the Ease of Electoral Reform to an Alternative Voting System**

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*Abstract:* In November of 2004 San Franciscans cast ballots on which they could rank their top three preferences for district representative to the City/County Board of Supervisors. This marks the move from a Runoff system to an Alternative Voting system (Instant Runoff). We assessed citizens' experience with the new system by surveying polling place voters in an exit poll and absentee voters with a mail-in survey. Specifically, we asked to what degree did they (a) know that they would be asked to rank candidates, (b) understand the AV ballot, and (c) use the opportunity to rank three candidates? Overall, their reports were positive. However, regressing those three indicators on a set of expected explanatory factors reveals differences across demographic groups that persist even after controlling for other influences. Some ethnic, education, and age groups fared better than others. We consider the implications for San Francisco and other jurisdictions looking at similar electoral reform.

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