

WHAT IS A REFERENDUM

/refə'ren.dəm/ (ref-er-REN-dum)

A direct popular vote on an issue of public policy, such as a proposed amendment to a state's constitution or a proposed law. A referendum is often used to gauge popular approval or rejection under consideration by the legislature.

Referendum is singular, while **referenda** is the traditional Latin plural. Although **referendums** is also accepted in modern English, **referenda** is more commonly used in legal, parliamentary and academic writing when referring to more than one referendum.

A Message from the Assistant Parliamentary Registrar

Mica Trott

At the Parliamentary Registry, we are responsible for educating voters, not only about the work of our office, but also about the different ways they can participate in Bermuda's democratic processes. This edition of our quarterly newsletter aims to do just that.

In recent months, there has been growing public discussion around whether or not we need to have a referendum in Bermuda. Being the election management body for Bermuda, we thought we would take the opportunity to join the conversation and educate voters on how referenda work and the role they play in our democratic process.

While parliamentary elections determine who will represent the people, a referendum allows registered voters to express their views directly on a question, or questions, that Parliament has decided should be put before the electorate. The holding of referenda allows the government to gauge public opinion on a specific topic.

In this edition, we walk readers through the referendum process and explain the Parliamentary Registry's role in ensuring it is conducted fairly, securely and transparently.

Democracy works best when people understand how it works. We hope this issue answers some common questions and offers a clearer understanding of this important civic process.

Our Work, Every Step of the Way



Plan & Prepare

Coordinate operations, appoint returning officers and secure polling stations



Inform the public

Publish referendum Notices in the Official Gazette and keep voters informed through social media, newspapers, radio and email



Register voters

Maintain and certify the Parliamentary Register



Conduct the Poll

Provide support to polling stations and voters on Polling Day



Count and declare

Oversee the count, declare the overall results and publish official results on our website

From Parliament to the Polls: How a Referendum Works

A referendum follows many of the same procedures as a parliamentary election, from voter registration and secret ballots to the careful counting of votes. But how does a referendum move from an idea under consideration to a question placed before Bermuda's voters? Here is a closer look at each stage of the process.



PARLIAMENT SETS THE PROCESS IN MOTION

The process begins when Parliament passes legislation requiring a referendum to be held. The legislation establishes the question—or questions—that registered voters will be asked to answer.



A DATE IS SET

Once the legislation comes into force, the Premier consults with the Parliamentary Registrar before publishing a Notice in the Official Gazette announcing the date for the referendum in accordance with the Referendum Act 2012. Polling Day must be held no sooner than 30 days and no later than 60 days after the Notice is published.



VOTERS ARE INFORMED

The Parliamentary Registrar then publishes an official public Notice in two successive editions of the Official Gazette. The Notice confirms the polling date, identifies the polling locations and sets out the question or questions voters will be asked.



THE PARLIAMENTARY REGISTER IS UPDATED

A seven-day registration period gives eligible residents an opportunity to register to vote for the first time. Registered voters should also update their information, including a change of name or address. Once this period closes, the Parliamentary Register to be used for the referendum is published.



ADVANCED VOTING TAKES PLACE

An Advanced Poll is held for eligible voters who cannot attend on polling day. This may include travellers, incapacitated, sick and shut-in and those carrying out official polling duties.



BERMUDA GOES TO THE POLLS

Polling stations open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Voters attend the polling station assigned to their constituency, where all regular polling station rules and procedures remain the same.



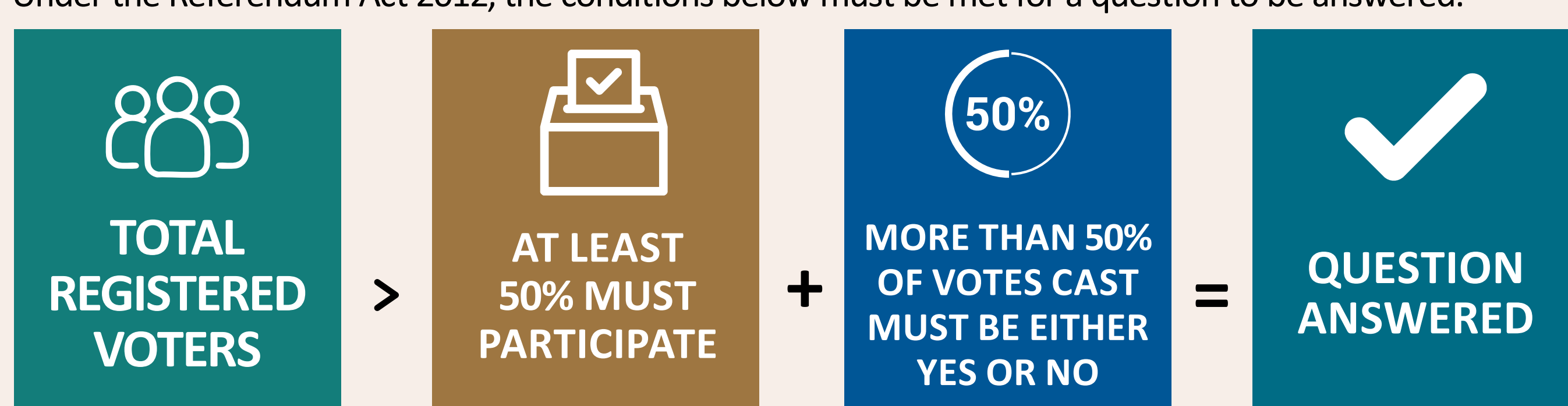
THE VOTES ARE COUNTED

Once the polls close, Returning Officers carefully count the ballot papers using the same procedures that are used in any parliamentary election. The results, plus all other election information will be found on our website www.elections.gov.bm.

The main difference between a referendum and parliamentary election sequence of events is that there is no 'nomination day' as we are not electing a person but voting on a question or questions.

The 50% Rule: When is a referendum question answered?

Under the Referendum Act 2012, the conditions below must be met for a question to be answered.



NOTE: If fewer than 50% of registered voters participate, even if most of those who voted selected "yes" or "no," the question is considered unanswered.

REFERENDA IN BERMUDA: A LOOK BACK

While general elections are a regular part of Bermuda's democracy, national referenda have been far less common. Since 1990 Bermuda has held three national referenda.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

1990

Bermudians were asked whether the death penalty for premeditated murder should be retained.

Turn out: 32.6 %

Results: 78.4% of those who voted supported retaining capital punishment

The referendum was conducted under the Capital Punishment Referendum Act 1989. Parliament later abolished the death penalty in 1999.

INDEPENDENCE

1995

Voters were asked whether Bermuda should be an independent nation.

Turnout: 58.76%

Results: 74.12% voted No | 25.88% voted Yes

The referendum was held under the Independence Referendum Act 1995.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND CIVIL UNIONS

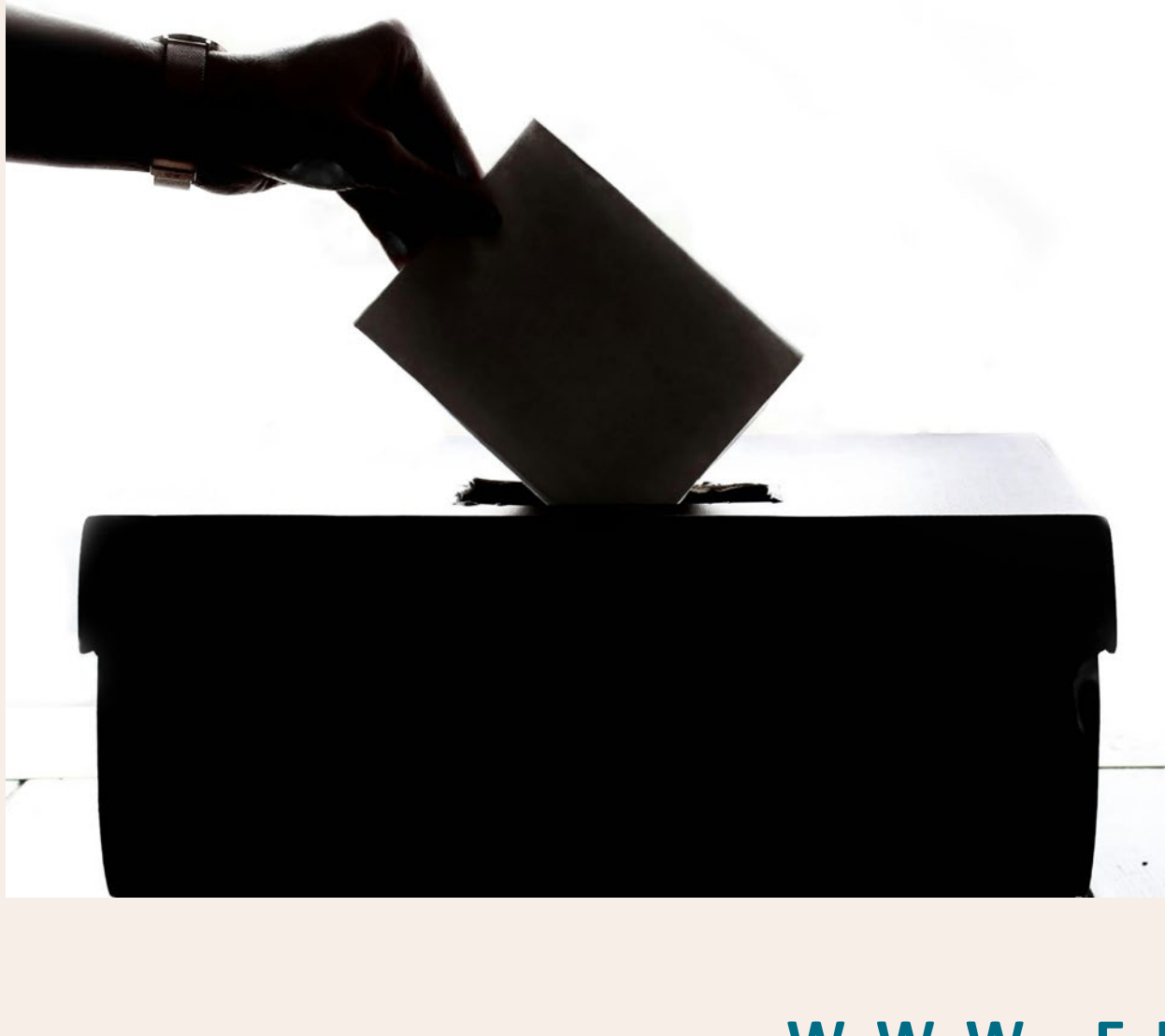
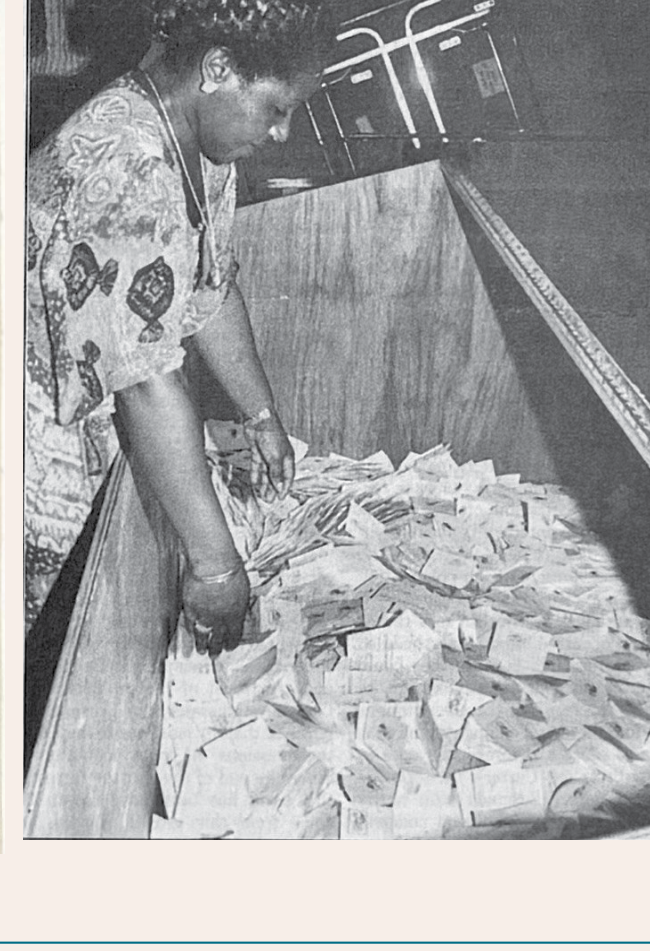
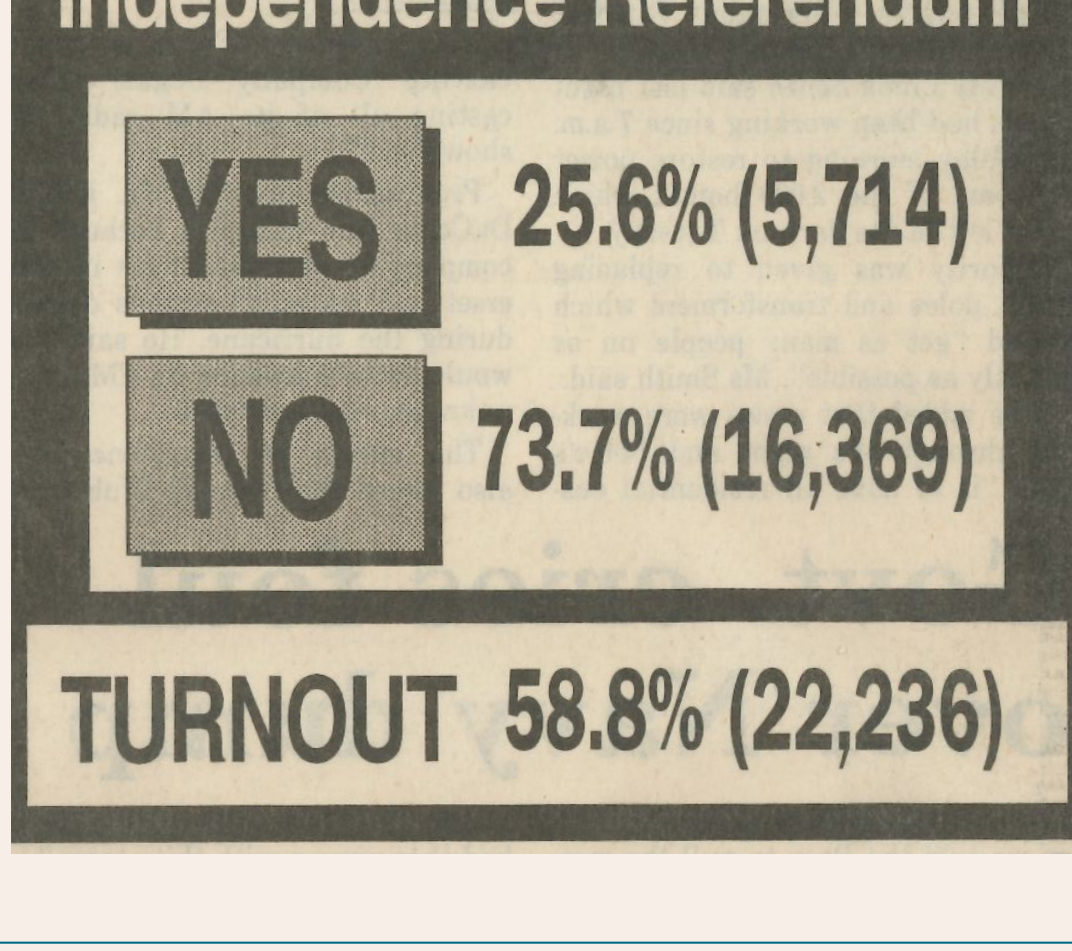
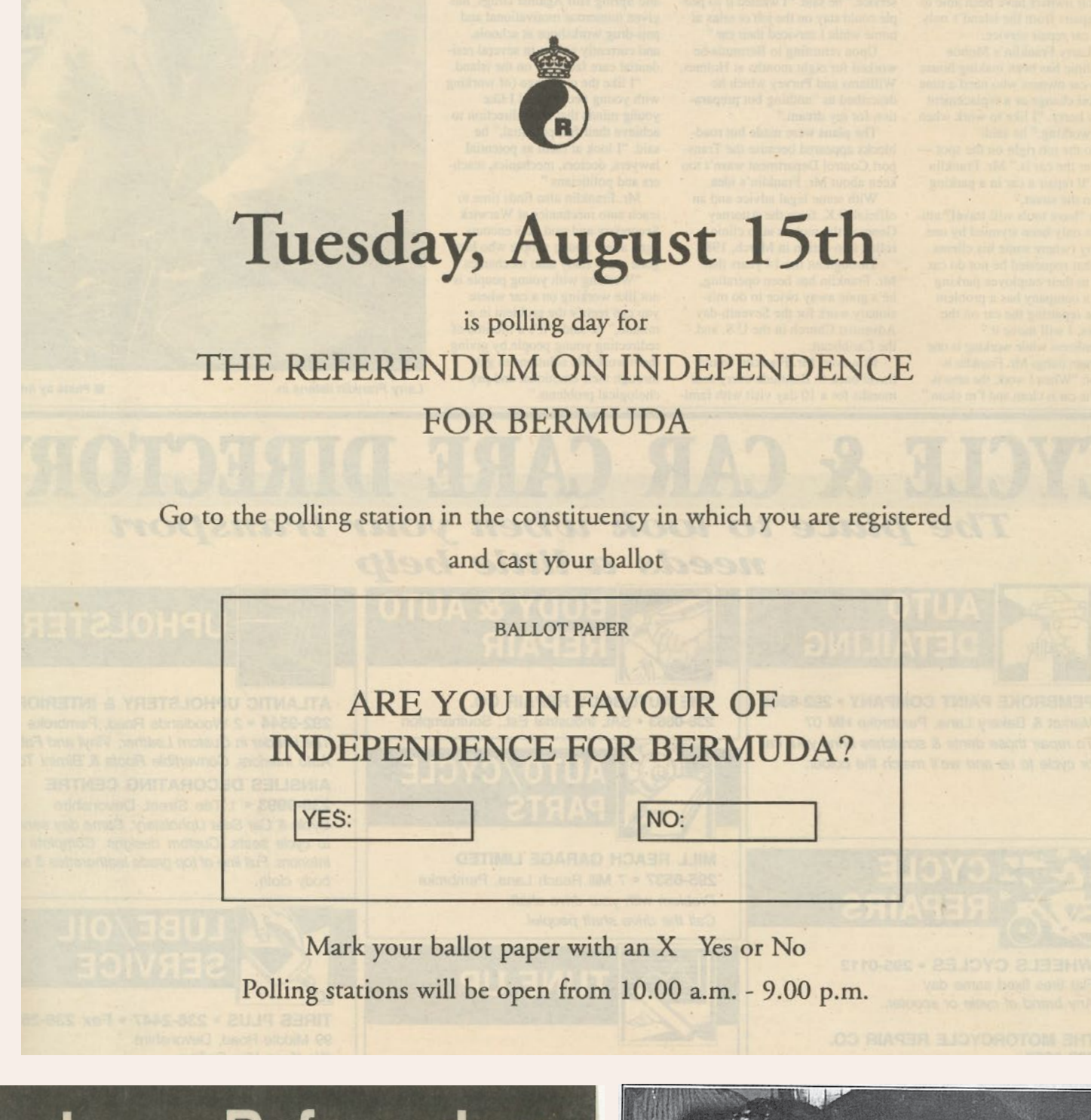
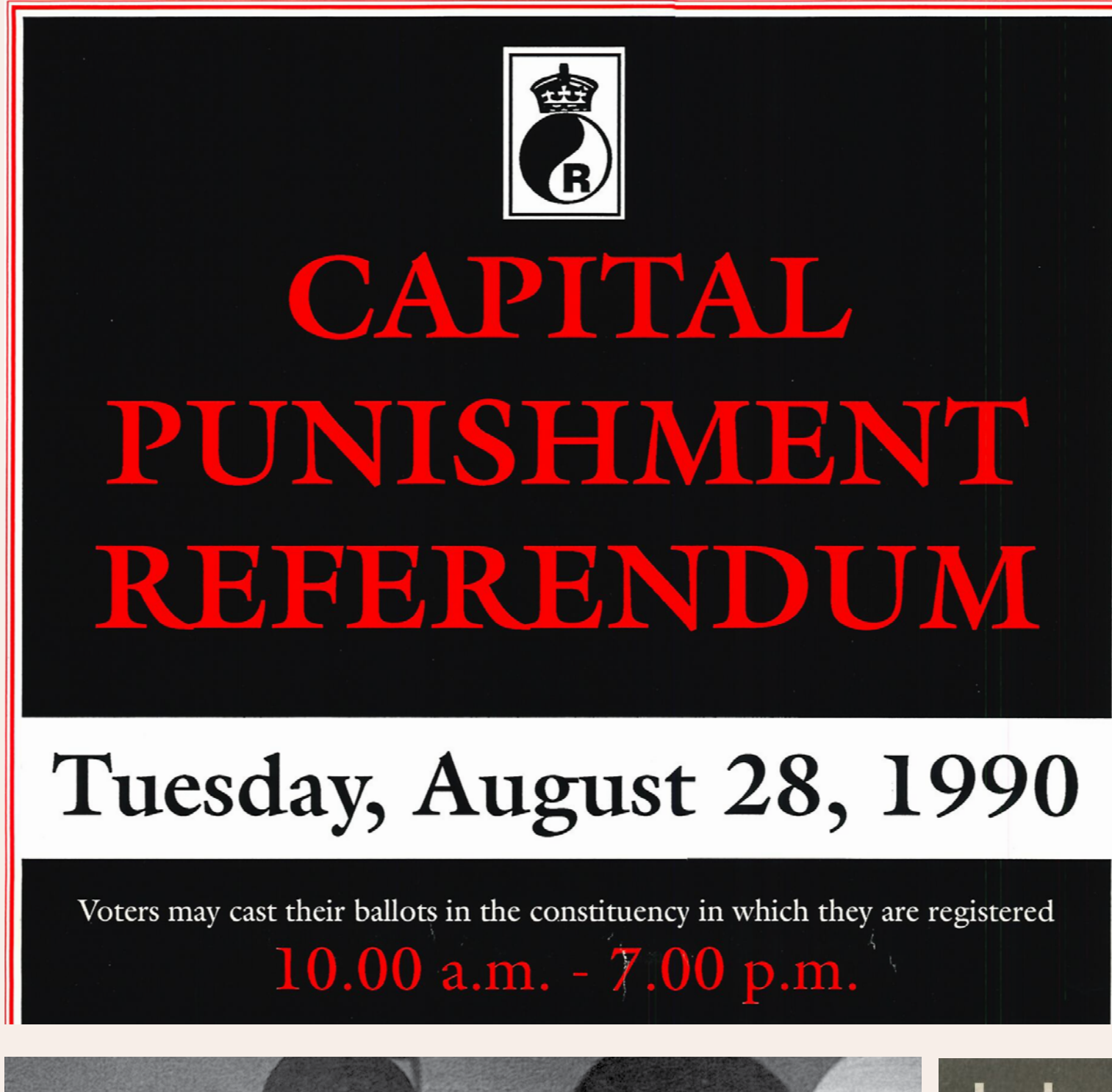
2016

Bermudians voted on two separate questions relating to same-sex marriage and civil unions.

Turnout: 46.89%

Results: Although majority of those who voted answered "No" to both questions, overall voter participation was below the 50% participation threshold required under the Referendum Act 2012. As a result, both referendum questions were officially deemed unanswered.

REFERENDA GALLERY



ARE YOUR VOTER DETAILS UP TO DATE?

Visit www.elections.gov.bm to check your details today!

WWW.ELECTIONS.GOV.BM

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