

Young Elector Participation

in the 2015 Territorial General Election

Nara Dapilos

Youth Programs Coordinator
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer
May 2019

Table of Contents

Introduction	
Youth Voter Turnout in the Northwest Territories.....	1
Voter Turnout by Electoral District (ED).....	1
Young Adult Male vs. Female Voter Turnout.....	2
Voter Turnout by Population Estimate	3
Yellowknife Voter Turnout	4
Conclusion: Potential Outcomes	4

Introduction

This research paper is intended to analyze election participation of young adults in the Northwest Territories based on data from the 2015 general election. Figure 1 shows a comparison between the NWT population estimate and the number of registered electors in 2015 by age.

Within the 18- to 35-year-old age range, the chart illustrates a significant gap between the two data sets, most significantly among first-time voters. It is estimated there were 596 18-year-olds in the NWT in 2015ⁱ, yet records show there were only 116 in the Register of Electors, which is approximately an 81% differenceⁱⁱ. In the following research paper, “youth” and “young adults” are used interchangeably and encompass data referring to the 18-35 age cohort. Figure 1 depicts the gap gradually narrowing as age increases across the chart, however the most noticeable differences remain amid young adults.

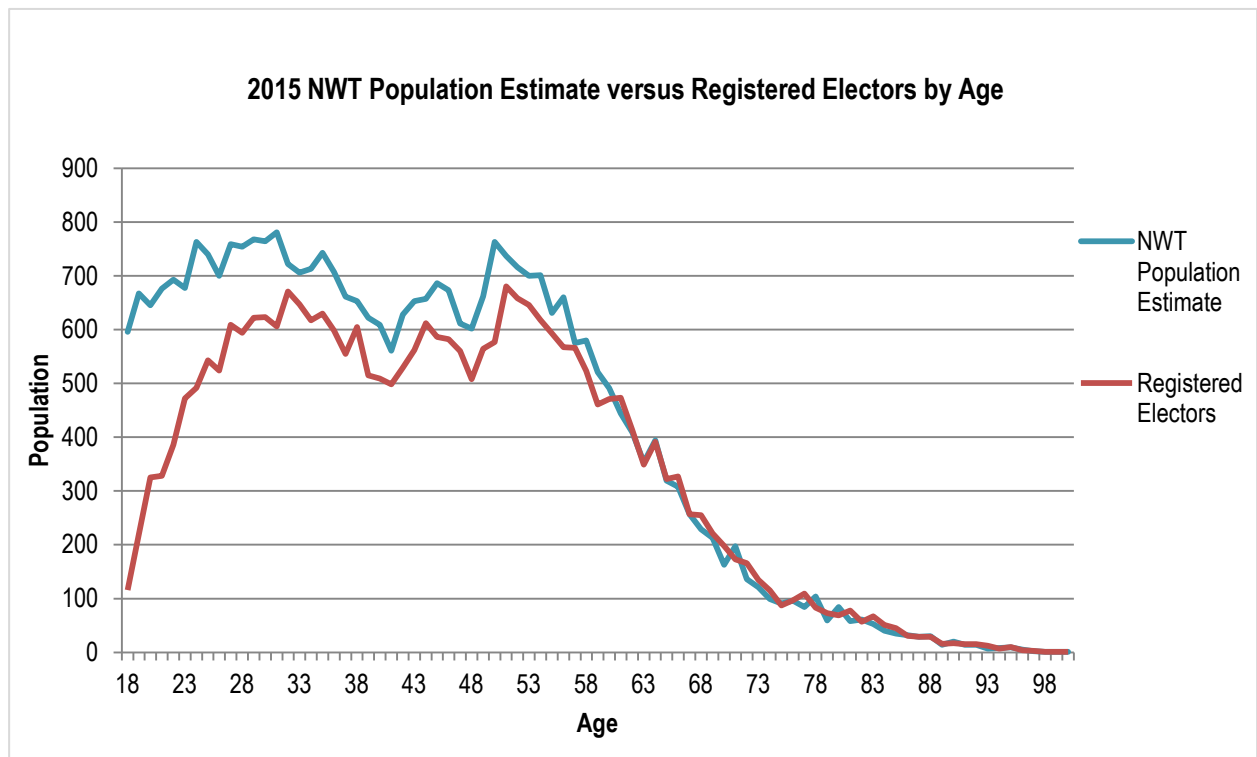
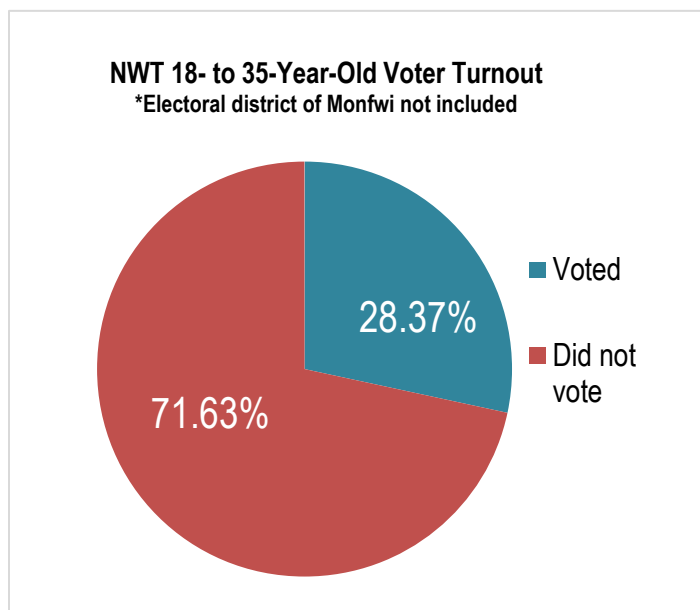


Figure 1 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors and NWT Bureau of Statistics table: Territorial Single Years of Age by Gender, 2001-2018

It should be noted that the candidate for the electoral district of Moqwhì – consisting of Gamèti, Wekweèti, Behchokò, and Whatì – was acclaimed in the 2015 general election. Thus, statistics from the electoral district were not included in calculating voter turnout percentages and are therefore not included in the following analyses.



Youth Voter Turnout in the Northwest Territories

Voter turnout percentage is generally calculated as the number of ballots casted divided by the total number of registered electors. According to the Register of Electors, there were 8,499 young adults age 18 to 35 that were registered, yet only 2,411 voted, resulting in only 28.37% voter turnoutⁱⁱⁱ (Figure 2).

Among all ages, there were 14,904 registered electors in NWT that did not vote. Of that population, 41% were between the ages of 18 and 35^{iv}.

Figure 2 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors

Voter turnout percentages for young adults within each electoral district can be seen in Figure 3 below.

Voter Turnout by Electoral District (ED)

In 2015, Nahendeh and Nunakput were the only electoral districts where more than half of all 18- to 35-year-old registered electors voted. Voter turnout rates among this age group were 54.72% and 50.84% respectively. Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh produced the third highest voter turnout rate of 40.91%.

In contrast, the three electoral districts with the lowest voter turnout rates in this age cohort are Kam Lake (15.63%), Yellowknife South (16.88%), and Great Slave (19.89%). 10 out of the 19 electoral districts produced youth voter turnout less than 30%, as seen in Figure 3.

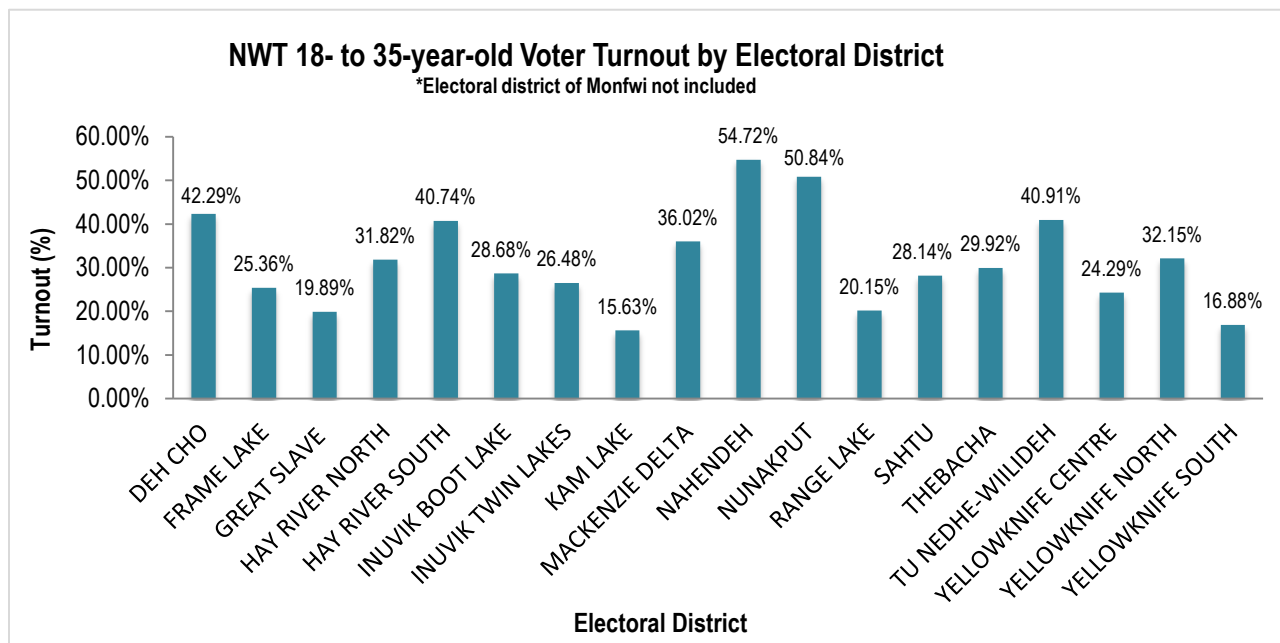


Figure 3 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors

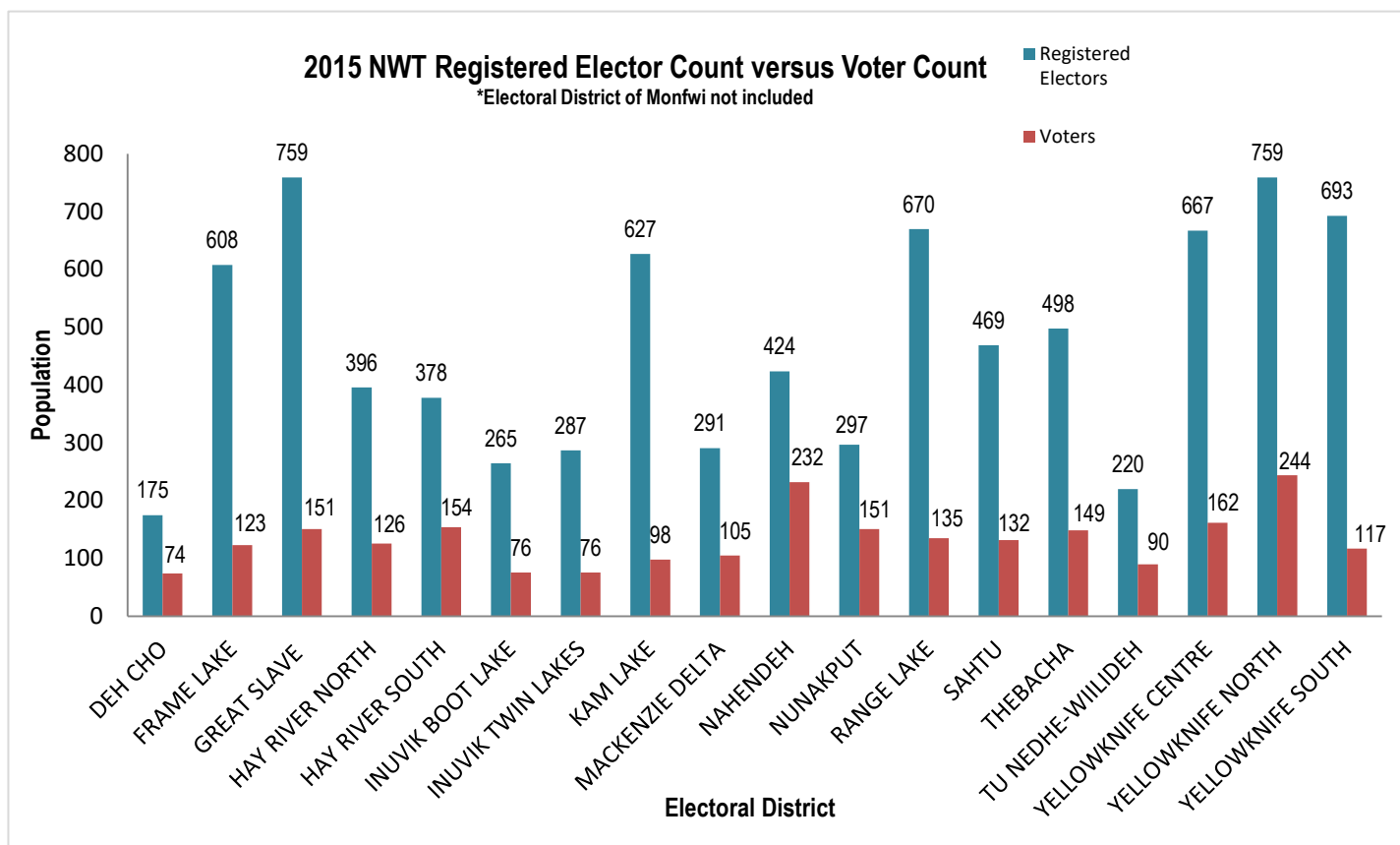


Figure 4 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors

It appears all seven of Yellowknife's electoral districts – Frame Lake, Great Slave, Kam Lake, Range Lake, Yellowknife Centre, Yellowknife North, and Yellowknife South – produced the largest disparities between registered electors and actual voters in comparison to the rest of the electoral districts. Yellowknife's EDs have the highest number of 18- to 35-year-old residents, yet they have the most young adults missing from the polls. Figure 4 displays side by side comparisons of registered elector counts and voter counts in each electoral district.

Young Adult Male vs. Female Voter Turnout

In NWT, there were more young adult males in the Register of Electors than there were females. However, female youth voter turnout among registered electors was 30.95%, while male voter turnout was only 25.28%. Seven electoral districts experienced a similar phenomenon where female voter turnout surpassed male voter turnout despite males outnumbering females in the Register of Electors, namely, Great Slave, Hay River North, Hay River South, Kam Lake, Nunakput, Thebacha, and Tu Nedhe-Wilideh. Nahendeh produced the highest male voter turnout of 58%^v and appears to be the only electoral district where young male voter turnout surpassed young female voter turnout. Nunakput produced the highest female voter turnout percentage of 53%.

Higher female voter turnout is actually consistent with gender differences found in the voter turnout for the Federal election in 2015. Women in Canada participated at a higher rate than men^{vi}.

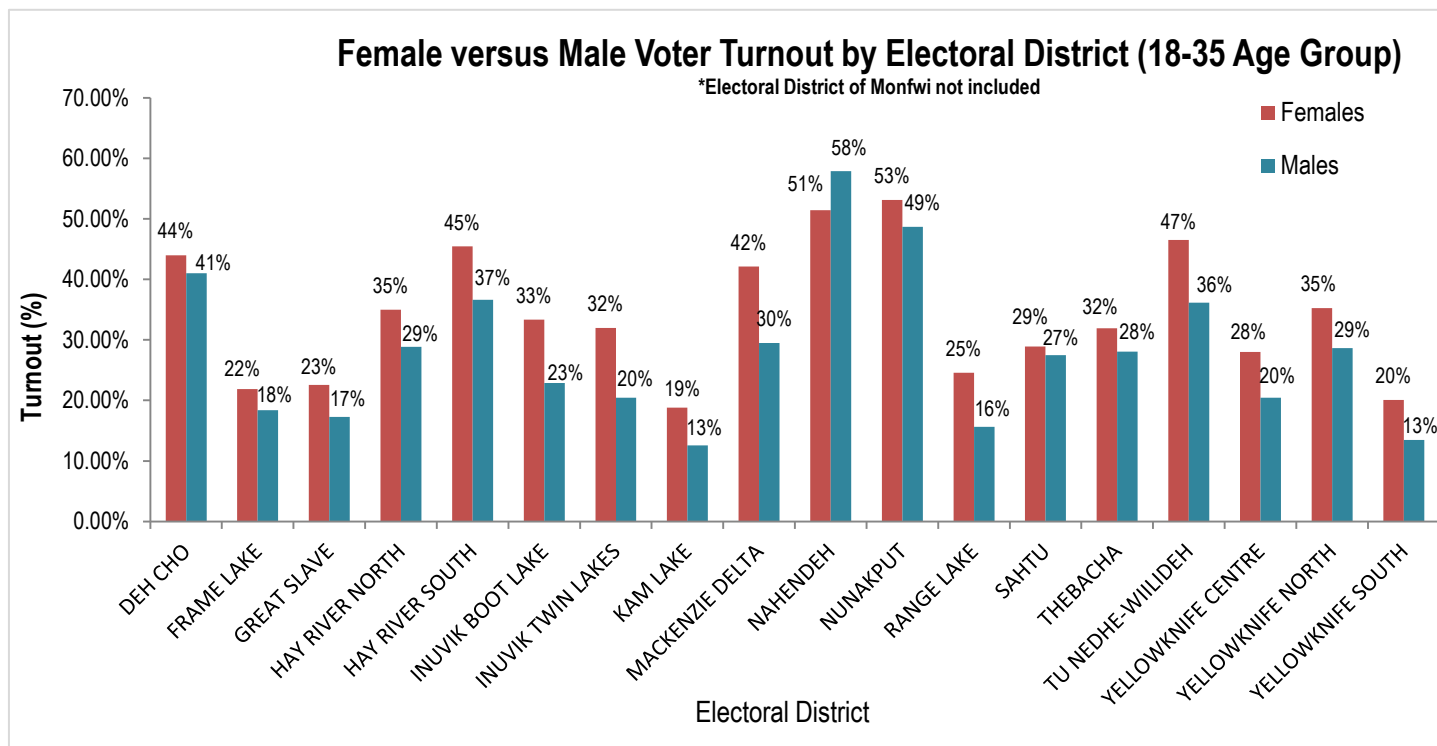
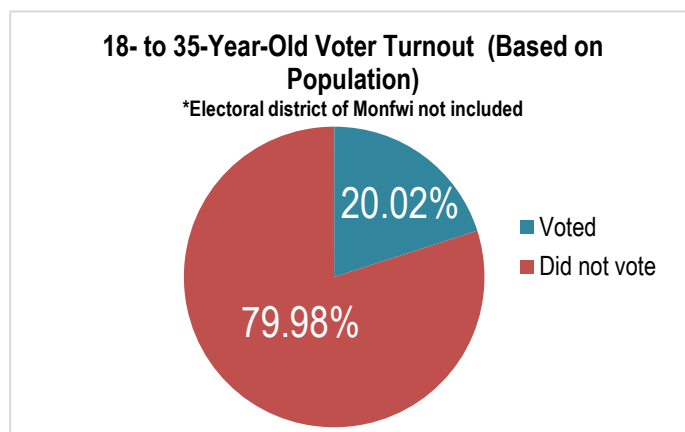


Figure 5 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors

Voter Turnout by Population Estimate

As previously mentioned, voter turnout percentage is generally calculated as the number of ballots casted divided by the number of total registered electors. However, considering the gap between the number of registered young adults and the population estimate (as seen in Figure 1, page 3), we also calculated voter turnout by taking the number of registered voters and dividing it by the population estimate, based on data from NWT Bureau of Statistics.



It is estimated there were 12,042 young adults age 18-35 in the Northwest Territories in 2015, not including the communities of Behchokò, Gametì, Wekweètì, and Whati (electoral district of Mowhi)^{vii}. Of that population estimate, only 2,411 were registered electors that voted in the territorial general election.

In other words, **80%** of NWT’s 18- to 35-year-old population did not vote in 2015 (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors and NWT Bureau of Statistics: Territorial Single Years of Age by Gender: 2001-2018

Yellowknife Voter Turnout

The analyses of voter turnout percentages both in the context of registered electors and population estimate reveals the challenge of engaging eligible young adults specifically in the capital city. Considering that seven of the territory's electoral districts are in Yellowknife, disparities in those regions should be taken note of. The Register of Electors show 18- to 35-year-olds made up approximately 33% - 37% of those registered in each of Yellowknife's electoral districts in 2015.

According to NWT Bureau of Statistics, it is estimated there were 6,173 young adults between the age of 18 and 35 in Yellowknife^{viii}. Among this age group, 4,783 were registered electors, which is 77.5% of the young adult population. However, only 1,030 registered young adults casted ballots at the polls (Figure 7).

Against the population estimate, this means Yellowknife's youth voter turnout was only **16.69%**. Approximately **83%** of Yellowknife's young adult population did not vote in 2015 (Figure 8).

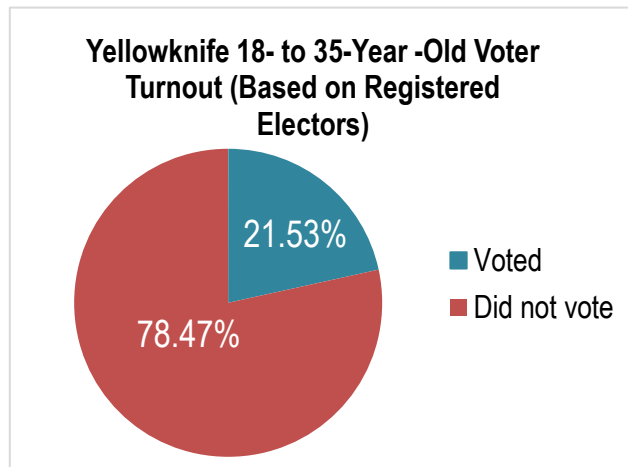


Figure 7 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors

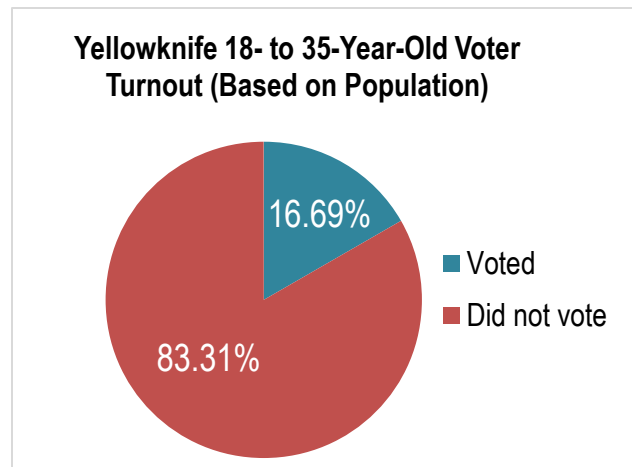


Figure 8 – Data Retrieved from NWT Register of Electors and NWT Bureau of Statistics: Population Estimates for 18- to 35-year-olds by Community

Conclusion: Potential Outcomes

Analyzing youth voter turnout often triggers the question of “What difference does the youth vote make?” Currently in the NWT, the 18- to 35-year-old cohort makes up approximately 28% of the estimated population^{ix}. According to the Register of Electors, 18- to 35-year-olds made up between 24%-37% of the registered population in each electoral district in 2015. Though these numbers do not imply a majority, it does not necessarily invalidate the potential for young adults to impact election results.

For example, judicial recounts were conducted in Nunakput, Range Lake, and Yellowknife North due to marginal differences of less than 2% between the winning candidate and the candidate with the second most votes^x. The number of young electors who did not participate in 2015 represent potential votes that could have determined different outcomes for these three electoral districts. Nunakput maintained a 4-vote difference after the recount, however there were 140 young adults that did not vote in

this electoral district. Similarly, Range Lake and Yellowknife North's final voting results ended with a 5-vote and 16-vote difference respectively. But there were 535 missing young electors in Range Lake, and 515 missing in Yellowknife North. Although nothing could have been guaranteed, these are still significant enough numbers to have potentially produced different results. Indeed, there is the possibility that results could have also remained the same. But, at least the election would have reflected decisions where young adults were included and represented, which is the root of the movement to mobilize young electors to vote.

ⁱ NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2019). [From the 2015 column in the table 'Total Population by Single Year of Age as of July 1'] *Territorial Single Years of Age by Gender, 2001-2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.statsnwt.ca/population/population-estimates/>

ⁱⁱ NWT Register of Electors. (2019). [Custom Report Excel Spreadsheet]. Retrieved from Voterview.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Ibid

^v Ibid

^{vi} Elections Canada. (2015). Estimation of voter turnout by age group and gender at the 2015 General Election. Retrieved from

<https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rec/part/estim/42ge&document=p1&lang=e>

^{vii} NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2019). [Excel spreadsheet] *Population Estimates for 18- to 35-year-olds by Community*. Accessed April 11, 2019.

^{viii} Ibid

^{ix} NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2019). [From the 2018 column in the table 'Total Population by Single Year of Age as of July 1'] *Territorial Single Years of Age by Gender, 2001-2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.statsnwt.ca/population/population-estimates/>

^x Elections NWT. (2015). *Modernizing Election Administration in the Northwest Territories: CEO Report on the Administration of the 2015 Territorial General Election*. Retrieved from https://www.electionsnwt.ca/sites/electionsnwt/files/2016-05-20_ceo_report_2015_general_election_en.pdf