

Young Elector Outreach and Participation

in the 2019 Territorial General Election

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Executive Summary

Part I: Youth Engagement Ambassador Program

The 2019 Youth Engagement Ambassador Program can be seen as a pilot project to inform future youth initiatives with the ultimate goal of increasing young elector participation. Although successful in gauging the interest of at least 20 young adults from across the territory, it is evident that more time is necessary for recruitment, effective and sustainable methods for monitoring activities should be explored, and that developing appropriate outreach tactics suitable to each specific community should be considered. A collaborative planning approach by means of a workshop or conference-style event in Yellowknife, in addition to writ-period outreach activities, may be a possible option to help mitigate the aforementioned challenges in the future.

Part II: Young Elector Participation Analysis

In order to gauge a more accurate representation of young elector participation, youth voter turnout was calculated by dividing the number of voters by the population estimate, as opposed to the number of registered electors.

Youth voter turnout increased by 11%, changing from 20% in 2015 to 31% at the 2019 Territorial General Election. Similarly, voter turnout specifically in Yellowknife increased by 12%, changing from 17% to 29% of youth having voted.

Overall registered female voter turnout remains higher than male voter turnout, sitting at 49% and 37% respectively.

Introduction

The report on [Young Elector Participation in the 2015 Territorial General Election](#) previously published by Elections NWT highlighted a significant lack of participation from young electors ages 18-35 in the NWT. In specific, voter turnout in this age group among young adults both registered and not registered came out to only 20% of youth in NWT having votedⁱ.

Several efforts to increase voter turnout among young adults for the 2019 Territorial General Election (TGE) were carried out throughout the months leading up to Ordinary Polling Day on October 1, 2019. The following report discusses one of the methods used to engage young electors in NWT, as well as a data analysis of young elector participation in the 2019 TGE. For brevity purposes, the terms “young adult” “youth” and “young elector” will be used interchangeably in this report to refer to the 18 to 35 age group. Please also note that electoral districts of Hay River North, Mackenzie Delta, and Monfwi were acclaimed and are therefore not included in the data analyses portion of the report.

Part I: Youth Engagement Ambassador Program

Program Overview

Elections NWT's Youth Programs Coordinator developed the Youth Engagement Ambassador Program, which ran from September 2 until October 1, targeting youth ages 18-35 within each community in the Northwest Territories. With the ultimate goal of increasing youth participation, the role of the Youth Engagement Ambassador was to promote elections awareness to fellow young adults in their community and encourage discussion on various election matters. Each Youth Engagement Ambassador was compensated \$500 for their outreach efforts.

Eye-catching recruitment posters were developed and distributed to the communities. The Youth Programs Coordinator contacted Youth Centres and High Schools across the north to further promote the program to youth in the community. Application forms were provided to those who expressed interest.

Of those interested, 20 youth ranging from ages 18 to 27 were selected and contacted for the position of Youth Engagement Ambassador in their community. Communities with participating youth include Yellowknife, Aklavik, Behchokò, Inuvik, Paulatuk, Whatì, Gamètì, Colville Lake, Norman Wells, Fort Good Hope, Tuktoyaktuk, Fort Liard, Fort Providence, Sachs Harbour, Hay River, and Nahanni Butte.

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
AMBASSADORS WANTED!**

\$500 COMPENSATION

Ready to make a difference in the next territorial election?
 Passionate about raising the voices of youth in the North?

We are looking for Youth Engagement Ambassadors between the ages of 18-24 who will facilitate outreach activities to youth in their communities all throughout September and promote a larger presence at the polls on Election Day (October 1).

DID YOU KNOW...

80% of young adults in the NWT were **missing** from the polls in 2015?

We can change this.
Apply now to become a Youth Engagement Ambassador in your community!

For more information and to apply, please e-mail Nara Dapilos at Nara_Dapilos@electionsnwt.ca.

In your e-mail, please include a brief description of yourself, where you're from, and why you think you would be a great Youth Engagement Ambassador for your community.

Deadline: July 19, 2019

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That said, only 13 ambassadors completed the program in its entirety. Reasons for a youth's discontinuation with the program were either of personal circumstance or the youth lived in a community belonging to an electoral district that was acclaimed.

As part of the program, Youth Engagement Ambassadors were sent packages of Elections NWT merchandise for personal keeping as well as for the purpose of giveaways. Such items included hats, t-shirts, hoodies, water bottles, sunglasses, power banks, and stickers. Youth were also provided with Activity Schedules outlining various outreach tasks to carry out during the Writ Period. 3 tiers of Activity Schedules were created and distributed based on size of the community, but all activities focused on the main premise of promoting elections awareness and facilitating discussions with peers. Activities included, but were not limited to:

- Taking photos of youth holding the #TruantNoMore sign and uploading to social media
- Asking peers about which candidates they think best reflect their interests
- Discussions on why it is important for youth to vote
- Discussions on issues specific to their community
- Giveaways and draws for Elections NWT merchandise

Program Successes

One of the most effective forms of advertising for the program was through Facebook. In particular, the Youth Programs Coordinator joined a number of Community Bulletin groups on Facebook, which helped increase the reach of the program to audiences who already use the platform. Ambassadors from Wha Ti, Gamètì, and Nahanni Butte were recruited with this method. The Youth Programs Coordinator also connected with various youth centres and Government Services Officers across the territory to help facilitate recruitment.

The program was successful in gauging the interest of at least 20 young adults from various regions across NWT. Although it was not a primary goal, there was success in recruiting at least one ambassador in nearly each electoral district, except for Thebacha and Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Those who were able to post #TruantNoMore photos on social media as outlined in the schedule seemed to have received positive feedback from the public online (i.e. received many "likes", photos were shared, etc.). Additionally, several ambassadors had taken initiative to accomplish outreach tasks outside of the activity schedule. One ambassador had collected the e-mail addresses of youth via Google forms, which they then used to send out reminders to youth about the upcoming election. Moreover, a few ambassadors reported visiting either local organizations or high school classrooms in the community and spoke with the young adults about the importance of voting, facilitated some discussion, and distributed merchandise and giveaways.

Areas for Improvement

Phone calls to youth centers and poster distribution occurred during the latter half of May, with the application deadline of July 19. It is evident that this was a rather short recruitment period which resulted in slow-growing "hype" around the program, and averaging only around 1 application being submitted per

week. As it also was the summer time, the possibility of a lack of available youth may have played a role in the slow uptake of interest. Although there was success in recruiting 20 youth engagement ambassadors, the initial goal was to find at least one ambassador in each of the 33 communities.

Four of the youth recruits were affected by acclamations, and were no longer required to facilitate outreach activities. They were notified of the acclamations and were encouraged to keep personal merchandise. However, these youth would no longer be paid. This should be taken into consideration when planning future youth projects.

In terms of program activities, some ambassadors provided feedback on a few challenges they faced during their outreach, which are summarized below:

- Lack of Internet access/inadequate internet connection to fulfill the social media portion of the tasks created a slight barrier. Several ambassadors reported having great discussions with youth but were not able to make social media posts due to lack of internet access.
- Lack of internet or phone access made communicating with Youth Coordinator challenging
- It was difficult to recruit participants in weekly group discussions or schedule out times that worked best for others.
- There was lack of interest from other youth in the community when youth ambassador would approach them
- Youth were not showing interest in having their photo taken and posted on social media

Maintaining consistent communication between the ambassadors and the Youth Programs Coordinator was indeed a challenge, mostly involving those in the smaller communities. Reasons behind the issue are a mix of internet or phone accessibility issues, or youth not having completed any activities to report on. Youth who evidently did not complete any of the outlined tasks were asked to send merchandise back to the Elections NWT office. It is clear a more effective monitoring strategy should be implemented into future youth initiatives that involve activities or projects that take place outside of Yellowknife.

Recommendation

The above criticisms and feedback on the program provide valuable input for improving future youth initiatives. Overall, the concept of having youth ambassadors across the NWT can be effective in mobilizing youth to be leaders and create tangible change in their community. However, an entire restructuring of the program should be considered. One recommendation is to utilize a collaborative approach, as will be explained shortly.

As highlighted in ambassador feedback, an area for improvement is the development of appropriate activities that accommodate a community's available resources and population. Despite the creation of three tiers of activity schedules to accommodate for the different population sizes in the current program, some ambassadors in the smaller communities still found outreach challenging. One possibility to improve on this could be for the new program to include a young electors summit or workshop in Yellowknife during the spring of 2023 for the selected young adults ages 18-35 in the NWT. It would be recommended to plan at least one year ahead of the election to fit time for planning, advertising, application

submissions, budgeting costs, and arranging accommodations. Such is a general recommendation that the Youth Programs Coordinator begin planning and reaching out to communities for any youth initiatives at least one year ahead to mitigate the chances of late applications or last minute deadline extensions.

The idea behind hosting a workshop or summit for interested youth prior to September is that the young adults would have the opportunity to collaborate with one another and with the Youth Programs Coordinator and determine what outreach activities work best for their community. A lot of the activities in the current schedule are social media-oriented, which seemed to have only been the best method for some people, or wasn't a method that youth could keep up on a continuous basis throughout the month, making it difficult to monitor their progress. As youth know their community best, a conference-style event gives them the opportunity to produce new ideas and tailor outreach activities to fit their needs and be most effective in rallying young people to vote. Youth would return home with a more suitable plan to engage their peers. It would also be a chance for youth to have preliminary discussions amongst themselves about various topics and issues, which will better prepare them for conversations they would be expected to initiate with youth in their home town come September. Moreover, engaging with the youth in person and developing rapport with the Youth Programs Coordinator could be beneficial in facilitating the communication and monitoring process once outreach activities are in full swing.

Part II: Young Elector Participation Analysis

Purpose

One of the main purposes of the following data analysis is to answer the question of whether there indeed was an increase in young elector participation from 2015 to 2019.

Although voter turnout percentage is typically calculated as the number of ballots cast divided by the total number of registered electors, Figure 1 below displays an evident gap between the population estimate and the number of registered electors, similar to what was observed in the 2015 Territorial General Election¹.

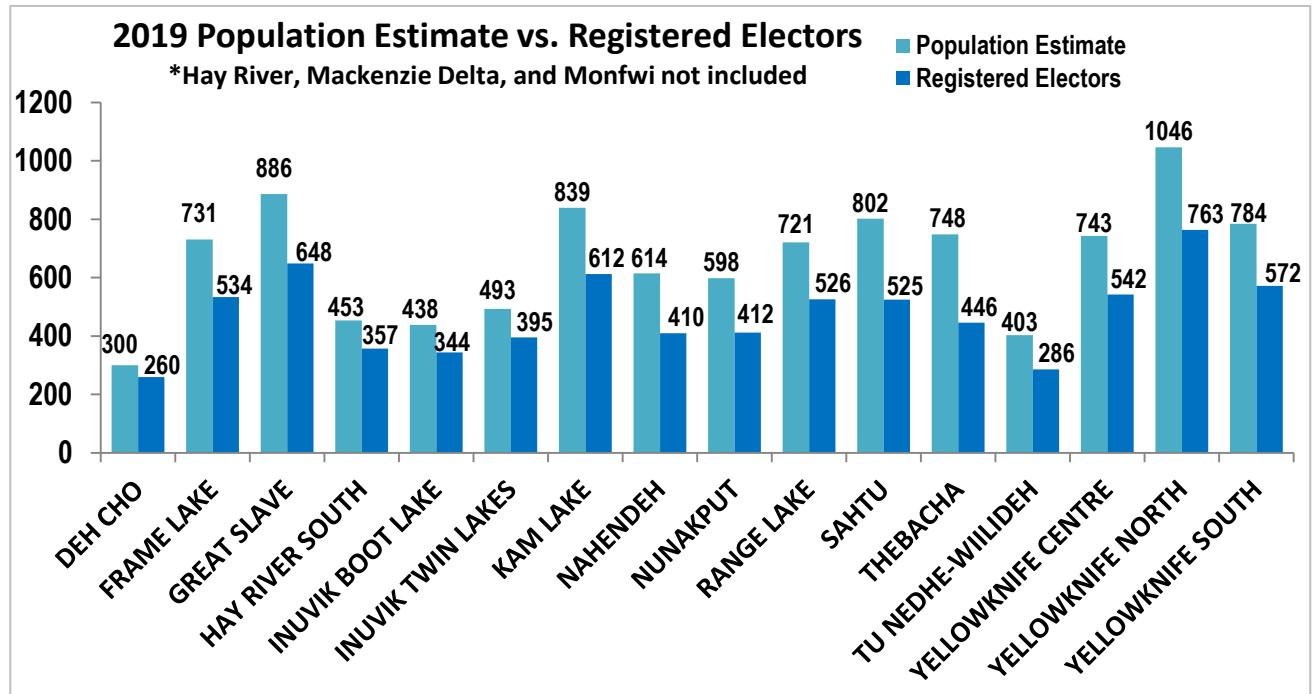


Figure 1 - Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors, NWT Bureau of Statistics

A more practical approach to determining what voter turnout looks like among *all* young electors aged 18 to 35 in NWT would be to divide the number of voters by the population estimate. The population estimate includes all young adults in NWT both registered and not registered. Population data used in this analyses was provided by NWT Bureau of Statistics.

¹ Population estimates of electoral districts in Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Hay River are approximate and were calculated by taking the proportional value of each district in the register of electors and applying it to the Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Hay River community population estimates provided by NWT Bureau of Statistics.

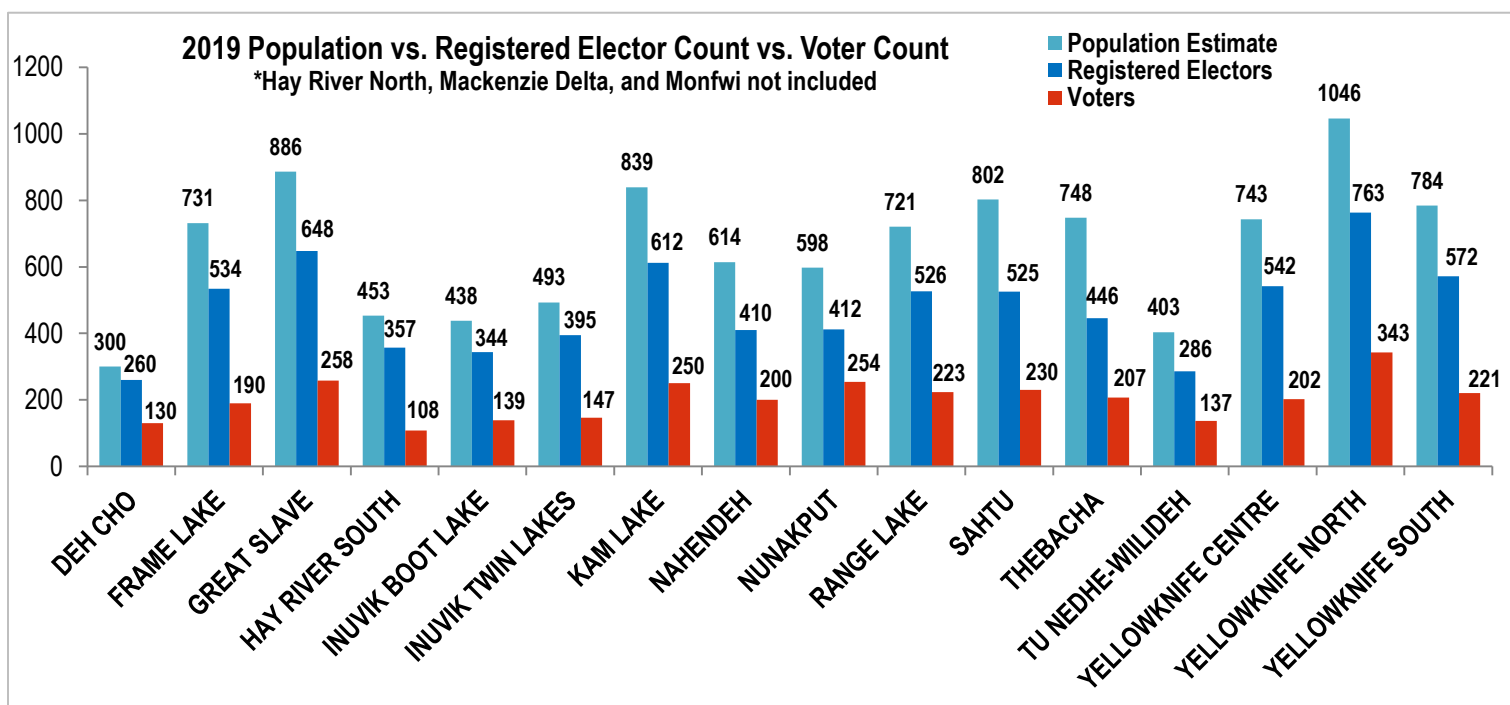


Figure 2 - Data Retrieved from NWT Bureau of Statistics, NWT Register of Electors

Voter Turnout Among Young Electors in NWT

Figure 2 above displays each electoral district's 18- to 35-year-old population estimate, registered elector count, and voter count to provide a visual of the proportion of voters in the NWT.

In 2015, it was estimated there were 12,042 young adults age 18-35 living in the Northwest Territories (not including Monfwi, which was acclaimed in 2015). However, only 2,411 young electors voted, resulting in a turnout of 20%ⁱⁱ.

For **2019**, the population estimate for 18- to 35-year-olds in NWT – excluding Hay River North, Mackenzie Delta, and Monfwi – is **10,599**ⁱⁱⁱ.

The number of young electors who voted in 2019 is **3,239**.

This results in a voter turnout of **31%**, which is an **11% increase** from 2015. ^{iv}

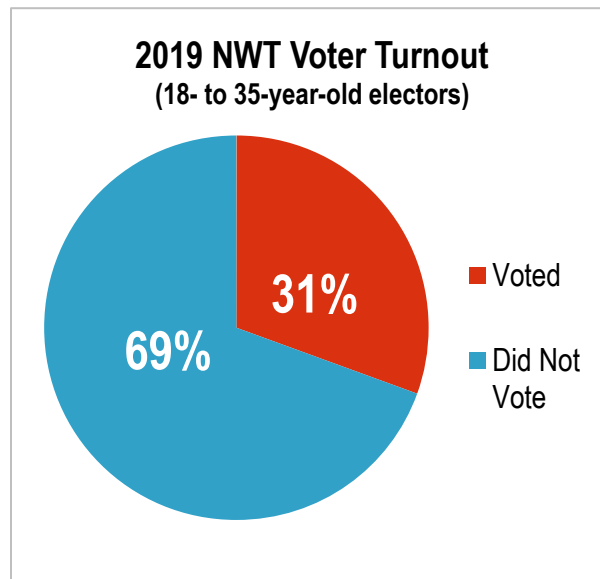


Figure 3 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors, NWT Bureau of Statistics

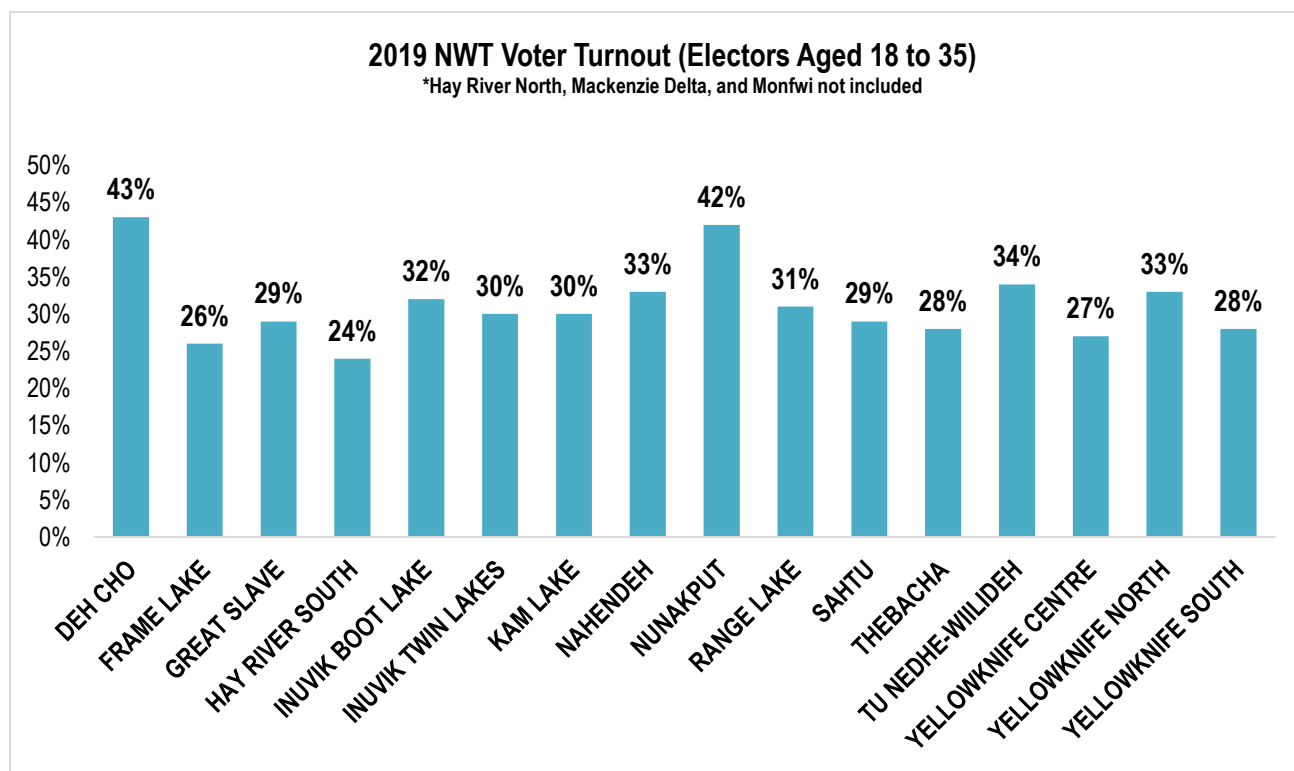


Figure 4 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors, NWT Bureau of Statistics

According to Figure 4^v above, Deh Cho appears to have the highest youth voter turnout of 43%, followed closely by Nunakput with 42%, and Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh with 34%. The electoral district with the lowest turnout is Hay River South, with only 24% of young adults in the district having voted. Alongside Hay River South, Frame Lake and Yellowknife Centre are also among the three electoral districts with the lowest turnout. Only 26% of young adults in Frame Lake voted in the election. For Yellowknife Centre, turnout was 27%.

To gain a clearer picture of whether growth had taken place for youth participation between the 2015 and 2019 elections in each electoral district, data from both years were analyzed and compiled.

The chart below displays side by side comparisons of voter turnout for young adults in each electoral district from 2015 and 2019, and includes differences in turnout between the two election years.

Electoral District	2015 Young Elector Turnout	2019 Young Elector Turnout	Difference
DEH CHO	23%	43%	+20%
FRAME LAKE	16%	26%	+10%
GREAT SLAVE	16%	29%	+13%
HAY RIVER NORTH	24%	Acclaimed	N/A
HAY RIVER SOUTH	31%	24%	-7%
INUVIK BOOT LAKE	16%	32%	+16%
INUVIK TWIN LAKES	15%	30%	+15%
KAM LAKE	11%	30%	+19%
MACKENZIE DELTA	22%	Acclaimed	N/A
MONFWI	Acclaimed	Acclaimed	N/A
NAHENDEH	37%	33%	-4%
NUNAKPUT	26%	42%	+16%
RANGE LAKE	18%	31%	+13%
SAHTU	17%	29%	+12%
THEBACHA	20%	28%	+8%
TU NEDHE-WIILIDEH	23%	34%	+11%
YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE	20%	27%	+7%
YELLOWKNIFE NORTH	22%	33%	+11%
YELLOWKNIFE SOUTH	14%	28%	+14%
OVERALL	20%	31%	+11%

Figure 5 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors, NWT Bureau of Statistics

Overall, young elector turnout in the NWT had increased by 11% between 2015 and 2019. The electoral district that experienced the highest increase is Deh Cho, which raised from 23% to 43% -- a 20% increase. Kam Lake also experienced a significant increase in turnout, with 19% more youth voting at the 2019 territorial general election. Inuvik Boot Lake and Nunakput both experienced increases of 16% in youth turnout^{vi}. In comparison, Yellowknife's electoral districts still seem to be producing slightly lower turnout compared to the other electoral districts, which was the same observation found in 2015. There is, however, significant growth in Yellowknife to take note of.

Thebacha, Yellowknife Centre, and Frame Lake displayed the three lowest voter turnouts for young adults. The only two electoral districts that saw a decrease in young elector participation is Hay River South and Nahendeh, where turnout decreased by 7% and 4% respectively. Despite the decrease, however, Nahendeh produced one of the top three highest youth voter turnouts of 33%.

An overall increase of 11% among youth is consistent with the increase in voter turnout for all registered electors in NWT. According to Elections NWT's Official Results Report, voter turnout in NWT across all ages increased from 44% to 54%, which is a 10% increase.^{vii}

Yellowknife Young Elector Participation

In 2015, the capital city's electoral districts displayed some of the lowest youth voter turnouts out of all electoral districts, which was of particular concern as Yellowknife accounts for nearly 50% of the NWT population^{viii}. Figure 6 compares the youth voter turnout specifically in each of Yellowknife's electoral districts, as well the overall voter turnout in Yellowknife, from both 2015 and 2019.

Electoral District	2015 Young Elector Turnout			2019 Young Elector Turnout			Difference
	Population Estimate	Voters	Turnout	Population Estimate	Voters	Turnout	
FRAME LAKE	781	123	16%	731	190	26%	+10%
GREAT SLAVE	947	151	16%	886	258	29%	+13%
KAM LAKE	895	98	11%	839	250	30%	+19%
RANGE LAKE	769	135	18%	721	223	31%	+13%
YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE	792	162	20%	743	202	27%	+7%
YELLOWKNIFE NORTH	1116	244	22%	1046	343	33%	+11%
YELLOWKNIFE SOUTH	836	117	14%	784	221	28%	+14%
OVERALL	6,136	1030	17%	5,750	1,687	29%	+12%

Figure 6 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors, NWT Bureau of Statistics

The electoral district in Yellowknife that experienced the highest increase in turnout is Kam Lake, where young elector participation increased from 11% in 2015, to 30% in 2019.

In contrast, the electoral district that demonstrated the lowest increase in turnout is Yellowknife Centre, which only increased from 20% in 2015 to 27% in 2019.

Despite the 18- to 35-year-old population having decreased by 423 in Yellowknife, the number of youth who voted increased by 657, which resulted in a 12% increase in young elector participation in the city^{ix}. Though turnout remains nowhere near the ideal, there still was evident growth displayed by Yellowknife that should be recognized.

Youth Voter Turnout Across Genders

2019 TGE Youth Voter Turnout Across Genders ^x			
ED	Female	Male	X (Not specified)
DEH CHO	57.0%	43.5%	69.2%
FRAME LAKE	40.3%	30.3%	42.9%
GREAT SLAVE	45.4%	34.6%	14.3%
HAY RIVER SOUTH	31.3%	29.8%	0.0%
INUVIK BOOT LAKE	43.8%	38.0%	0.0%
INUVIK TWIN LAKES	49.0%	26.3%	19.2%
KAM LAKE	50.0%	32.5%	25.0%
NAHENDEH	50.8%	51.5%	12.0%
NUNAKPUT	65.8%	61.7%	37.1%
RANGE LAKE	48.0%	37.4%	0.0%
SAHTU	48.5%	41.7%	31.8%
THEBACHA	56.9%	37.3%	12.5%
TU NEDHE- WIILIDEH	52.8%	45.2%	33.3%
YK CENTRE	45.5%	30.1%	13.3%
YK NORTH	52.2%	38.2%	9.1%
YK SOUTH	47.1%	30.7%	40.0%
TOTAL	48.7%	37.2%	26.4%

Figure 7 – Data retrieved from NWT Register of Electors

Figure 7 compares the youth turnout rates for the gender categories across all electoral districts. Note that these figures are based only on registered electors.

At the 2019 TGE, there was an approximately equal number of young men and women registered for the election. It is important to note that there were more individuals in 2019 who identified as neither male nor female on their registration, making up 3.1% of all young voters ages 18-35.

Similar to what was observed in 2015, more registered females ages 18-35 casted ballots compared to males, with a turnout of 48.7% and 37.2% respectively. Higher voter turnout among women is consistent across each electoral district, except in Nahendeh as displayed below. Both statistics are an increase from the 2015 results, which showed a 30.95% female voter turnout, and a 25.28% male voter turnout.

Conclusion

One could argue that because three electoral districts were acclaimed in the 2019 Territorial General Election, having only 16 electoral districts would account for the increase in young elector turnout data. However, the Register of Electors indeed shows that the actual amount of young adults that attended the polls in 2019 increased from 2,411 to 3,239. Although it is a small increase, it is an increase nonetheless.

There is, however, still room for improvement. Figure 2 on page 6 shows that there remains a large discrepancy between the number of registered electors and the population estimate, let alone between the voter count and population estimate. Similar to what was concluded in 2015's [Young Elector Report](#), the fact that judicial recounts were issued while nearly 71% of young adults in Yellowknife did not cast a ballot should be further looked into as an area of focus. Frame Lake had undergone a judicial recount, meaning the margin by which the Candidate receiving the most votes surpassed the second-place Candidate was 2% or less. However, Figure 2 shows us that 541 eligible young electors did not vote. 541 votes that could have potentially swayed results went unused. Similarly, Yellowknife North had also undergone a judicial recount, but with 703 young adults not having voted.

Developing outreach programs and youth-led projects is a step in the right direction. Whether this election's 11% increase in young elector participation can be attributed to outreach efforts is not certain, but it is a sign that there has been improvement, and that there is untapped potential among our young people. A focus on the impact of youth votes should continue to be emphasized and brought to young people's awareness. In an age where information is readily available at our fingertips, and a variety of youth-led movements are trending on a global scale, it is an opportune time for young elector participation to be brought to the forefront of election matters. It is important that even the small act of casting a ballot continues to be seen as an impactful step towards youth-led change.

ⁱ Dapilos, N. (2019). Young elector participation in the 2015 Territorial general Election. 1-3. Retrieved from https://www.electionsnwt.ca/sites/electionsnwt/files/2019-06-18_young_electors_participation_2015_tge_n_dapilos.pdf

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2019). [Custom Report Excel Spreadsheet]. Population estimates for those 18 to 35 of Age, Northwest Territories, July 2019. Accessed December 4, 2019.

^{iv} NWT Register of Electors.(2019). [Custom Report Excel Spreadsheet]. Retrieved from VoterView.; NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2019). [Custom Report Excel Spreadsheet]. Population estimates for those 18 to 35 of Age, Northwest Territories, July 2019. Accessed December 4, 2019.

^v Ibid

^{vi} Ibid

^{vii} Elections NWT. (2019). *Territorial General Election 2019 Official Results Report*.

^{viii} NWT Bureau of Statistics (2019). Population Estimates by Community and Region As At July 1, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.statsnwt.ca/population/population-estimates/bycommunity.php>. Accessed December 5, 2019.

^{ix} NWT Register of Electors.(2019). [Custom Report Excel Spreadsheet]. Retrieved from VoterView.; NWT Bureau of Statistics. (2019). [Custom Report Excel Spreadsheet]. Population estimates for those 18 to 35 of Age, Northwest Territories, July 2019. Accessed December 4, 2019.

^x NWT Register of Electors.(2019). [Custom Report Excel Spreadsheet]. Retrieved from VoterView