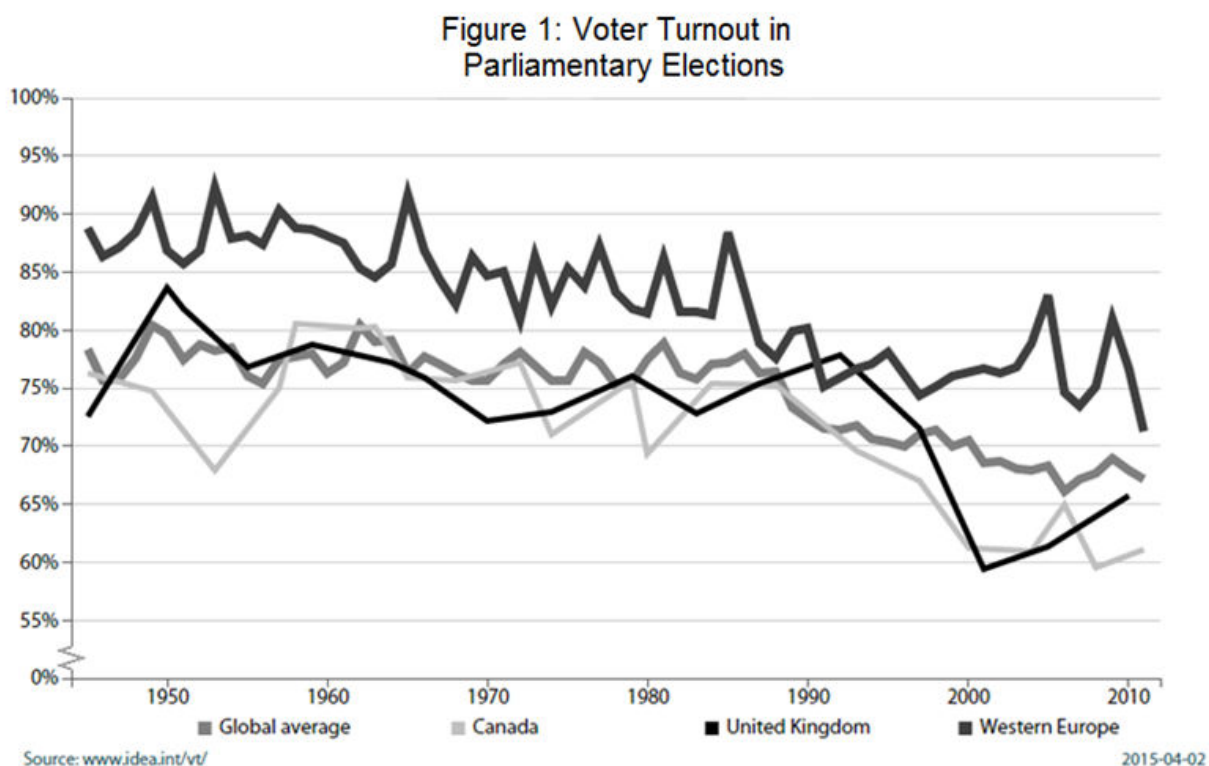


## TRENDS IN VOTER TURNOUT

### 1.0 World Trend

Western democracies have witnessed a general decline in voter turnout over the past few decades, with few exceptions.

- Data show that the average international voter turnout for both parliamentary and presidential elections hovered in the mid-to-higher 70 per cent range from 1945 to 1990.
- From 1990 to 2006 the average turnout dropped to 69.7 per cent, indicating an overall decline in the world turnout rate.
- Figure 1 shows the general decline in turnout from 1945 to 2011 in parliamentary elections experienced in Canada, the United Kingdom and Western Europe countries<sup>1</sup> in comparison to the global average.



<sup>1</sup> Western Europe includes Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands and Switzerland.

## **2.0 The National Level**

As can be seen in Figure 1, Canada's national voter turnout reflects the general decline at the international level.

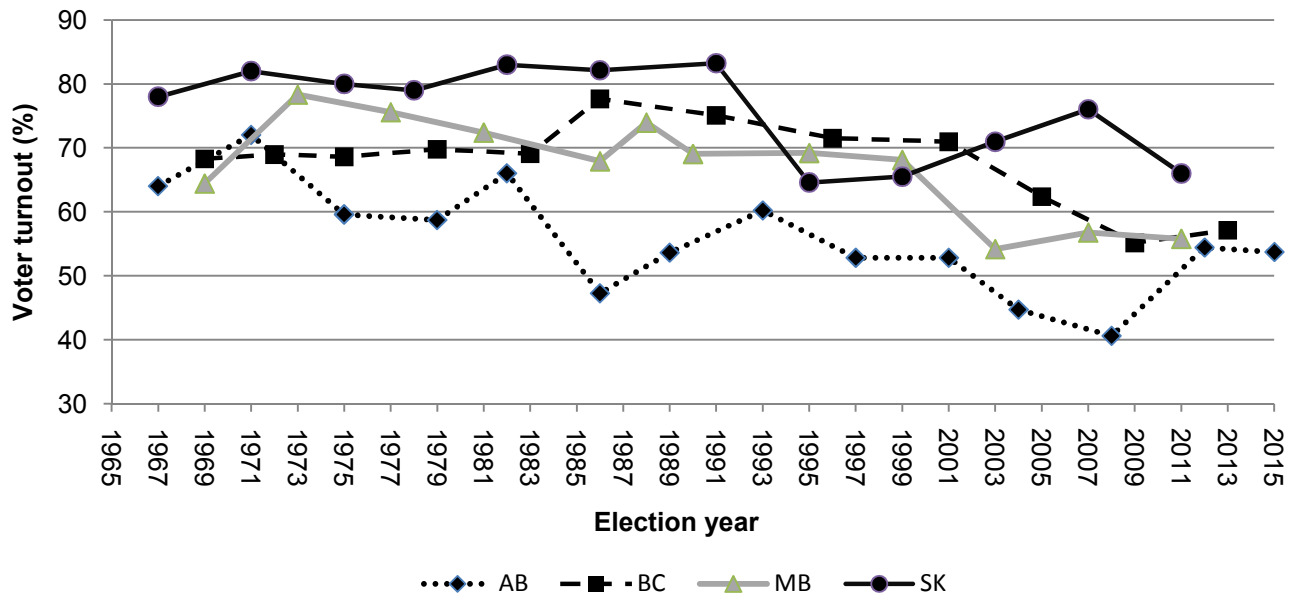
- Decline in national Canadian voter turnout started in the late 1980s.
- Turnout dropped dramatically from 75.3 per cent in 1988, a rate close to the average for the previous 30 years, to 64.1 per cent in 2000 and 60.9 per cent in the 2004 federal election.
- The 2011 federal election saw a 61.1 per cent turnout.

## **3.0 The Provincial Level**

The general decline in voter turnout can be seen in most provincial jurisdictions in Canada. An analysis of Canada's western provinces is provided in Figure 2 as a case study.

- The first province to experience a decline was Alberta where participation rates have fallen from a high of 72 per cent in 1971 to a low of 40.6 per cent in 2008.
- Similarly in Manitoba, turnout has declined by nearly 25 percentage points since 1973.
- The rate of voter participation has fallen in British Columbia with increasing velocity from 77.7 per cent in 1983 to 51 per cent in 2009 and 57 per cent in 2013.
- Saskatchewan experienced high participation levels in the 1980's. Turnout fell from 83.2 in 1991 to 64.6 per cent in 1995. Voter turnout appeared to be recovering, reaching 76 per cent in 2007 but decreased to 66 per cent in 2011.

**Figure 2: Voter Turnout in Provincial Elections, Western Canada (1965-2015)**

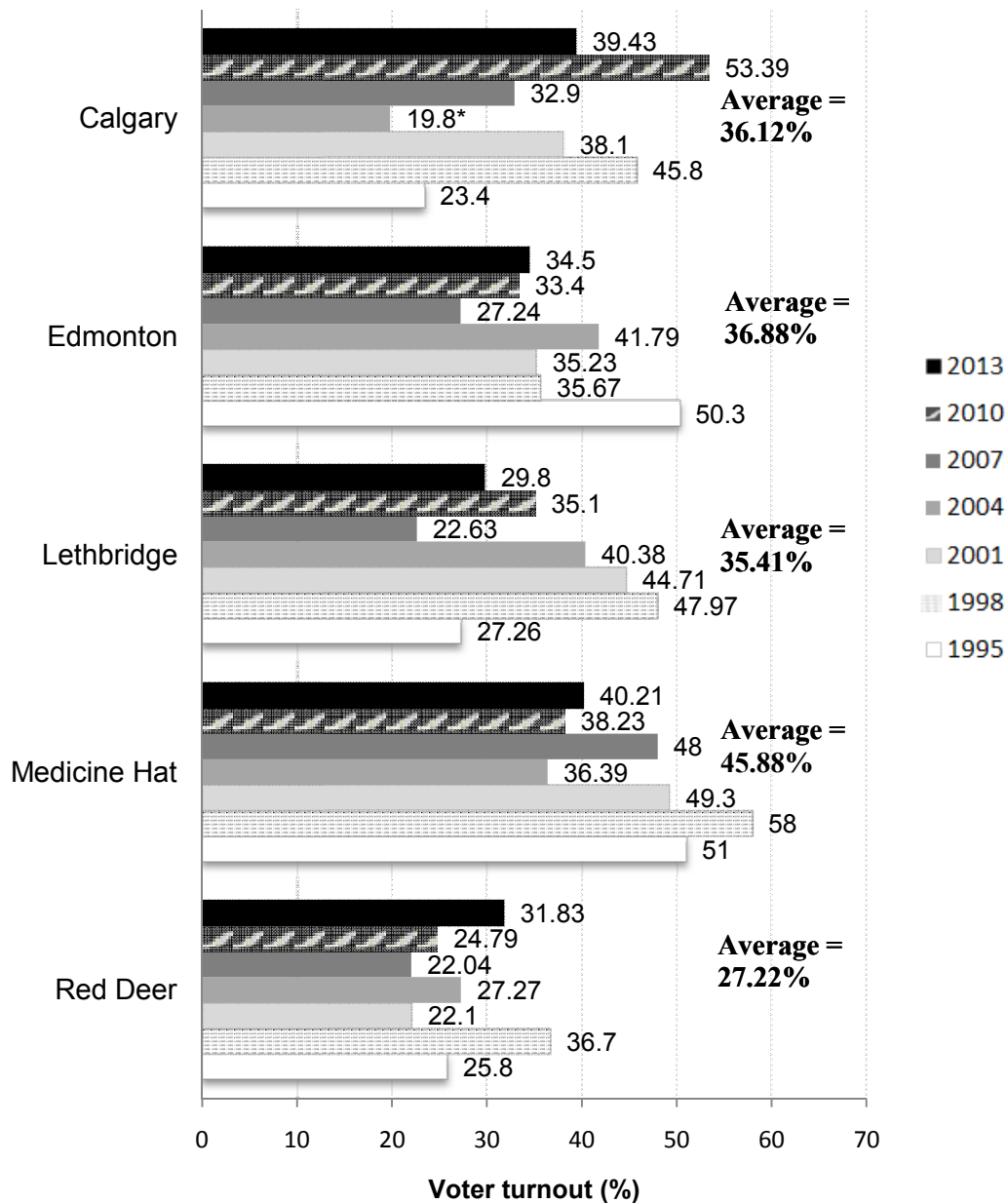


#### 4.0 The Municipal Level

In Canada, municipal voter turnout is lower than the federal and provincial levels.

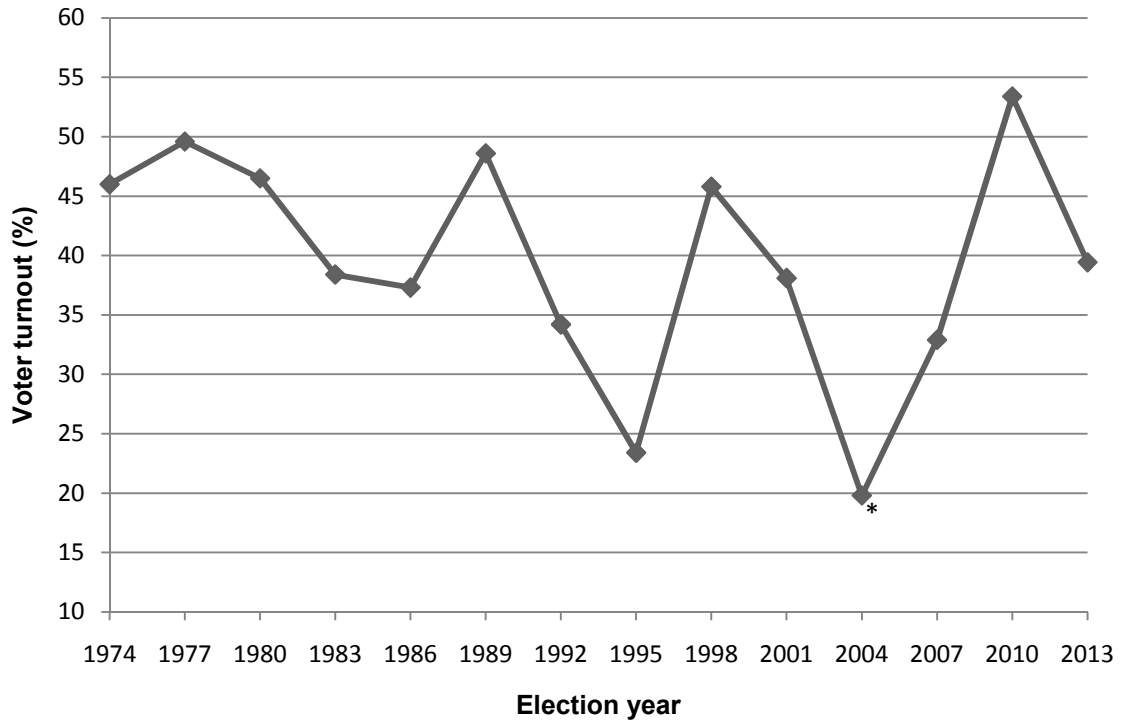
- Information on voter turnout at the local level in Canada is generally unavailable and there is no study that analyzes aggregated data.
- Many researchers estimate the average voter turnout at the local level to be between 20 and 30 per cent.
- Figure 3 provides a quick look at the last twenty years of municipal elections in Alberta's five largest municipalities. The chart shows lower turnout rates than at federal and provincial levels but higher levels than expected by researchers.
- Figure 3 shows how unpredictable voter turnout can be both within a municipality and across municipalities from year to year.
- Figure 4 shows Calgary's voter turnout since 1974.
- Calgary's municipal voter turnout statistics are on par or higher in comparison to other North American municipalities. Figure 5 compares Calgary's average voter turnout for the last four elections to other large municipalities across Canada and the United States.

**Figure 3: Alberta's Largest Municipalities-  
Voter Turnout Since 1995**



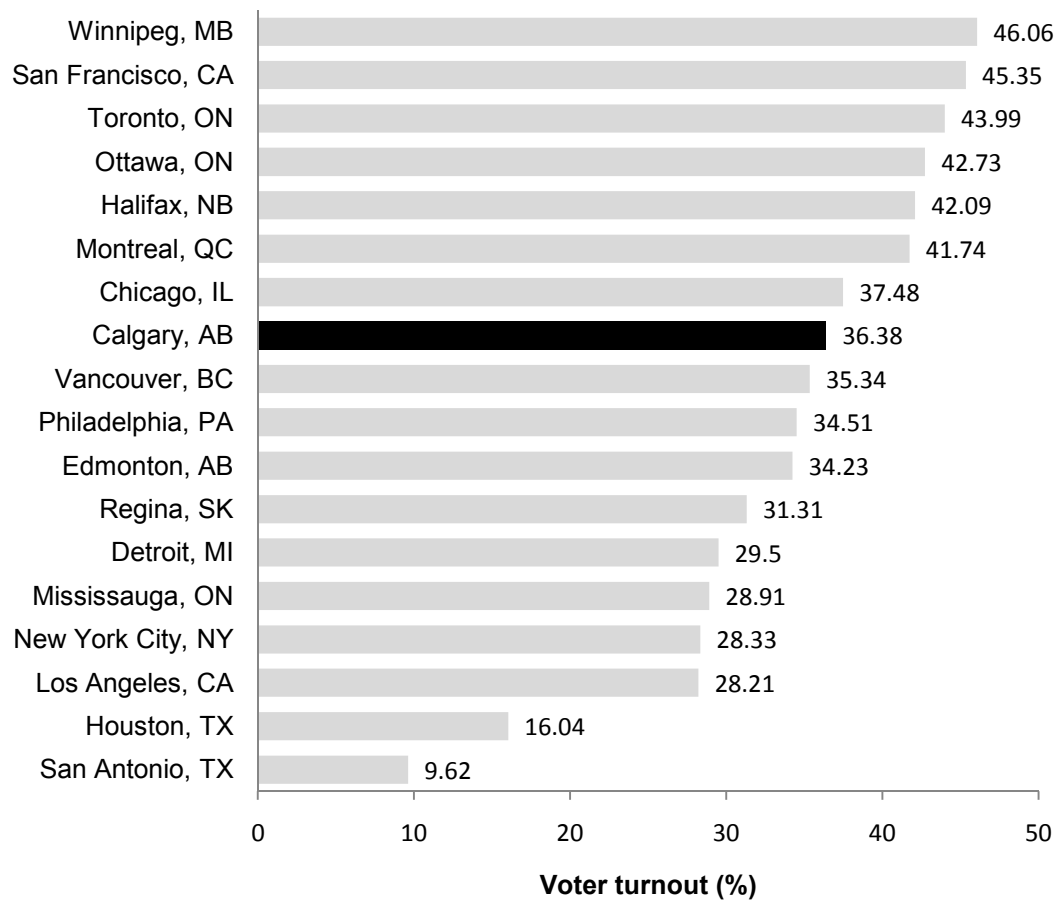
\*Calgary experienced its first snowstorm of the season on election day, affecting voter turnout.

**Figure 4: Calgary Voter Turnout 1974-2013**



\*Calgary experienced its first snowstorm of the season on election day, affecting voter turnout.

**Figure 5: Average Voter Turnout of Previous Four Municipal Elections\***



\* Statistics taken from mayoral elections. If the election included both a primary and a runoff, data from the runoff were used.