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Contact: Patrick Christmas
Policy Program Manager
Committee of Seventy
(267) 940-4503 (office)
pchristmas@seventy.org

Dan Ford
Community Ambassador, Azavea
(215) 925-7723 (office)
dford@azavea.com

C70's VOTER EXPERIENCE SURVEY: GENERALLY OK, BUT SOME LONG LINES AND INAPPROPRIATE REQUESTS FOR VOTER ID

The survey is the third administered by the Committee of Seventy since 2015

PHILADELPHIA, PA (December 5, 2016) – The [Voter Experience Survey](#) conducted by the Committee of Seventy during the November 2016 General Election fielded responses from nearly 1,700 voters in the Philadelphia area. The survey is the third administered since the May 2015 primary and is designed to identify issues voters encounter when voting in-person or via mail-in (absentee or alternative) ballot.

Although most respondents indicated a relatively smooth voting experience, not all were able to cast their ballot with ease. A few said they were disenfranchised altogether.

- **Long Lines at the Polls:** One in five respondents reported waiting in line to vote for 30 minutes or more; seven percent were in line for more than an hour. The [2014 Presidential Commission on Election Administration](#) concluded that no voter should have to wait longer than 30 minutes. According to an analysis by Azavea, a Philadelphia-based geospatial technology firm, long wait times were most commonly reported in Center City, University City and West Philadelphia, parts of North Philadelphia and Northwest Philadelphia. News reports indicated that some voters at polling places near Temple University waited in line for close to 3 hours. (See Azavea map below.)
- **Inappropriate Requests for Voter ID:** As revealed in November 2015 and April 2016, a high proportion of voters continue to encounter unwarranted requests from polling place officials to show identification. Only first-time voters or voters casting ballots for the first time at a certain division are required to show an approved form of photo or non-photo ID. Of the 331 respondents asked for ID, 131 – 40 percent – stated they were not a first-time voter nor was it their first time at the polling place. (See Azavea map below.)
- **Absentee Ballot Problems:** Although only 42 respondents indicated casting an absentee or alternative ballot, 17 reported difficulty in the process, some attempting for weeks to receive a ballot



despite having submitted an application. The protracted legal battle regarding the judicial retirement age ballot question language may have contributed to delays in some cases.

“This survey is the only way we have to give voters a chance to comment on their experience at the polls,” said Committee of Seventy President and CEO David Thornburgh. “Any long lines and confusion at the polls discourage some people from casting their votes. No voter who takes time off from work, school, or family should be asked to tolerate broken machines and poorly-trained, disorganized election workers. In 2016, the voting experience should not be modeled on Soviet-era shopping from the 1950’s. We need to expect more.”

As one respondent stated: “This was my first time in Philadelphia voting in person (non-absentee) and I was pretty disappointed by it. It made me realize that voting is not as simple as we are led to believe. I don't think the situation was caused by too few volunteers, I think it was caused by poor preparation and foresight. There were a fair number of volunteers, they just didn't seem very productive or helpful.”

Good news from the survey included a lower proportion of voters reporting illegal electioneering inside of polling places (69 or 4% of respondents), and an uptick of respondents – 88 percent – suggesting they believe the process produces fair outcomes.

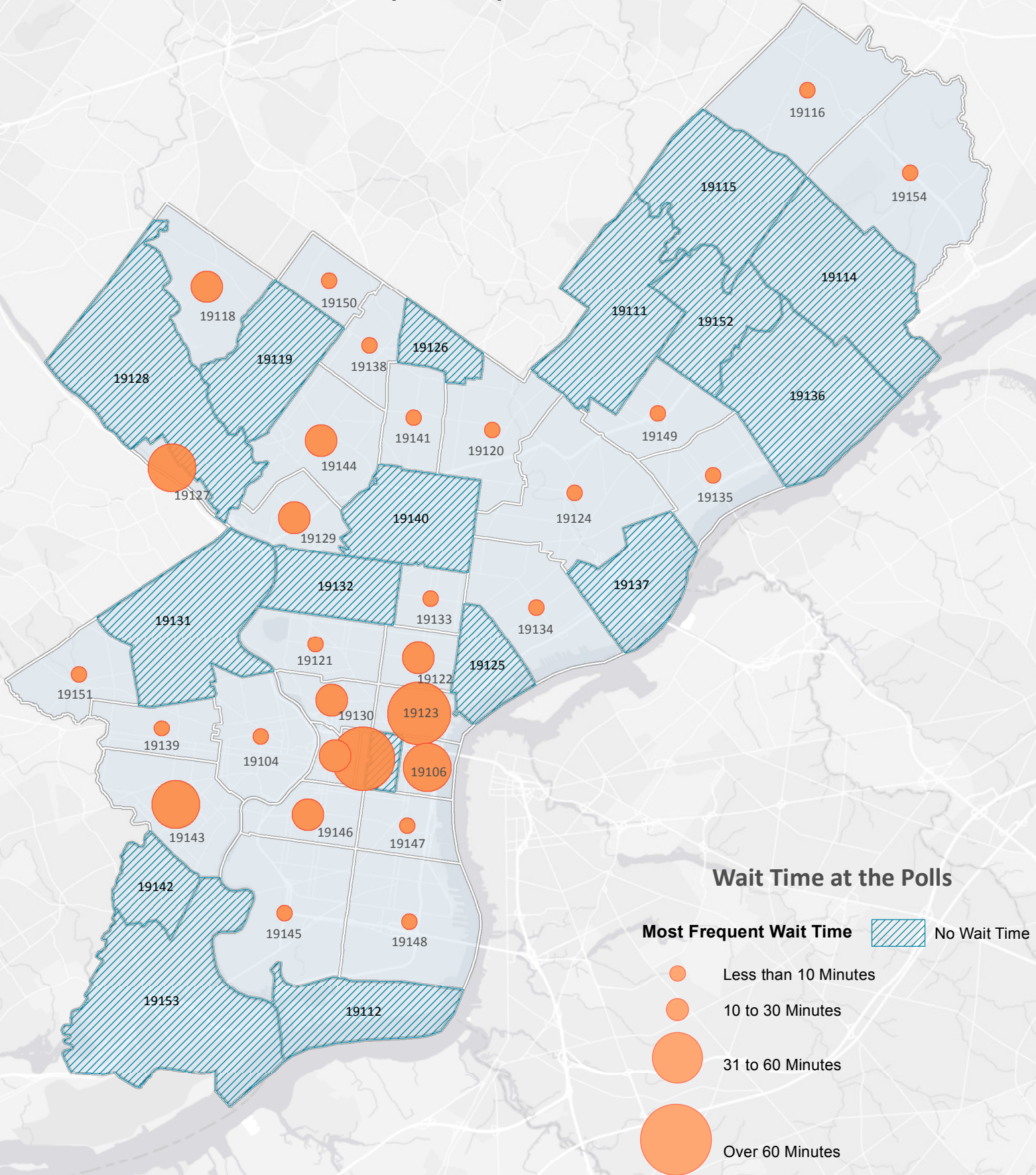
Survey Methodology and Background: This is the third consecutive election Seventy has conducted, having received more than [650 responses in November 2015](#) and nearly [1,100 responses in April 2016](#). Specific issues covered by each survey include: voting wait time, illegal electioneering, voter registration, voter ID, voting machines, voter assistance, language access, poll worker performance and confidence in the election process.

Most questions have been collected from similar surveys conducted by academics in other states and have been kept consistent each election season. Despite a large number of respondents, the results are not drawn from a random and representative sample of Philadelphia voters and, therefore, only offer insight into the experiences of the nearly 1,700 participants – not the broader population of voters. The survey is designed to identify issues that the electorate at large may be encountering in the voting process.

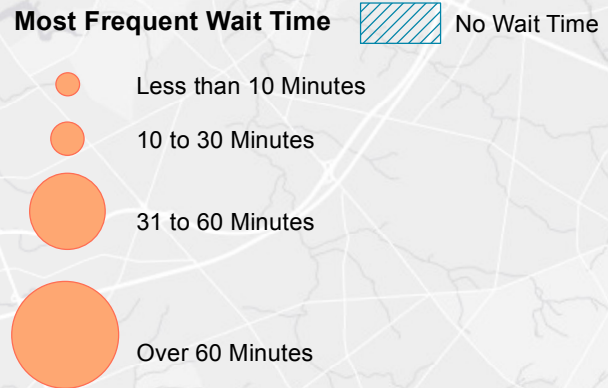
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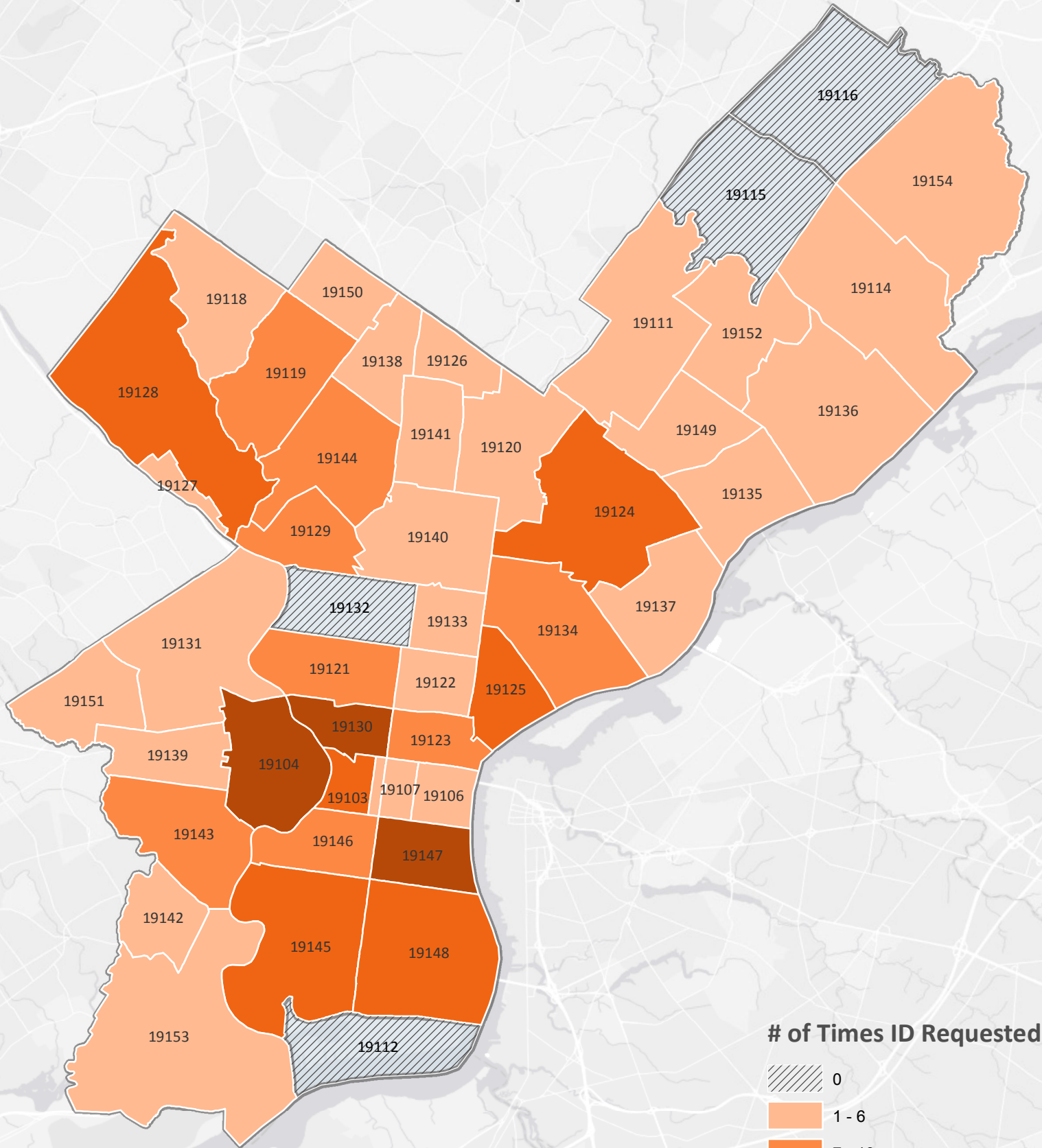
Most Frequent Wait Time at the Polls per Zip Code



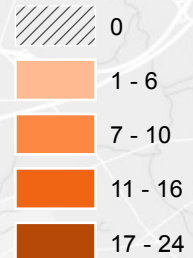
Wait Time at the Polls



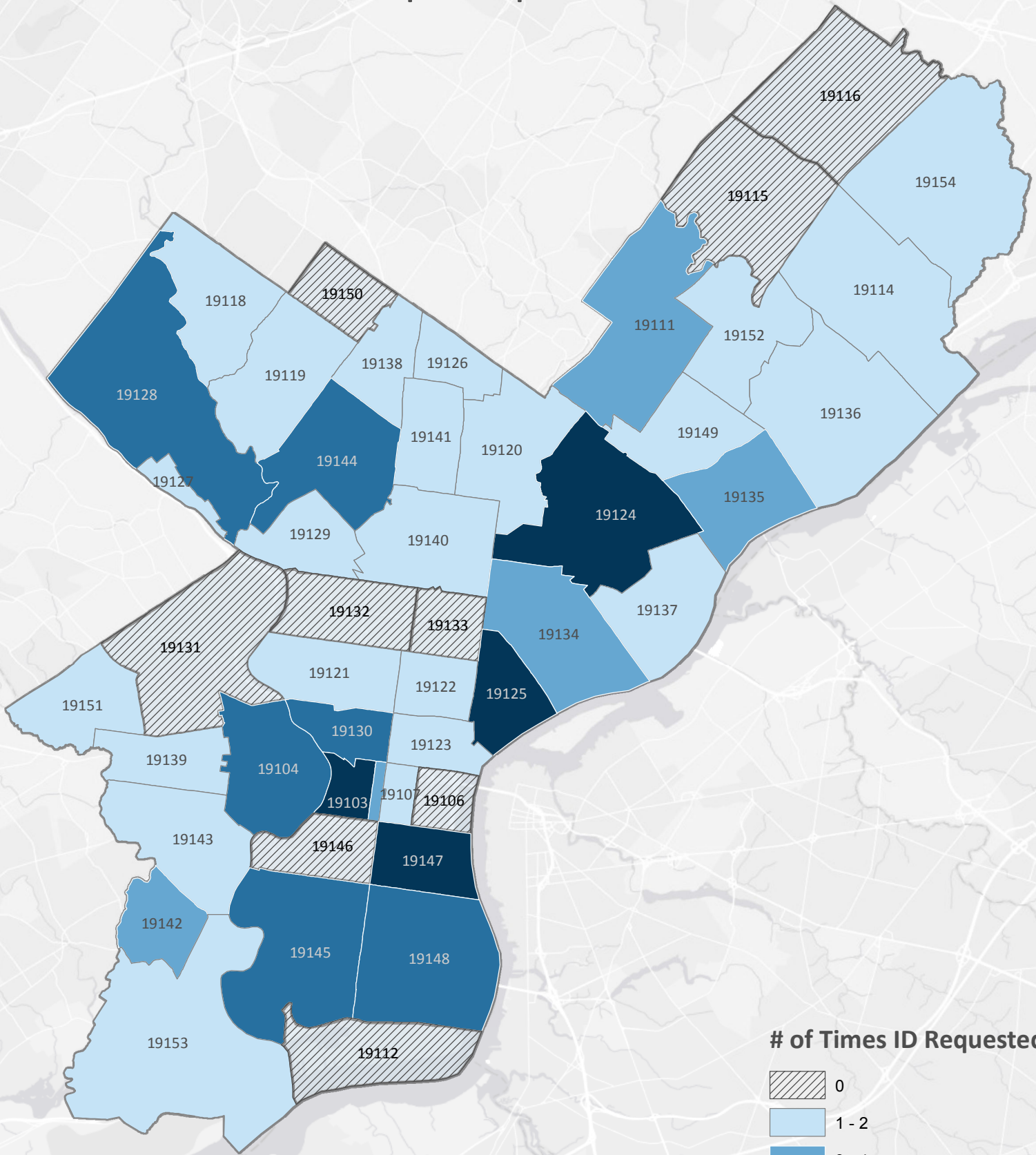
Number of Times ID was Requested Per Zip Code



of Times ID Requested



Illegal ID Requests per Zip Code



of Times ID Requested

