

PULSE of the PRIMARY

2021 NYC MAYOR'S RACE



Presented by



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New Poll Finds Voters Cautiously Optimistic About City's Future, Though Half are Presently Undecided in the Upcoming Race for Mayor

NEW YORK, NEW YORK — (March 24, 2021) — *Pulse of the Primary: 2021 NYC Mayor's Race*, presented by Fontas Advisors and Core Decision Analytics (CODA), released its second set of poll results on March 24th. The second in a series of three quantitative voter surveys, this latest iteration of the Fontas/CODA poll drilled down further into the issues and attitudes of likely voters in the June 22nd Democratic primary and reassessed awareness of the leading candidates, including the current state of the races. The telephone poll of N=800 NYC Democratic primary likely voters was conducted from March 15-18, in the wake of the latest campaign finance filing deadline.

"With vaccinations underway and restrictions slowly being lifted, New Yorkers appear to see hope at the end of the Covid tunnel with a solid majority of voters believing that NYC will bounce back the same or better than pre-pandemic times," said George Fontas, Founder and CEO of Fontas Advisors, a leading NYC-based government affairs consultancy. "It's not surprising to learn that recovering from the pandemic is the highest priority to voters, though it's extraordinary to see that public education far outpaces other issues, reiterating that a functioning in-person school system is mandatory to return the City to normalcy."

"Though the candidates may have been campaigning for several months, our survey shows that voters are only now starting to tune in to the mayor's race," said Adam Rosenblatt, President of Core Decision Analytics (CODA), a non-partisan national public opinion research and analytics firm based in Washington, DC. "With less than one hundred days until the Democratic primary, the majority of likely voters are undecided, unfamiliar with most candidates, and also largely unaware of the new ranked choice process."

The full survey results, including complete question wording, all questions asked, as well as demographics and screening criteria, is publicly available at PulseOfThePrimary.com.



This second Fontas/CODA Pulse of the Primary poll, coinciding with the one-year anniversary of the outbreak of the pandemic in NYC, found that voters are cautiously optimistic about the City's post-Covid future. Key findings included:

- **52%** of likely voters said that the City is **“headed in the right direction”** vs. 34% who believe it is **“headed down the wrong track.”** 14% of voters indicated that they were **“not sure.”**
- When asked to think ahead to March 2022, **a solid majority of voters (58%)** said they think things in NYC will be **either “better than things were prior to the pandemic” or “back to the way things were before the pandemic.”** Only 9% said they think things next year will be **“worse than now,”** while one in four (25%) predicted things may be **“about the same as things are today.”**

Building upon insights from the first Fontas/CODA poll conducted in late January, the survey drilled deeper into eleven key issues facing the City that candidates often address on the campaign trail.

- Unsurprisingly, **91%** of likely voters responded that **“vaccine distribution and stopping the spread of COVID-19”** is **“Extremely”** or **“Very”** important, placing it ahead of all other issues.
- Interestingly, **88%** said that **“improving public education”** is **“Extremely”** or **“Very”** important.
- Rounding out the top five issues were **“creating new jobs and opportunities”** (86% extremely + very important), **“homelessness”** (85% extremely + very important), and **“healthcare, not including COVID-19”** (84% extremely + very important).

With the race for mayor in mind, the second Fontas/CODA poll asked voters about their awareness of ranked choice voting and their familiarity with eight major candidates. It also assessed the current state of the race (**“If the Democratic Primary for mayor were held today...”**). Key findings include:

- **Awareness of ranked choice voting remains very low:** Despite this survey taking place seven weeks after the last Fontas/CODA poll, there is a relatively minimal increase in terms of how many have heard, read, or seen **“a lot”** about ranked choice voting. While this change is a +3 percentage point increase from January (12% January vs 15% March), there has been a more dramatic rise in those who say they have heard **“nothing at all”** (34% January vs 41% March).
- **Three candidates still enjoy high awareness, though others are gaining traction:** Awareness of Andrew Yang, Scott Stringer, and Eric Adams is virtually identical to what the Fontas/CODA poll observed seven weeks ago. Yang remains the best known of the three, with 85% of likely voters in March saying they have heard of him, while Stringer and Adams are names known by 64% and 62% of likely voters, respectively. Shaun Donovan, Maya Wiley, and Ray McGuire have made noticeable gains since January in terms of awareness among voters: +11 for Donovan (33% Jan -> 44% Mar), +9 for Wiley (33% Jan -> 42% Mar), and +13 for McGuire (25% Jan -> 38% Mar). Fewer than one in three voters are familiar with Kathryn Garcia and Dianne Morales.
- **With less than 100 days until the Democratic primary, half of likely voters are undecided:** When presented with the names of the leading eight candidates as well as the option to say someone else, fully 50% of likely voters said they are undecided. Andrew Yang has a lead at 16%, followed by Eric Adams with 10%. Maya Wiley, Scott Stringer, and Ray McGuire have 6%, 5%, and 4%, respectively. Shaun Donovan, Kathryn Garcia, and Dianne Morales each have 2%, while 1% said they would vote for someone else.



- **A profile of the undecided voters:** A demographic examination of the undecided voters reveals they are geographically located throughout all five boroughs. From a traditional demographic standpoint, they encompass a broad mix of racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as age groups. However, the undecided voters are more likely to be female (68%, which is +7 percentage points more than likely voters as a whole). Finally, it is not surprising to see that undecided voters are less aware of the new ranked choice voting process, and, across the board, they are less familiar with all eight candidates assessed.

“Undecided voters appear to be spread throughout the City and come from all walks of life,” said Rosenblatt. “Undecided voters are less familiar with all the candidates, which may be a consequence of campaigning in the age of Covid. With voter contact and outreach efforts heating up as election day draws nearer, we anticipate our next poll will show awareness increasing, and presumably voters shifting from undecided to preferred candidates.”

“Our poll shows that the mayor’s race is wide open and, although the June primary is right around the corner, recent history has taught us that three months is an eternity in an NYC election,” said Fontas. “Given this, it’s no surprise that the candidates who have raised the most money have so far spent very little, giving them an extraordinary war chest to address changing dynamics. We expect spending — both from the campaigns and from multi-million dollar Super PACs — to play an increasingly important role ahead of our next poll.”

The Fontas/CODA Pulse of the Primary poll is a three-part series which will publish poll results and analysis leading up to the NYC Democratic primary. Visit PulseOfThePrimary.com for the latest poll reports, analysis, and to subscribe to receive updates.

Methodology

On behalf of Fontas Advisors, Core Decision Analytics (CODA) conducted N=800 live telephone interviews (landline and cell) among New York City Democratic primary likely voters from March 15-18, 2021. The overall margin of error is +/-3.46% at the 95% confidence interval. Tracked findings referenced reflect the first Fontas/CODA Pulse of the Primary study conducted online January 20-25 among N=842 New York City Democratic Primary likely voters. The complete poll report, including all survey questions, screening criteria, and demographics, are available at PulseOfThePrimary.com

About Fontas Advisors

Fontas Advisors is a boutique government affairs consultancy focused on the New York metropolitan area. Leveraging our strong knowledge of city and state administrations combined with our robust network honed over decades of experience, we drive results by serving the next-generation needs of corporations, nonprofits, and trade associations. Learn more at fontasadvisors.com

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