

School Budgets Pass While Voter Turnout Declines



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Advancing the Business of Education

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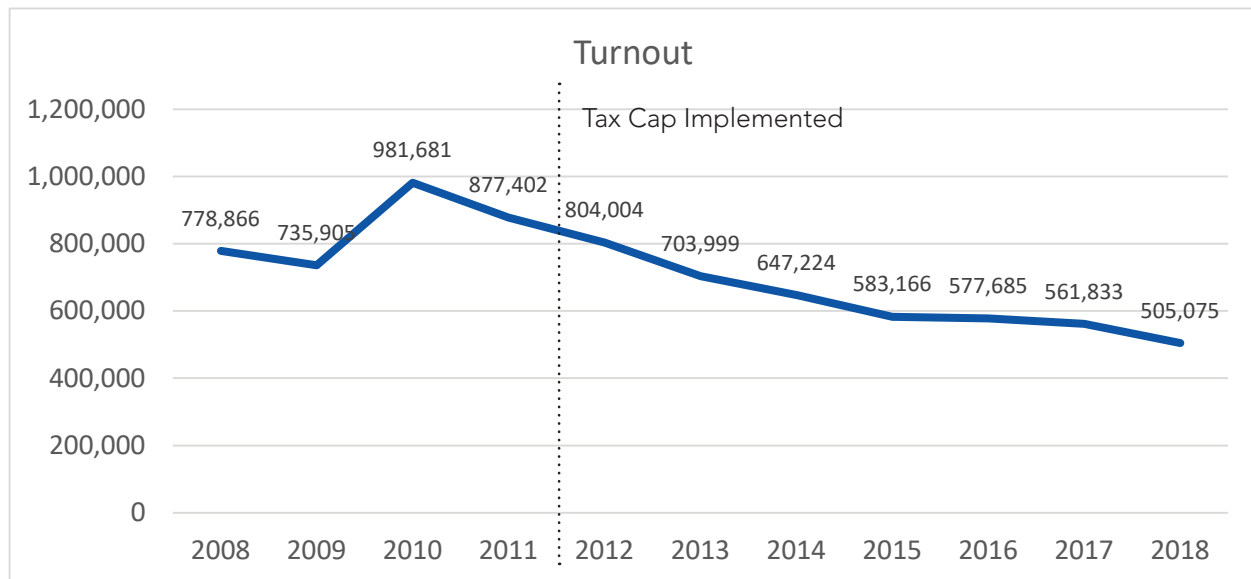
Introduction

On May 15, New York communities passed 658 out of 674 budgets proposed by their local boards of education, continuing a trend of widespread support in school budget votes, although the overall passage rate of 97.6 percent is below last year's record of 99.3 percent.¹ However, the long-time trend of falling voter turnout continued this year. Even with the incredibly high pass rate for school budgets, the overall share of yes votes saw a significant decline. This report looks at the trends in turnout, tax cap overrides, negative tax caps, and regional variations in turnout and support over time for 669 major school districts and five minor school districts. The Big 5 city school districts have their budgets approved as part of their cities' overall budgets and are not subject to a school district budget vote.

Turnout Trends

Turnout last week fell 10 percent over last year and is down more than 35 percent from 10 years ago. In 2008, 778,866 New Yorkers voted on their local school budgets. Last week, 505,075 people voted. Figure 1 shows the turn-out by year. In 2018, turnout was 48.5 percent less than at its 2010 peak.

Figure 1. Voter Turnout by Year, 2008-2018

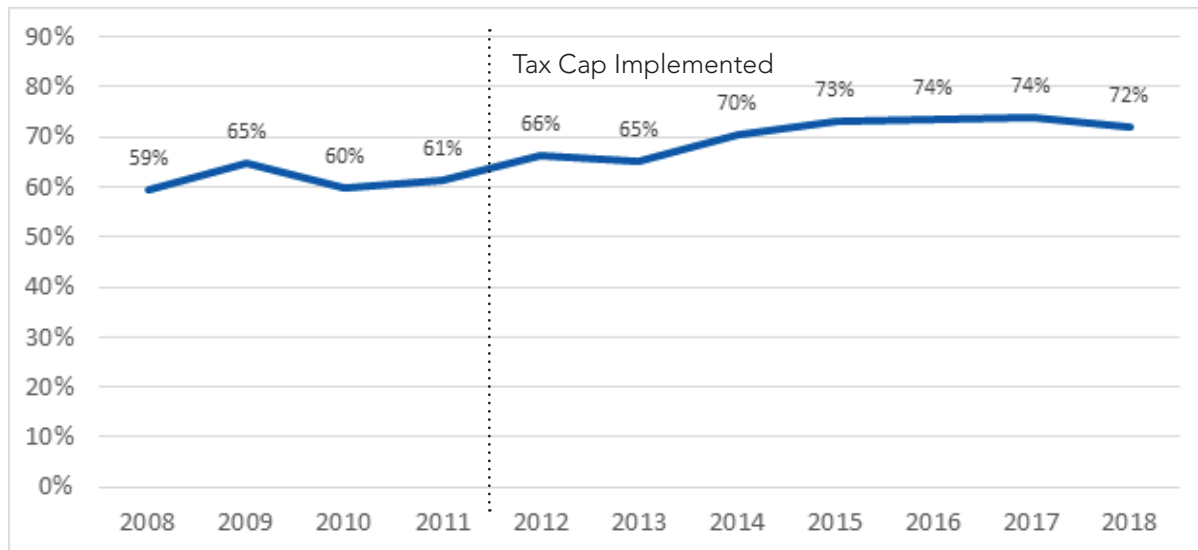


As turnout has declined, the overall support for budgets has increased. Figure 2 shows the percent of voters who voted yes by year. While this year saw a large drop in the number of people who voted yes, over the past few years, the overall share of yes votes has been trending upward.

The end of this report includes a detailed regional breakdown of turnout and voter support. The largest 10-year decline in turnout was 39.3 percent in the Hudson Valley. The largest five-year decline was a 37.2 fall in Western New York.

¹ Eldred Central School District vote was delayed due to weather.

Figure 2. Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



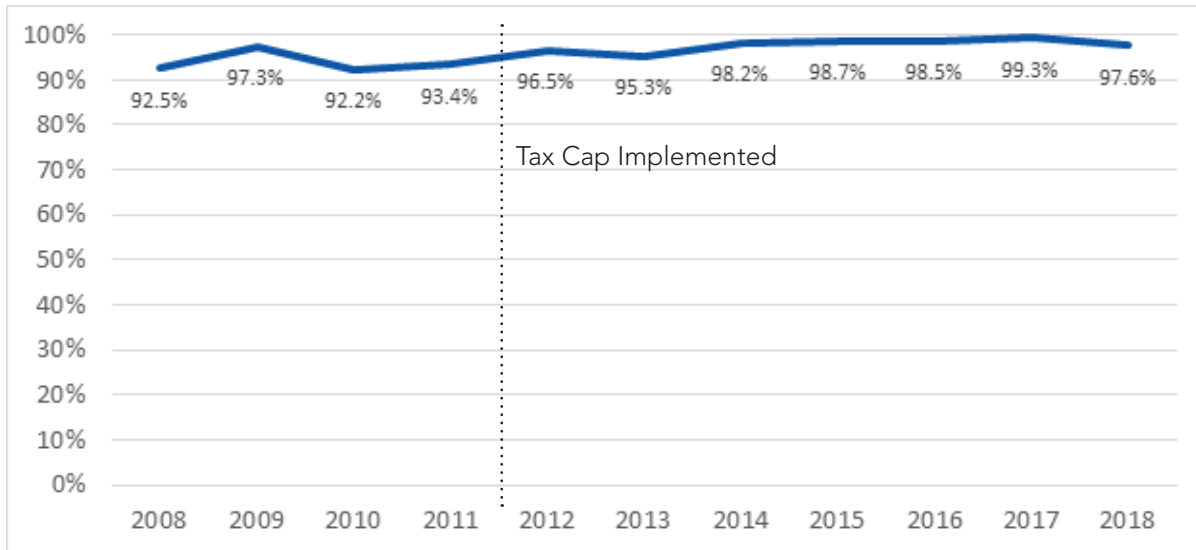
Defeated Budgets

Last year, only five proposed budgets were defeated in May. Three of the defeats were proposed overrides of the tax cap and the other two were narrow defeats in small districts. This year, while voters passed 97.6 percent of proposed budgets during the first round of voting, this passage rate is the lowest since 2013. The table in Figure 3 provides detail on each of the defeated budgets. The graph in Figure 4 shows the overall passage rate since 2008.

Figure 3. Defeated School Budgets, May 2018

District Name	Region	Override	Share of Yes Votes
Brewster CSD	Hudson Valley	No	46%
Clymer CSD	Western Region	Yes	50%
East Ramapo CSD (Spring Valley)	Hudson Valley	No	45%
Eden CSD	Western Region	Yes	43%
Fort Edward UFSD	Capital District	No	40%
Gowanda CSD	Western Region	No	47%
Johnstown City SD	Mohawk Valley	Yes	51%
New Rochelle City SD	Hudson Valley	Yes	35%
North Bellmore UFSD	Long Island	Yes	52%
Ripley CSD	Western Region	No	50%
Stamford CSD	Southern Tier	Yes	50%
Uniondale UFSD	Long Island	No	46%
Valley CSD (Montgomery)	Hudson Valley	No	46%
West Valley CSD	Western Region	No	46%
Westfield CSD	Western Region	No	40%
Westport CSD	North Country	Yes	44%

Figure 4. Percent of Budgets Passed in May Vote, 2008-2018



School districts with defeated budgets have the option to propose a second budget to voters in June or adopt a contingency budget. If the budget is defeated in the re-vote, then the district is required to adopt a contingency budget with no levy increase.

Proposed Tax Cap Overrides

In 2018, residents in 14 school districts voted on budgets that required a 60 percent supermajority approval for an override of the tax cap. Seven overrides were successful and seven were defeated in this first vote. Three of the defeated overrides failed to garner even majority support. Figure 5 presents more detail on the attempted tax cap overrides.

Figure 5. Results of 2018 Proposed Overrides

District	Region	Result	Share of Yes Votes
Alfred-Almond	Western Region	Pass	77%
Cazenovia	Central New York	Pass	72%
Chateaugay	North Country	Pass	82%
Chazy	North Country	Pass	69%
Clymer	Western Region	Defeated	50%
Eden	Western Region	Defeated	43%
Greenport	Long Island	Pass	65%
Johnstown	Mohawk Valley	Defeated	51%
Lake Shore (Evans-Brant)	Western Region	Pass	64%
Mamaroneck	Hudson Valley	Pass	78%
New Rochelle	Hudson Valley	Defeated	35%
North Bellmore	Long Island	Defeated	52%
Stamford	Southern Tier	Defeated	50%
Westport	North Country	Defeated	44%

The last two years saw the fewest number of proposed tax cap overrides, since the implementation of the tax cap. With the exception of 2016, when extremely low levels of inflation led to particularly low tax caps, the general trend has been toward fewer attempted overrides each year. Figure 6 shows the number of successful and proposed overrides for each year since the start of the tax cap in 2012.

Figure 6. Successful and Proposed Tax Cap Overrides, 2012-2018

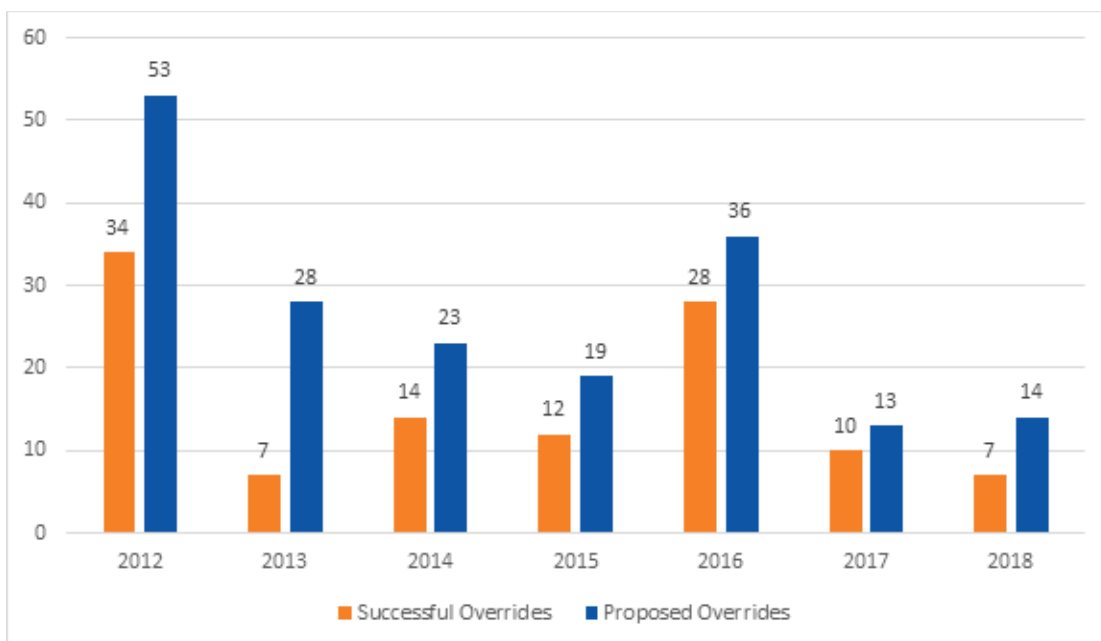


Figure 7. School Districts with Negative Levy Limits for 2018-19 School Budgets

School District	Maximum Allowable Levy Change	Override	Result
Alfred-Almond Central School District	-0.49%	Yes	Pass
Belfast Central School District	-1.68%	No	Pass
Binghamton City School District	-1.48%	No	Pass
Cazenovia Central School District	-1.09%	Yes	Pass
Chazy Union Free School District	-1.75%	Yes	Pass
Evans-Brant Central School District	-1.36%	Yes	Pass
Hoosick Falls Central School District	-0.15%	No	Pass
Johnstown City School District	-2.49%	Yes	Defeated
Lackawanna City School District	-0.75%	No	Pass
North Babylon Union Free School District	-0.59%	No	Pass
Onondaga Central School District	-0.47%	No	Pass
Oswego City School District	-0.69%	No	Pass
Oxford Academy And Central School District	-0.59%	No	Pass
Shoreham-Wading River Central School District	-0.50%	No	Pass
Tuxedo Union Free School District	-4.16%	No	Pass
Watkins Glen Central School District	-2.19%	No	Pass

Negative Tax Caps

The two percent tax cap isn't really two percent as each school district calculates its own levy limit based on a statewide allowable growth factor, which is the lesser of two percent or the annual change in the Consumer Price Index. District-specific tax caps vary with the amount of payments in lieu of taxes and capital spending. Because the last few years have seen very low levels of inflation, before this year, the last time the allowable levy growth factor was actually two percent was 2013. Factors like reductions in capital expenses, changes in the local property base, or increases in local payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs) can leave districts with a negative tax cap. Figure 7 lists the 17 districts with negative levy limits for 2018-19. Five of the 17 districts with negative tax caps proposed overrides. Voters passed 16 of the 17 budgets.

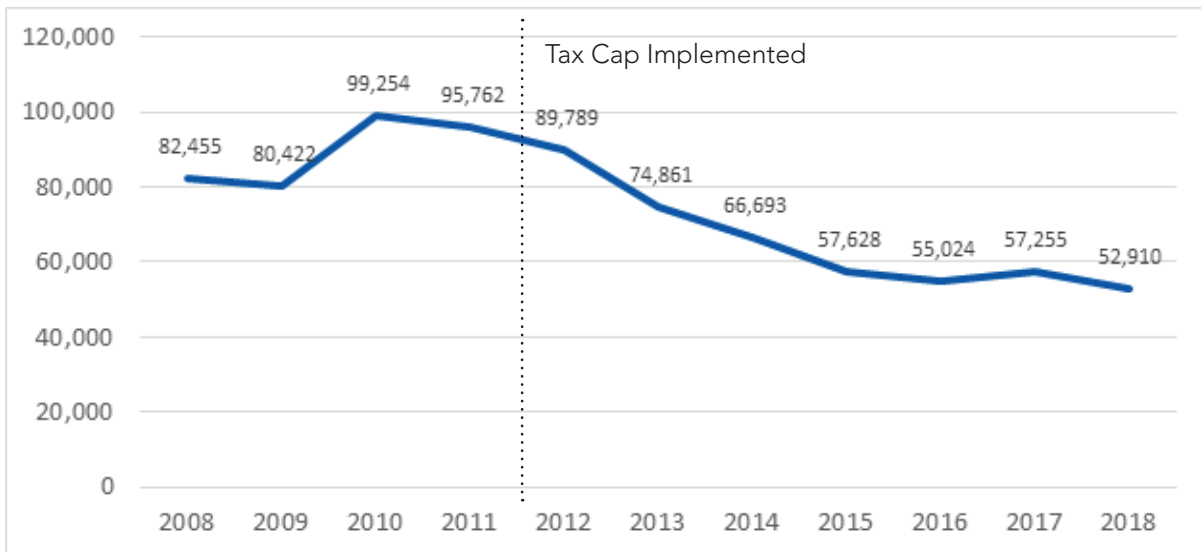
Regional Results

This section reports on turnout and yes votes by region. Turnout declined in all regions compared with five and ten years ago. The largest ten-year decline in turnout was 39.3 percent in the Hudson Valley. The largest five-year decline was a 37.2 percent fall in Western New York.

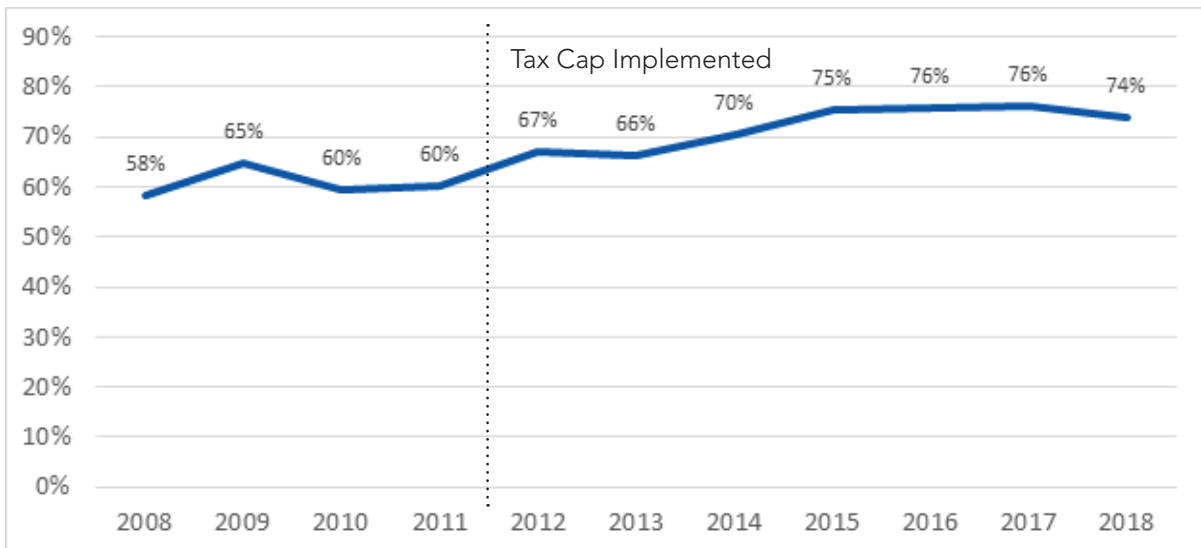
Capital District

2018 Budgets Passed/Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
73 Passed, 1 Defeated	No Overrides	52,910	-29.3%	-35.8%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



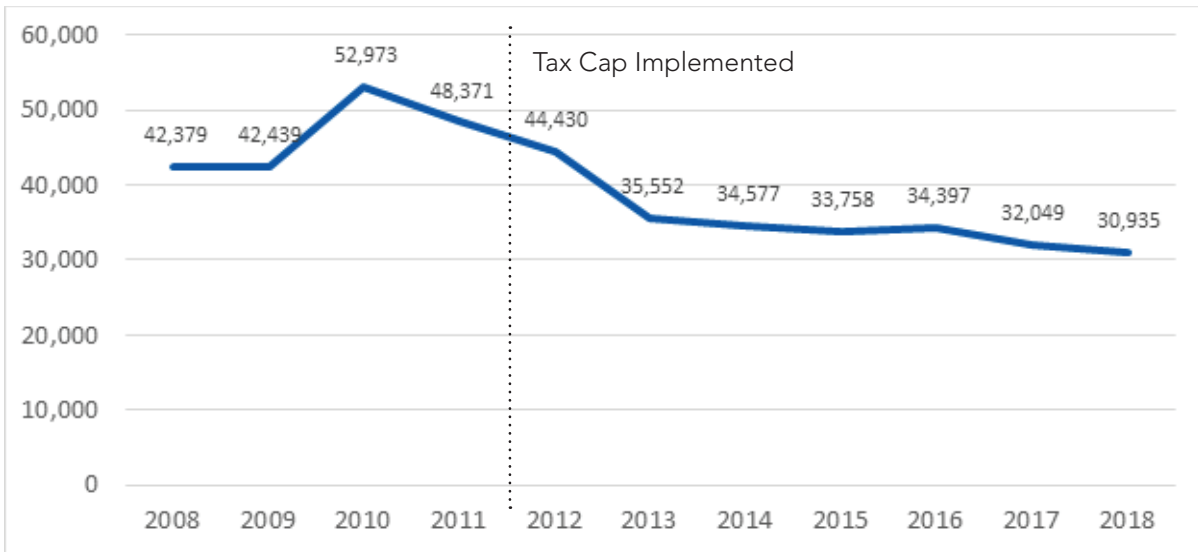
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



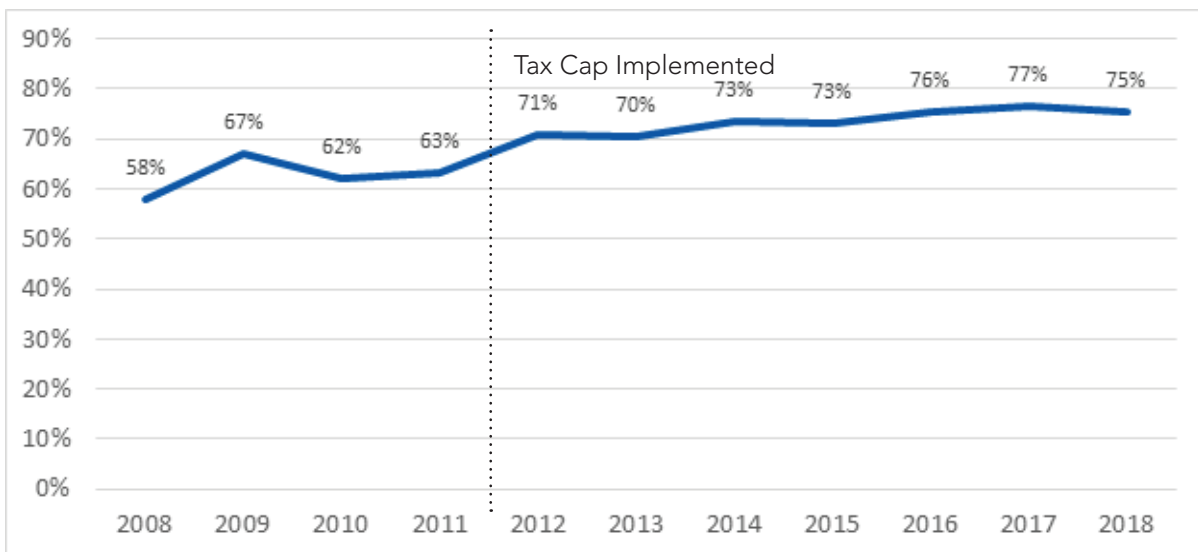
Central New York

2018 Budgets Passed/Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
48 Passed	1 Passed	30,935	-13.0%	-27.0%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



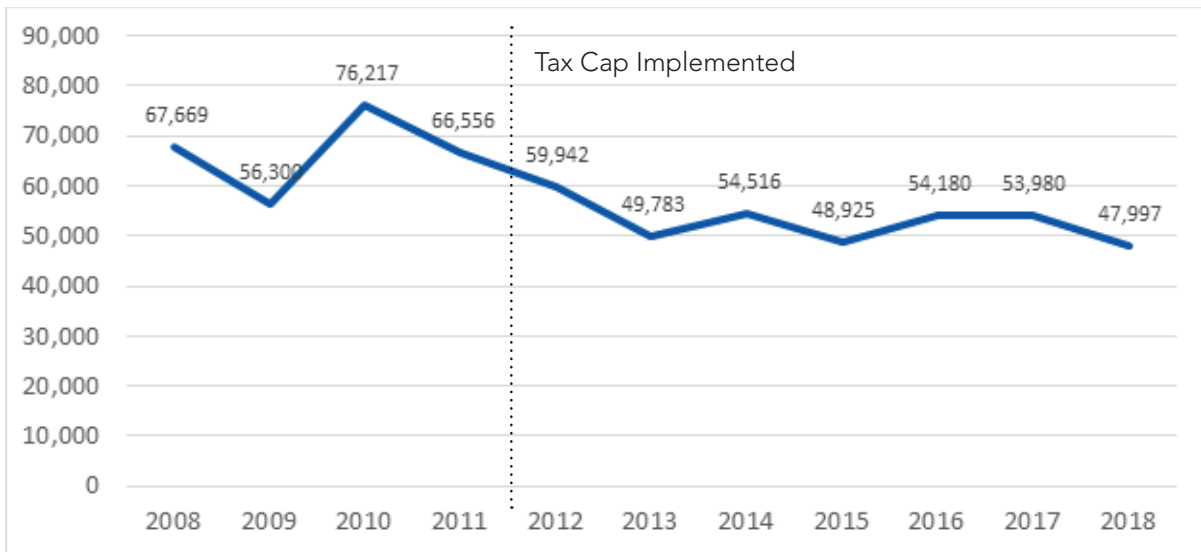
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



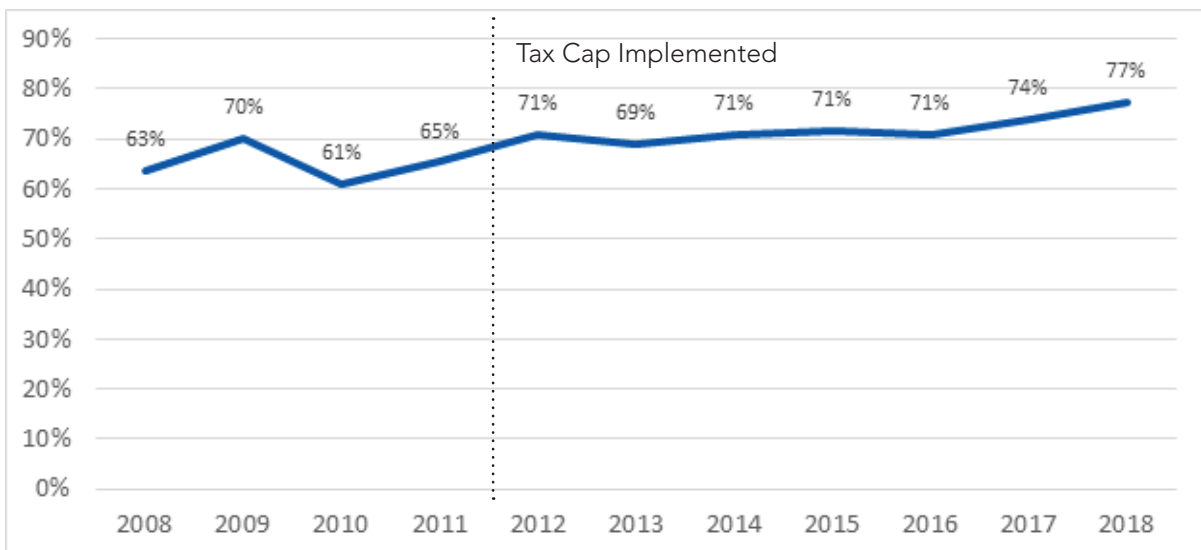
Finger Lakes

2018 Budgets Passed/Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
69 Passed	No Overrides	47,997	-3.6%	-29.1%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



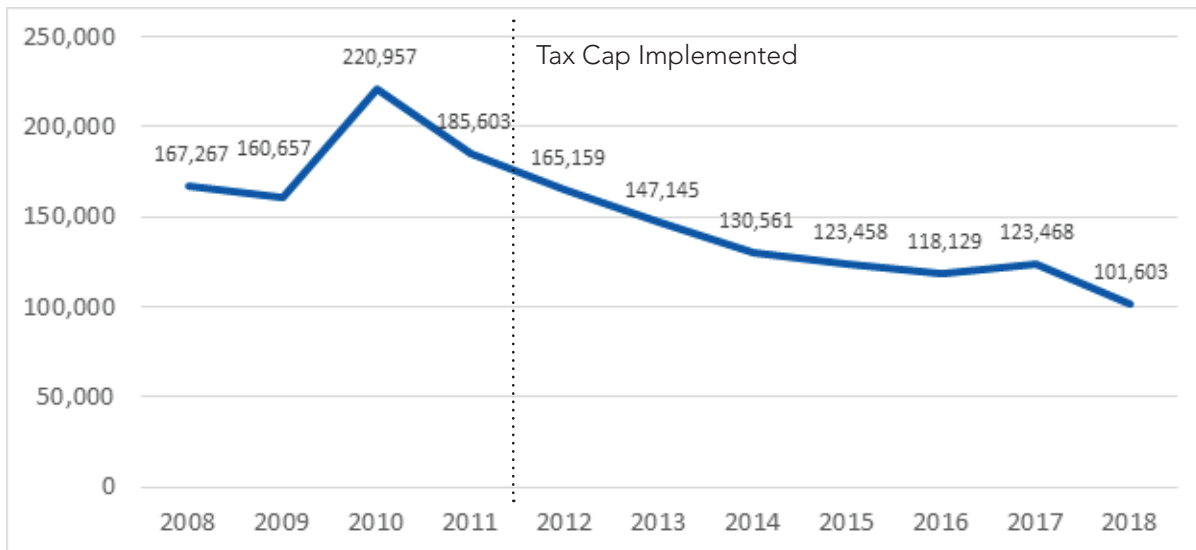
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



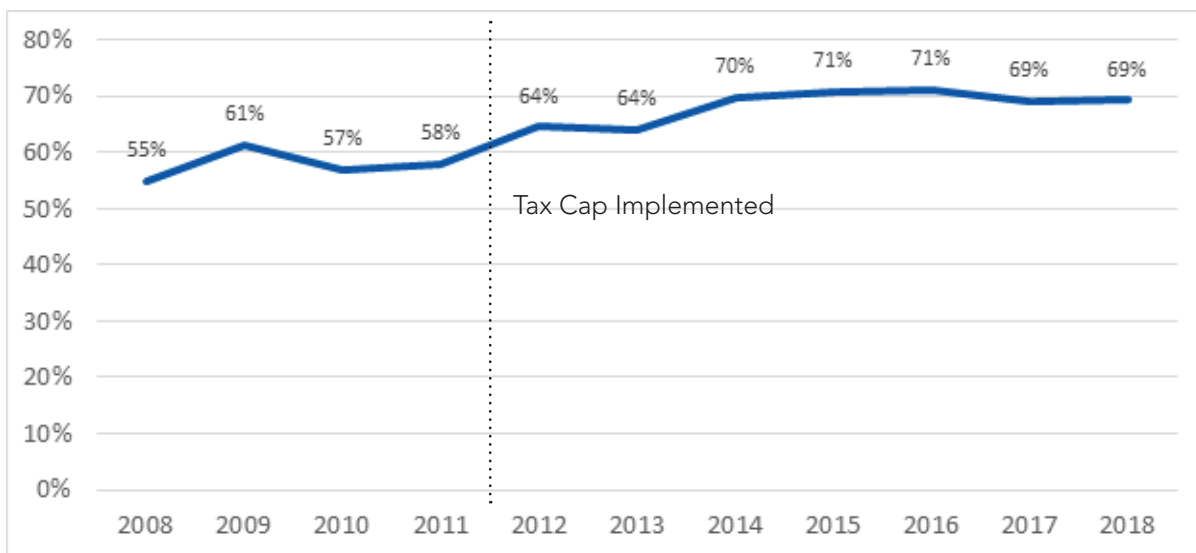
Hudson Valley

2018 Budgets Passed/ Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
95 Passed, 4 Defeated	Passed, 1 Defeated	101,603	-31.0%	-39.3%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



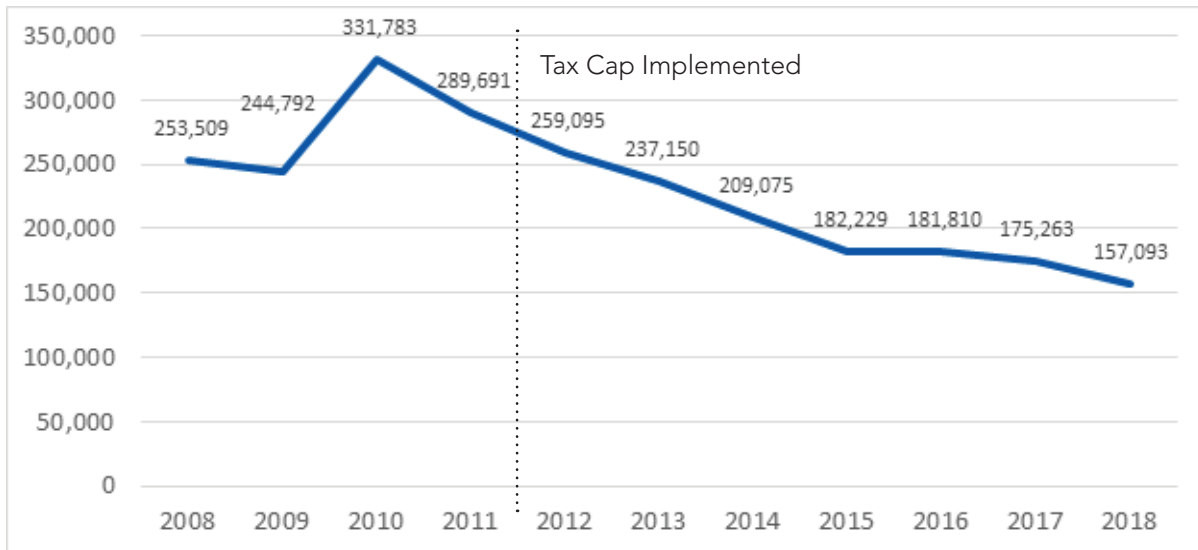
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



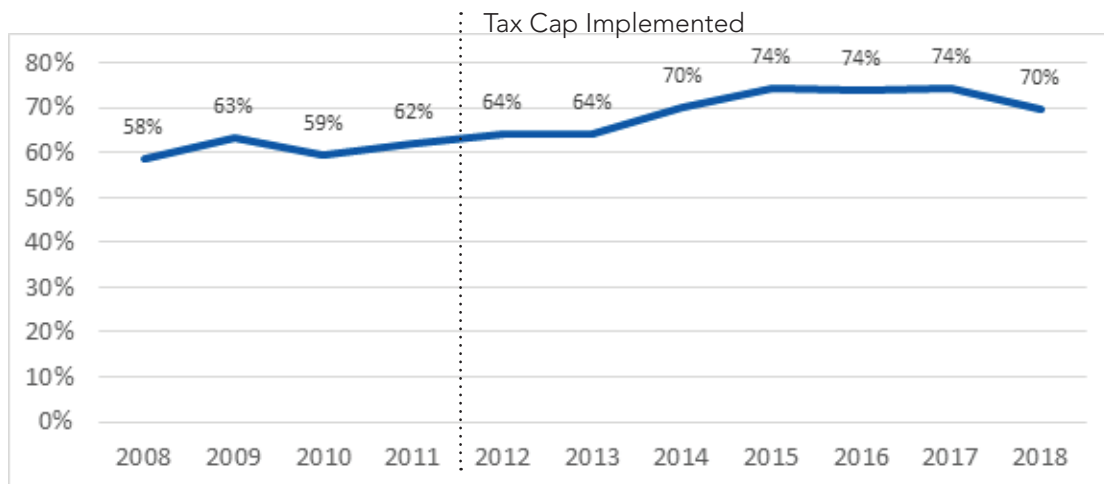
Long Island

2018 Budgets Passed/Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
122 Passed, 2 Defeated	1 Passed, 1 Defeated	157,093	-33.8%	-38.0%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



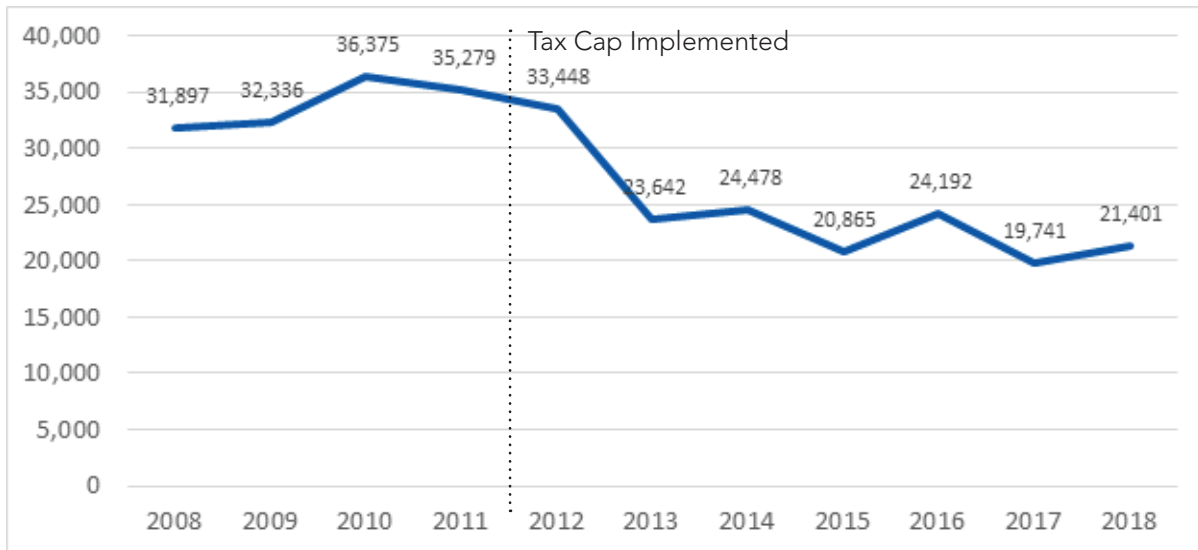
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



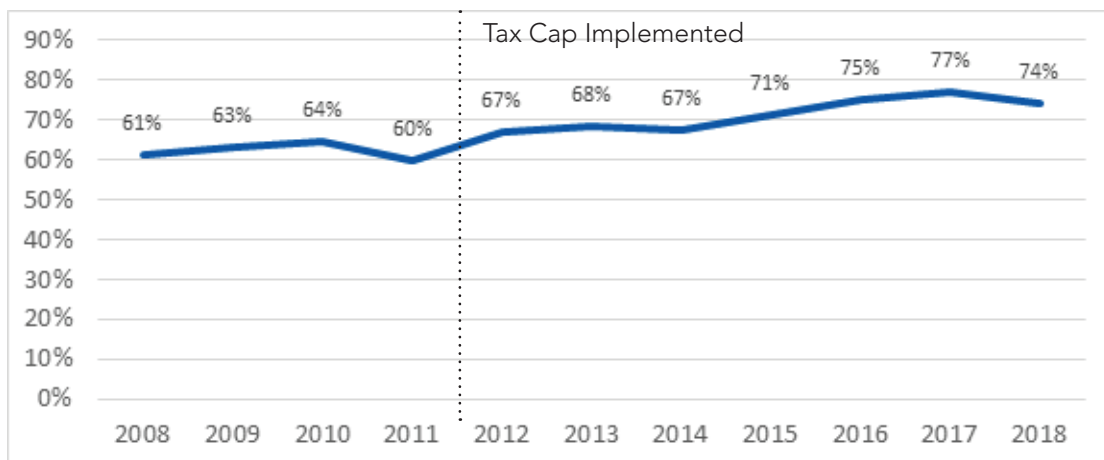
Mohawk Valley

2018 Budgets Passed/Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
48 Passed, 1 Defeated	1 Defeated	21,401	-9.5%	-32.9%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



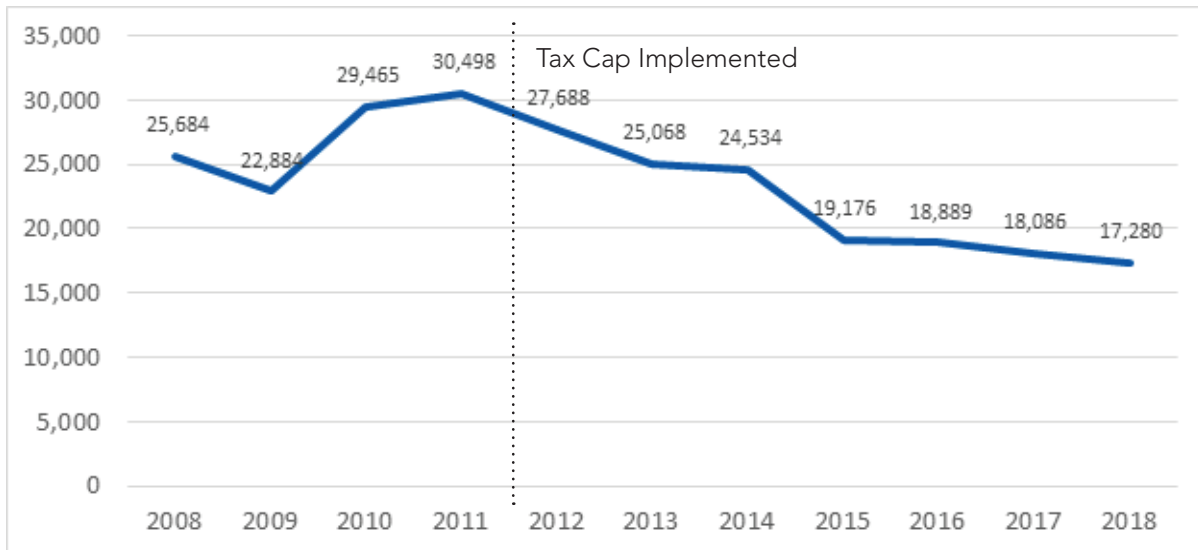
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



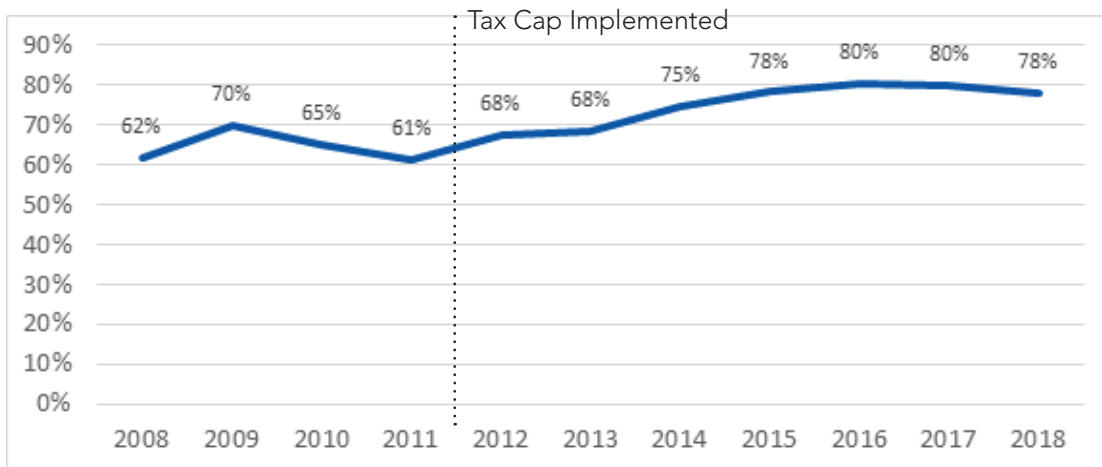
North Country

2018 Budgets Passed/Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
58 Passed, 1 Defeated	2 Passed, 1 Defeated	17,280	-31.1%	-32.7%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



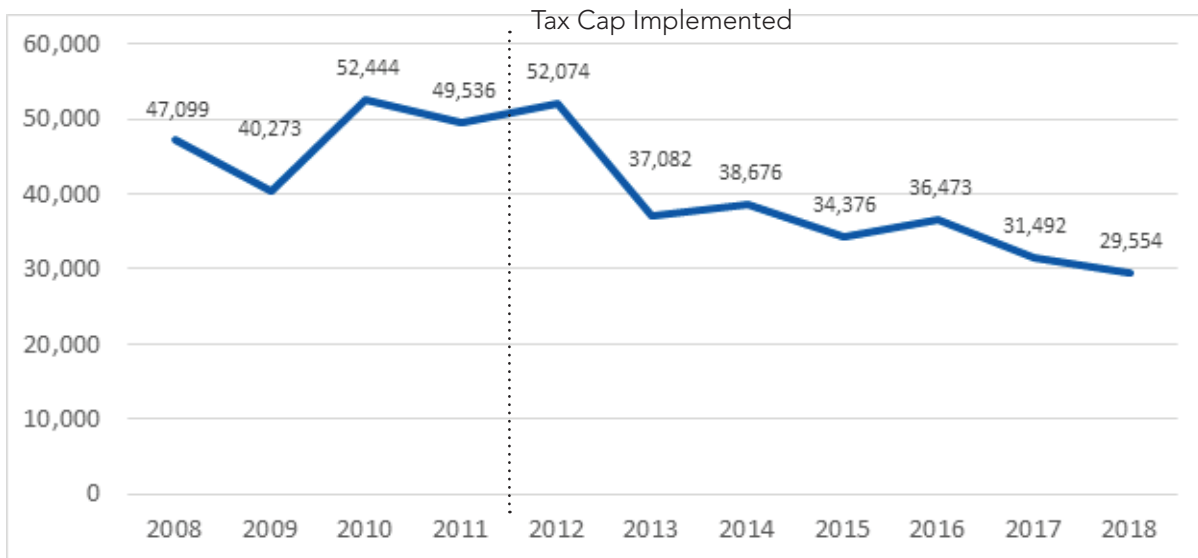
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



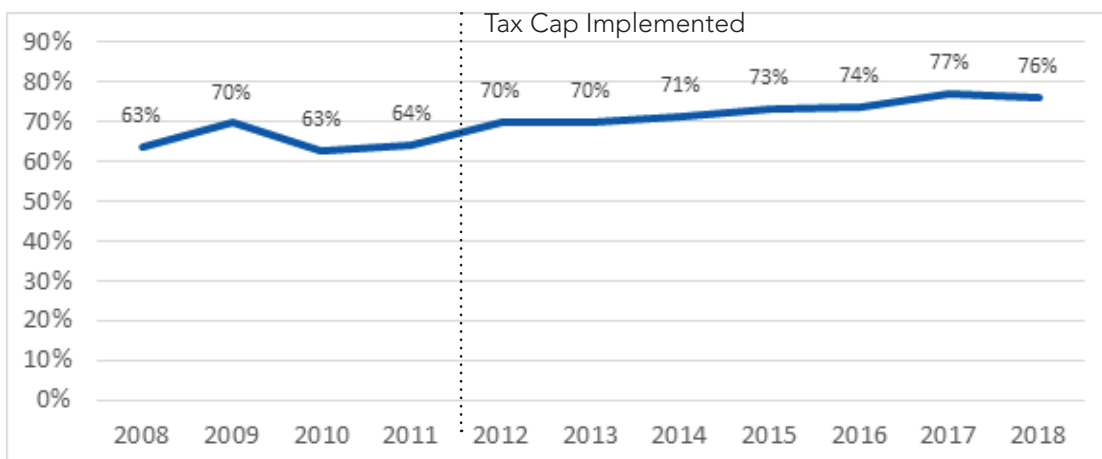
Southern Tier

2018 Budgets Passed/Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
73 Passed, 1 Defeated	1 Passed	29,554	-20.3%	-37.3%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



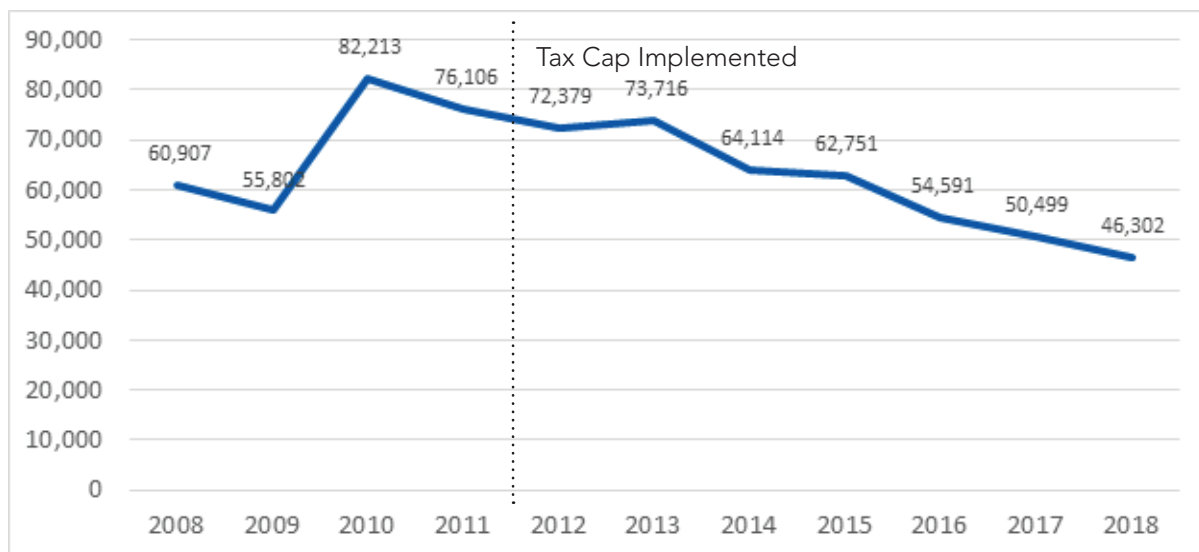
Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



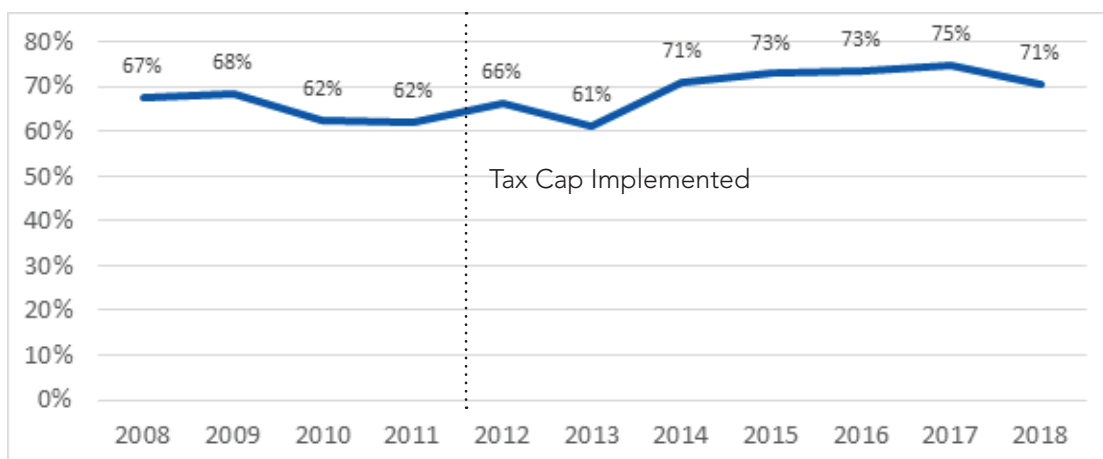
Western Region

2018 Budgets Passed/ Defeated	2018 Overrides and Results	2018 Turnout	Change Since 2013	Change Since 2008
73 Passed, 6 Defeated	2 Passed, 2 Defeated	46,302	-37.2%	-24.0%

Overall Turnout, 2008-2018



Share of Yes Votes, 2008-2018



Sources

NYSASBO analysis based on data from NYSED school budget vote database, district publications, and media reports. The following years/school districts data are missing: Inlet (2008), Auburn (2008), Yorktown (2009), Rush-Henrietta (2009), Lawrence (2009), Highland Falls (2010), Downsville (2014), Westbury (2015), and West Islip (2015).

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