

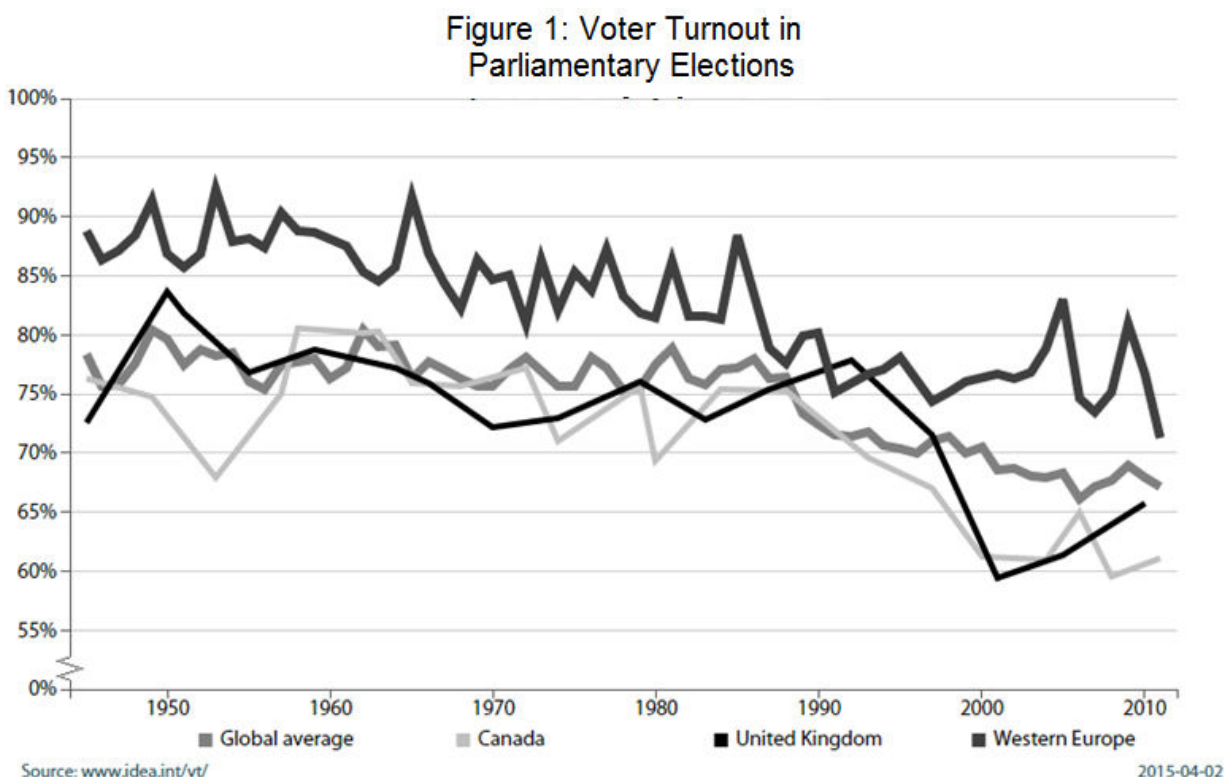
Trends in Voter Turnout

1.0 World trend

The world has witnessed a general decline in voter turnout over the past few decades.

- Data shows that the average international voter turnout for both parliamentary and presidential elections has been on the decline, from 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.
- There are countries where turnout at the national level remains high (e.g. Sweden, Malta and Australia) but these countries are the exception. Australia has mandatory voting, failure to vote is punishable by fine and possibly criminal record.

Figure 1 shows the general decline in turnout from 1945 to 2011 in parliamentary elections experienced in Canada, the United Kingdom and Western Europe countries¹ in comparison to the global average.



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

2.0 Canadian context

The turnout for Canadian parliamentary elections reflects the general decline at the international level, although Canada's totals are currently over 5 per cent below the average.

- 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. Though it rose in the 2006 election to 64.7 per cent, it dropped to 58.8 per cent in 2008 and 61.1 per cent in 2011.

3.0 Voter turnout at the municipal level

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

- Information on voter turnout at the local level in Canada is difficult to access 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 2 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 2 shows how unpredictable voter turnout can be both within a municipality and across municipalities from year to year. The average voter turnout for Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge all hover around 36% with Medicine Hat's hitting nearly 46% and Red Deer's floating around 27%.
- Figure 3 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 4 compares Calgary's average voter turnout for the last four elections to other large municipalities across Canada and the United States.

**Figure 2: Alberta's Largest Municipalities-
Voter Turnout Since 1995**

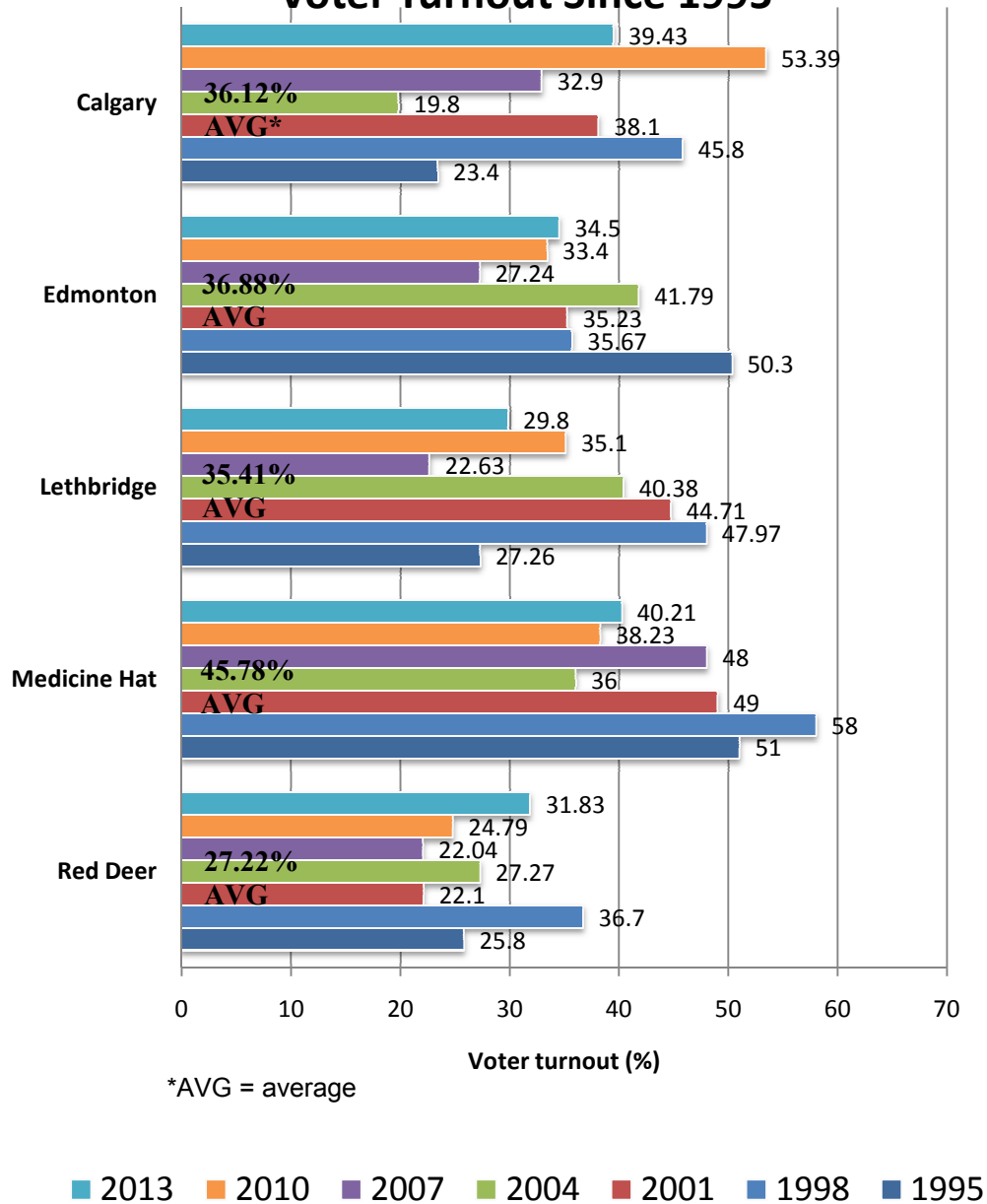


Figure 3: Calgary Voter Turnout 1974-2013

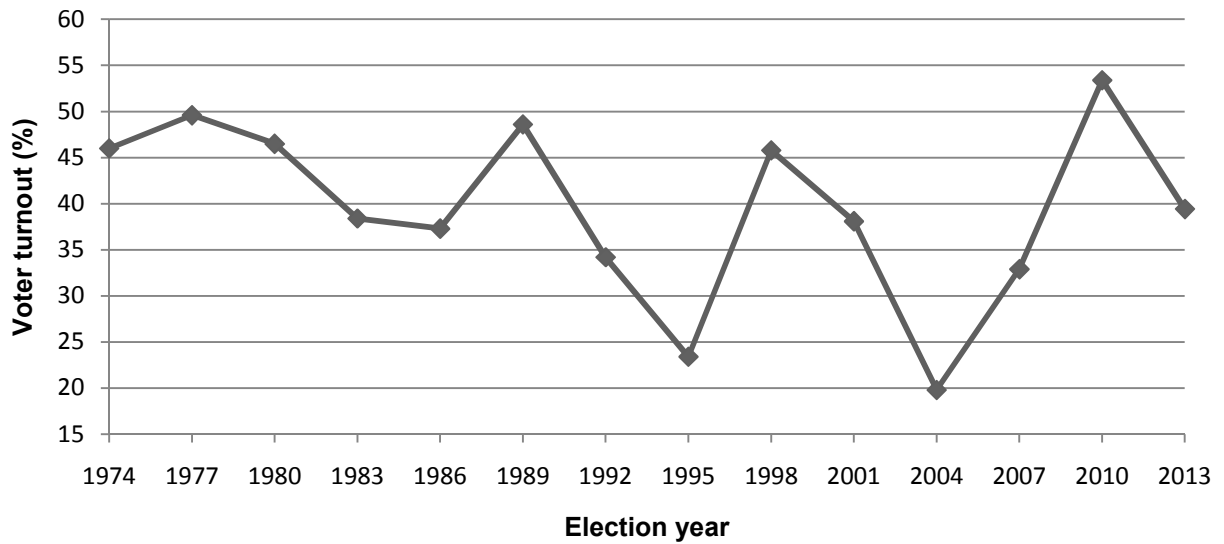
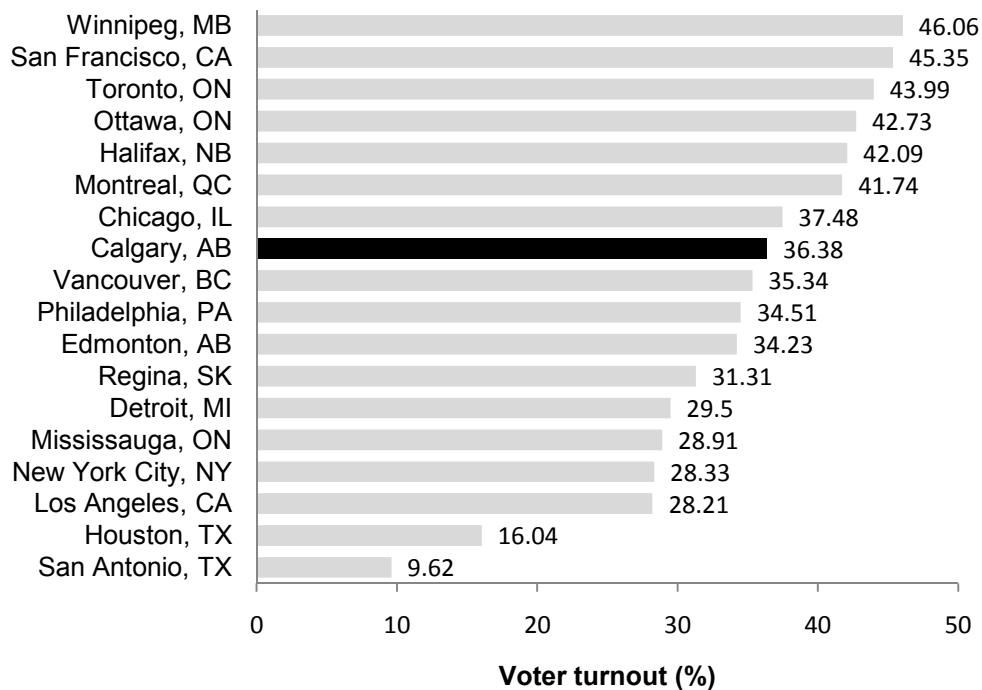


Figure 4: Average Voter Turnout of Previous Four Municipal Elections*



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