

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

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Getting out the vote: raising involvement in Vancouver's 2018 Election

What you need to know:

To raise voting numbers outreach strategies should focus on people who can't easily access election information due to physical, intellectual, or monetary barriers. Partnerships with community organizations and multilingual outreach staff can make voting easier for marginalized groups. Surveying voters and non-voters after an election may show other areas to improve election outreach.

What is this research about?

Fewer people vote in democratic countries than before. When voting decreases, elected governments are less representative of the people they serve and decisions by those governments have less support. In 2008, only 31% of people in Vancouver, Canada voted in the municipal election. In 2014, after more outreach, voting increased to 43.4%.

The City of Vancouver wants to continue increasing voting for the next election. This report examines how outreach can increase voting in the October 20, 2018 Vancouver election.

What did the researcher do?

To answer the question, "how can the City of Vancouver use public outreach to increase voting in the 2018 election?" the researcher took three steps. First, the researcher reviewed literature on political engagement, voter behaviour, and factors affecting voter turnout.

Second, the researcher looked at information about people in Vancouver and voters in the 2014 election. Finally, the researcher reviewed other government elections for best practices. To do this, the researcher interviewed outreach program managers at Elections Canada, Elections BC, the City of Toronto, and the City of San Francisco.



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Making voting information available in multiple languages is one strategy researcher Paul Hendren suggests to help more people vote (Photo credit: City of Vancouver staff, with permission).



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What did the researcher find?

The researcher found that people with more wealth and higher education are more likely to vote. The review also showed that difficulty accessing information and voting locations, as well as negative feelings for the government stopped people from voting. Data from the research shows that fewer voters come from areas where many people are young, Indigenous, new citizens, or non-English-speaking.

Based on these findings, the researcher recommends partnering with community organizations, hiring multilingual outreach staff, and reaching out to non-voters through peers they can relate to. The researcher also recommends surveying voters and non-voters after the election to better understand what influences voter behaviour and how people in different groups experience the voting process.

How can you use this research?

The Vancouver Election Office will use the recommendations in this research to develop an outreach plan with the goal of increasing voters for the 2018 election. Other governments can use the findings in this report to encourage more voters to take part in their elections as well. This research is also helpful to organizations working with people facing challenges to voting. Such groups can use this report to create programs and partner with governments to help more people take part in democracy.

About the researchers

Paul Hendren, MPA, is an alumnus of the University of Victoria (UVic). The researcher completed this project through the School of Public Administration master's program. Paul is currently working in the City of Vancouver Election Office, as the Election Outreach Lead.

Dr. Kimberly Speers, School of Public Administration, UVic, supervised this project.

Facilitated by [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), this project is a partnership between the City of Vancouver and UVic.

Keywords

Elections; Canada; voter turnout; government management; political engagement

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