

Town of Whitby 2022 Municipal Election Survey Results

March 8, 2023

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Overview

This report highlights the results of an exit survey of paper ballot voters carried out at polling locations in the Town of Whitby during the 2022 Municipal Election.

The report proceeds as follows:

1. Data and survey completion
2. Voter satisfaction
3. Issues experienced at the polls
4. Plan Your Vote
5. Other aspects of the voting process
6. Voter profile and attitudes
7. Key comparison of 2022 and 2018
8. Takeaways

Background

The Town of Whitby's 2022 municipal election was conducted by paper ballot at in-person polling locations.

Turnout was down slightly (3%) from the previous two elections:



This slight decline in participation was a trend observed across the province.

To better understand voter opinions and experiences, the Town conducted an exit survey of voters at the polls. After casting a ballot and leaving the voting room, voters were invited to take a survey about their voting experience on an iPad. Surveys were administered by election officials at 18 different poll locations.

Survey completion details

Surveys were completed from October 21 to 24, 2022. A total of 1,528 voters took the survey for a response rate of 6.4%.

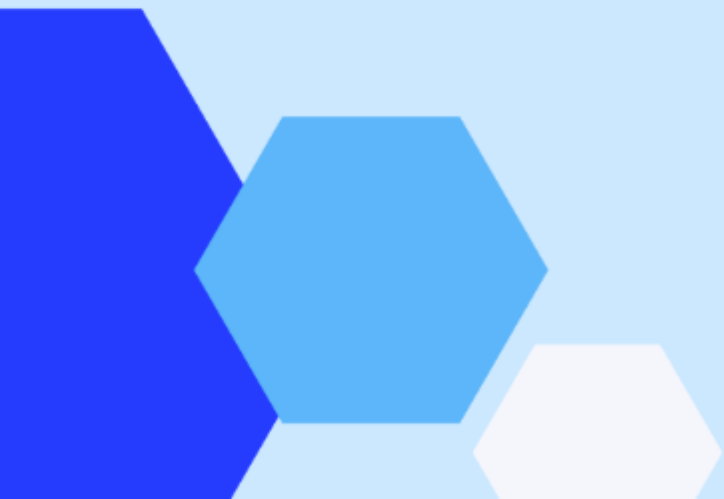
59% of surveys were completed during advance polls and 41% were undertaken on Election Day.

The largest proportion of surveys were completed between 11:00am and 4:00pm during the advance polls and from 3:00pm to 8:00pm on Election Day.

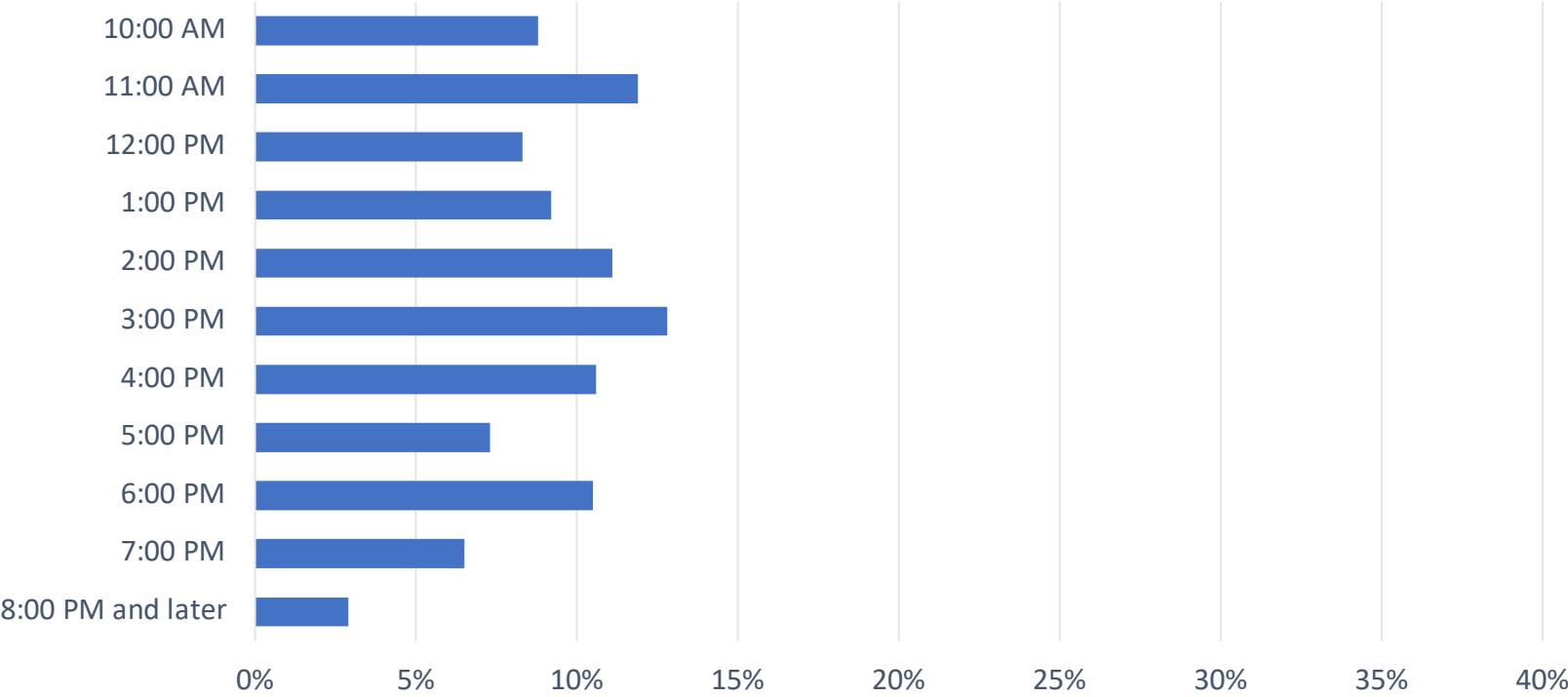
The median length of time to complete a survey was 4.85 minutes.

In the survey sample, voters aged 55+ are underrepresented, while those aged 18 to 54 are slightly overrepresented (see Chart in next section for breakdown).

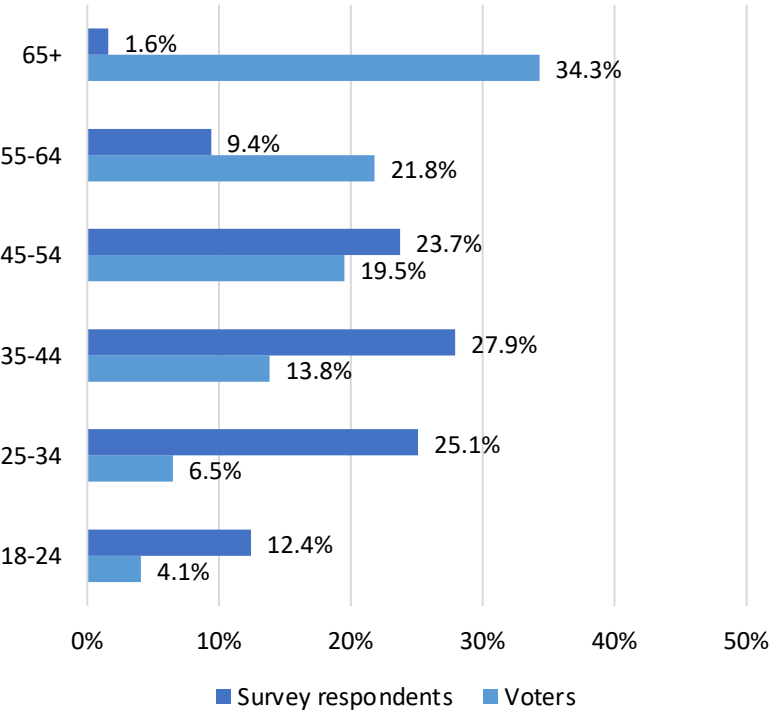
1. Data and Survey Completion



Surveys completed by time



Survey respondents and voters by age



- A majority of voters who completed a survey in 2022 are between the ages of 25 and 54.
 - This is a similar distribution to the 2018 survey.
- The average age of a voter in Whitby is 56 years.
- The average age of a 2022 survey respondent is 36 years.
- Given the low number of respondents 65+, comparisons by age throughout the report combine those aged 55-64 and 65+.

Data

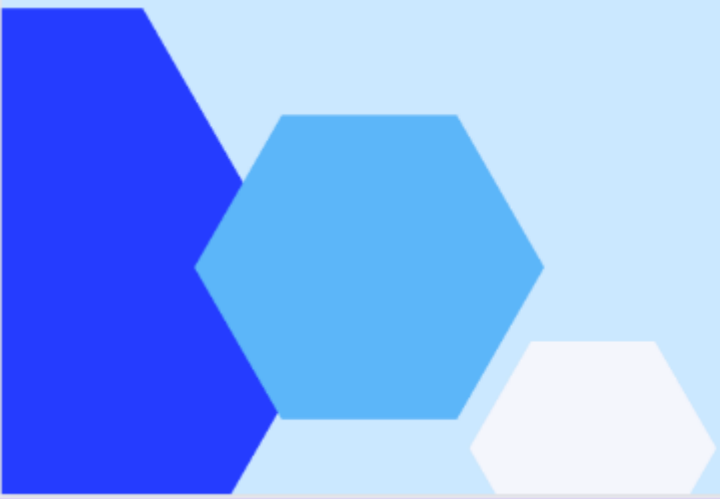
Where relevant, this report compares survey results with past data collected in the Town of Whitby. This includes:

- The Town of Whitby's survey of paper voters in the 2018 municipal election.
 - 876 voters completed surveys on iPads across 16 different voting locations for a completion rate of 3.7%.

Conducting election surveys over time allows the Town of Whitby to track changes in voter attitudes and experiences. The 2018 survey data provides a comparison of voters' opinions before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

All of data included in this report is self-selected. Generalizations to the population should be done with caution.

2. Voter Satisfaction

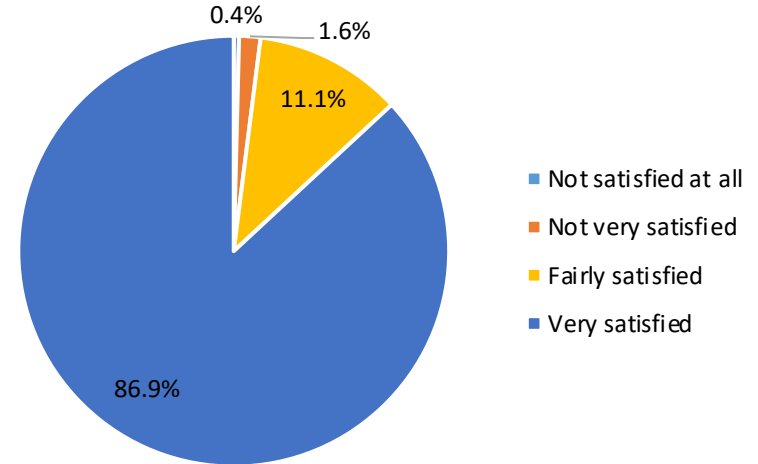


Voter satisfaction

98% of voters in Whitby are satisfied with paper voting.

- 87% say they are “very satisfied”.
- Those that report being “very satisfied” is up 4% from 2018.

Voter satisfaction in Whitby (98%) continues to be at par with, or greater than, other GTA municipalities which offered paper voting and for which data is available (97%).



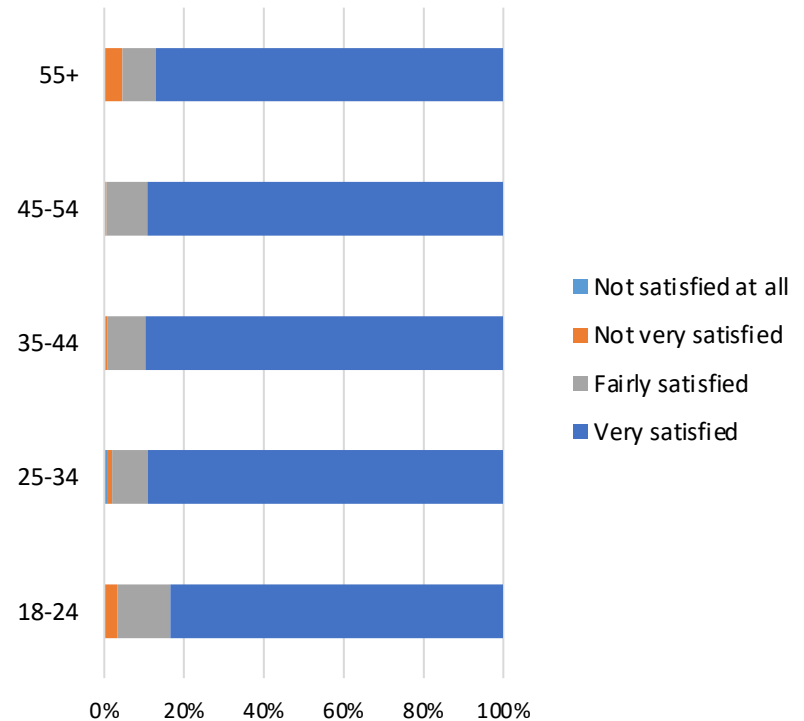
Voter satisfaction by age

There is strong satisfaction among all age groups.

Satisfaction is highest among those aged 35-54 (99% 'satisfied').

Voters aged 18-24 and 55+ report slightly lower satisfaction.

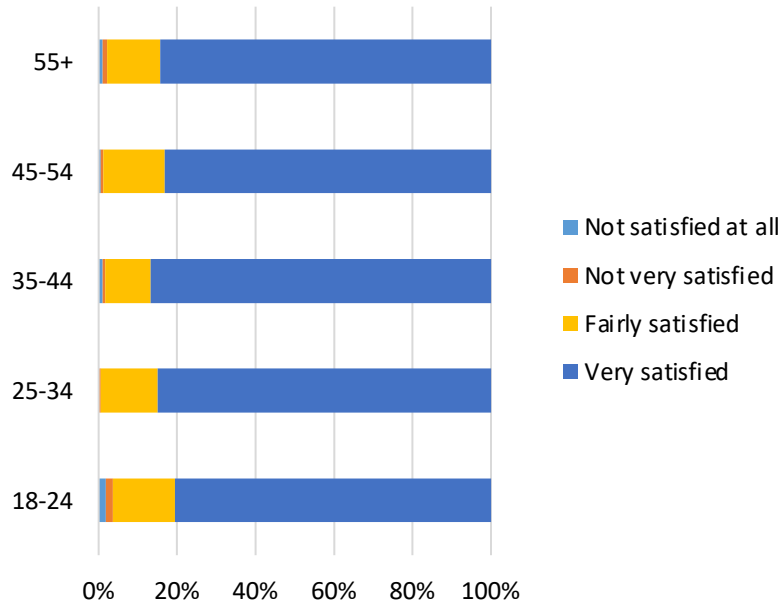
- Overall satisfaction is lowest among those 55+.



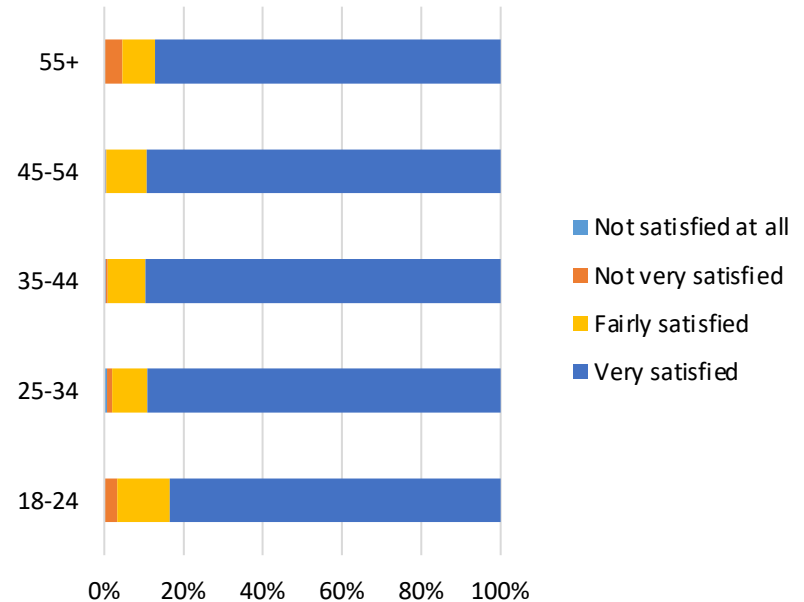
Comparing satisfaction with 2018

Most respondents are more satisfied in 2022 compared to 2018, except those 55+. However, identification with being 'very satisfied' has increased among all age groups.

Whitby 2018



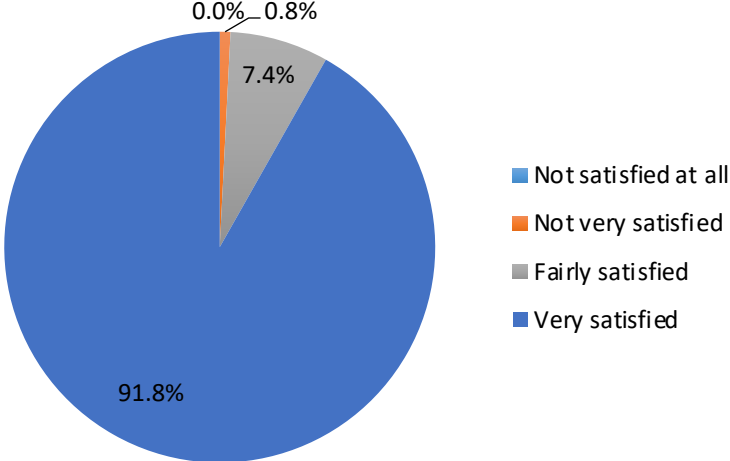
Whitby 2022



Satisfaction with support at polls

There is strong satisfaction with the support provided by election officials at the polls.

99% of respondents are satisfied with the support offered by poll workers. 92% of those indicate that they are 'very satisfied'.

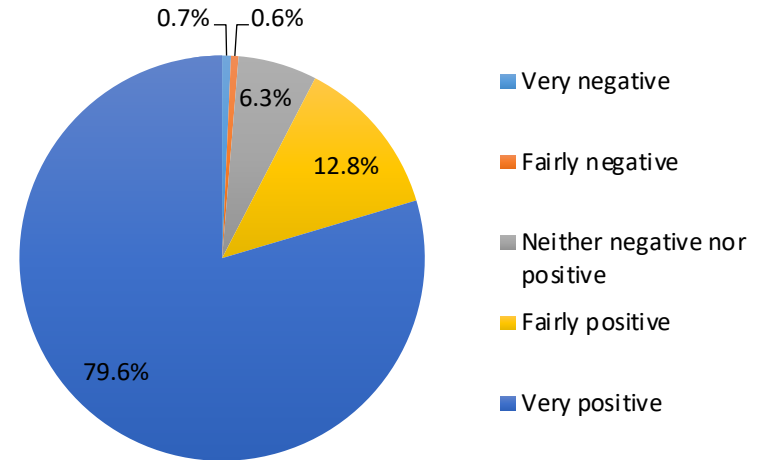


Overall voter experience

Survey respondents were also asked whether the paper voting experience was positive or negative overall.

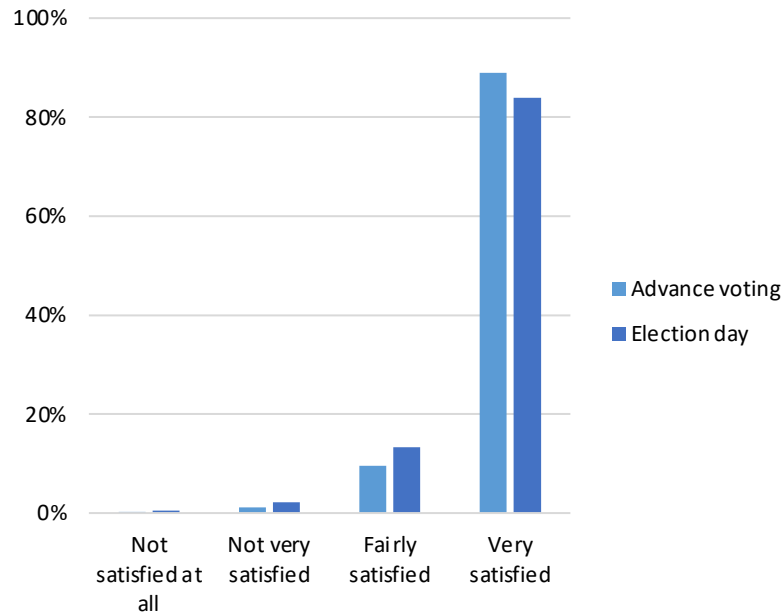
- 92% said it was positive.
- 6% reported it being neither negative nor positive.
- 1% said it was negative.

The percentage of voters reporting a 'very positive' overall experience was slightly higher in 2022 (80%) than in 2018 (78%).

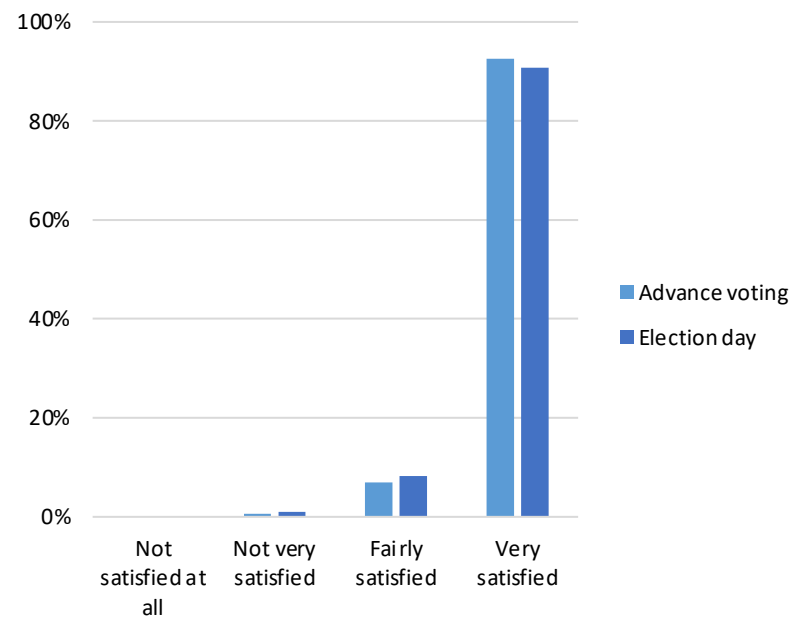


Voter satisfaction advance vs election day

Paper voting process



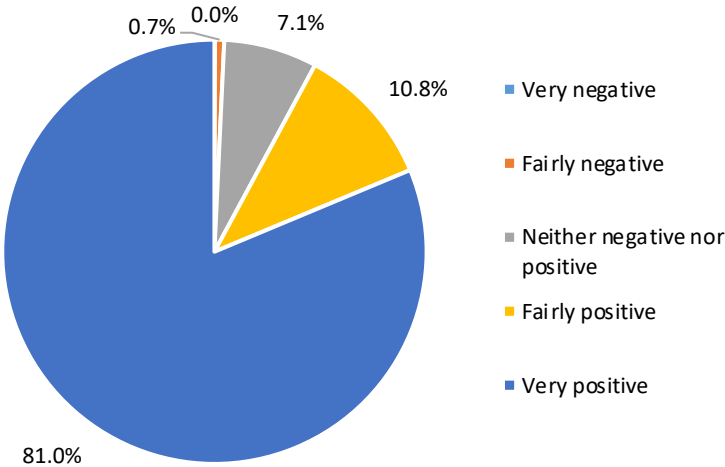
Election official support



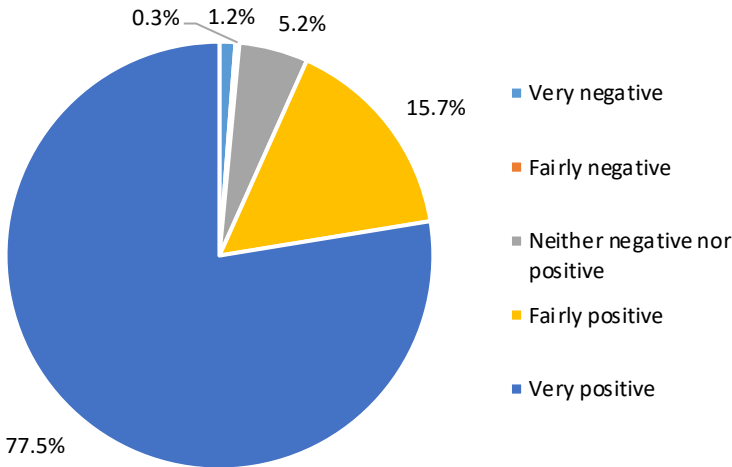
Advance voters report slightly higher satisfaction with the paper voting process and election official support than those who voted on Election Day.

Voting experience advance vs election day

Advance polls



Election Day



Advance voters were slightly more likely to report a “very positive” voting experience (81%) compared to those who voted on Election Day (78%).

Summary: Voter satisfaction



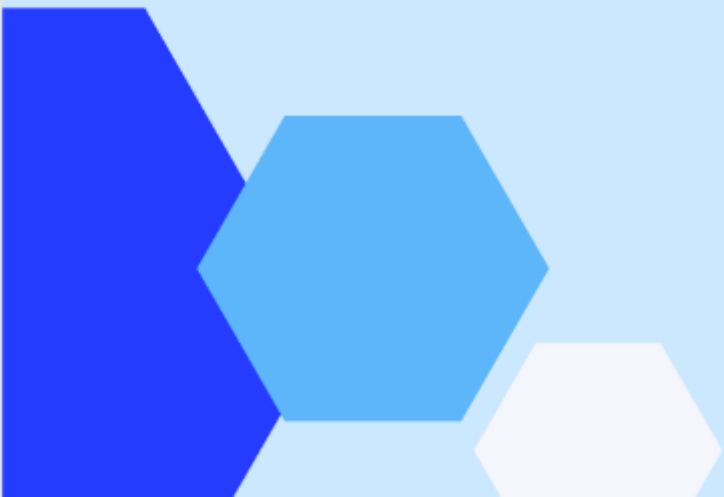
Voter satisfaction in the Town of Whitby continues to be strong.

- 4% more respondents said that they were “very satisfied” with the voting process in 2022 than in 2018.

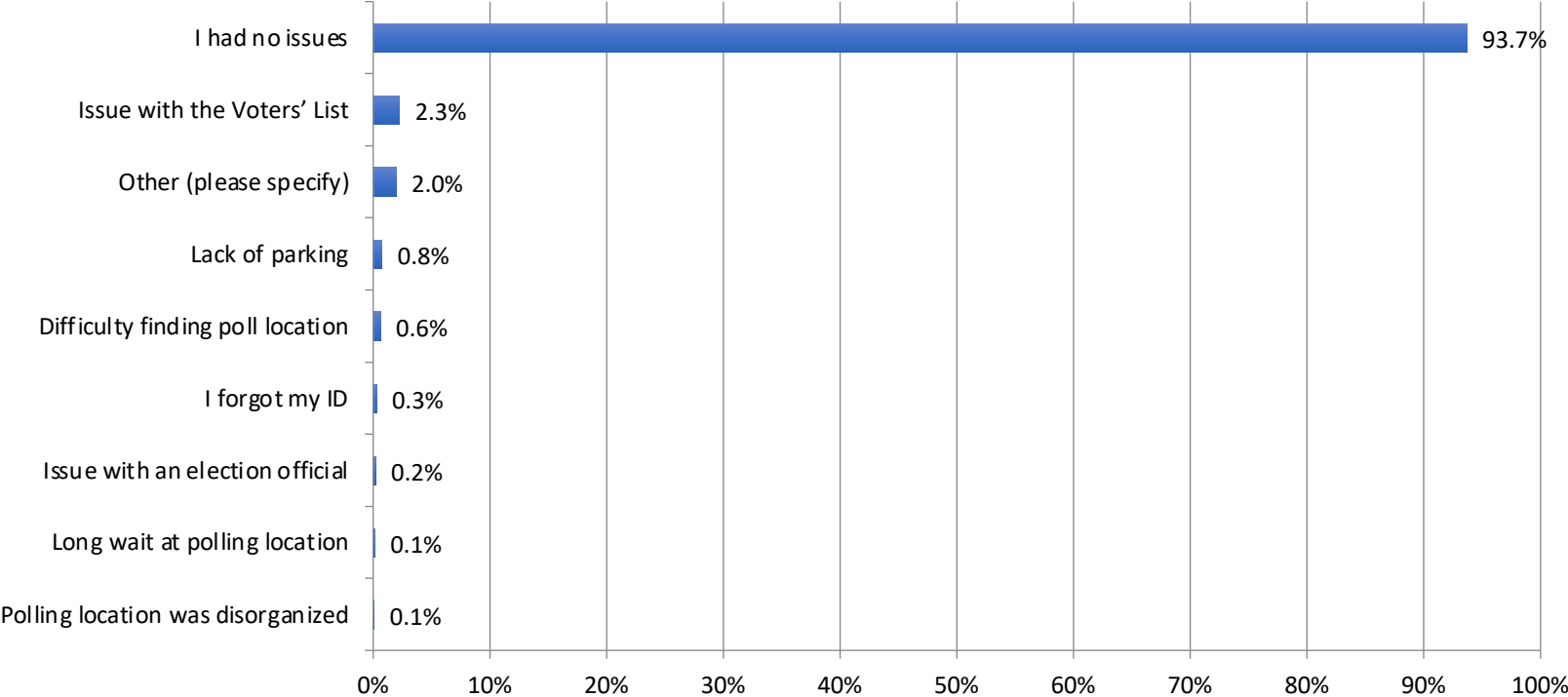
Satisfaction with election official support at the polls and positive perceptions of the voting experience are equally high.

- Satisfaction by poll location trended upward overall in 2022.
- Advance voters surveyed reported slightly higher satisfaction with the voting process, election official support, and the overall experience than Election Day voters.

3. Issues experienced at the polls



Issues at the polls: Chart



Issues experienced at the polls

Voters were asked whether they experienced issues voting at the polls.

Most respondents (94%) say that they encountered no issues at the polls.

Of those that did experience issues, voters' list errors, "other" and a lack of parking were the top identified items.

"Other" issues, albeit few, generally focused on 4 areas:

1. Issues with the ballot (circle being too small, top option being too high).
2. Technical issues/ negative feelings toward technology.
3. Issues with voter cards.
4. Privacy concerns.

Advance voters were less likely to report issues than election day respondents.

Summary: Issues at the polls

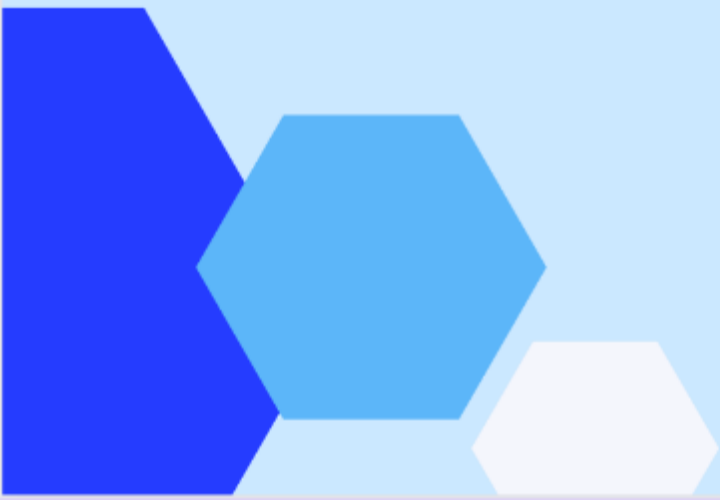
Overall, there was a decrease in reported issues at the polls in 2022.

- Those that reported having “no issues” increased by 8% from 2018.
- The biggest reported issue in 2022 concerns the voters’ list.

Lack of parking, long waits at polling locations, and “other” issues were reported less in 2022, while issues related to the voters’ list increased. Other changes were negligible.

The reduction in reported issues given the lingering pandemic is notable.

4. Plan Your Vote

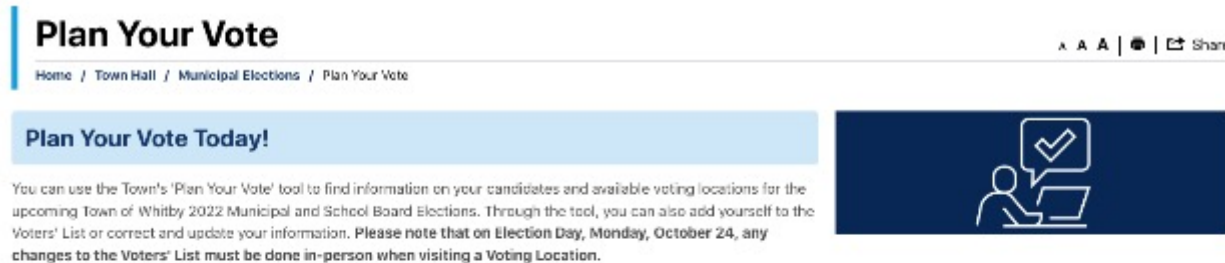


Plan Your Vote

In 2022, the Town of Whitby introduced Plan Your Vote: a web-based tool that allowed voters to confirm their voter registration, learn about candidates, and find their designated voting location.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about Plan Your Vote such as whether they used it, satisfaction with the webpage, most helpful aspects, and areas of Plan Your Vote that could be improved.

33% of the sample used Plan Your Vote and of those, 96% reported being satisfied with the tool (61% “very satisfied” and 35% “fairly satisfied”).



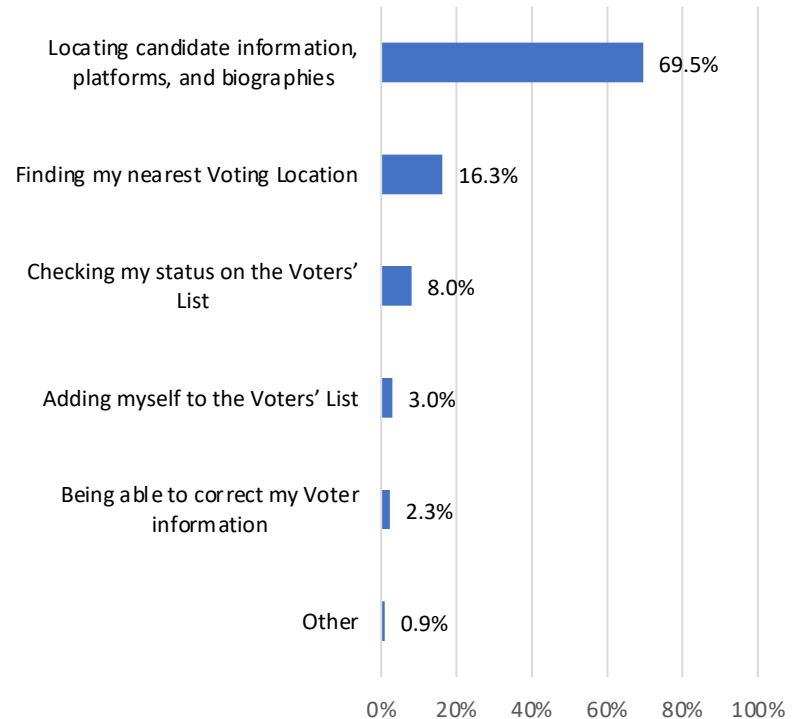
The screenshot shows the top portion of a web page titled "Plan Your Vote". The page has a blue header with the title and a navigation breadcrumb: "Home / Town Hall / Municipal Elections / Plan Your Vote". On the right side of the header, there are icons for font size adjustment (A A A) and a share icon. Below the header is a light blue banner with the text "Plan Your Vote Today!". Underneath the banner, there is a paragraph of text: "You can use the Town's 'Plan Your Vote' tool to find information on your candidates and available voting locations for the upcoming Town of Whitby 2022 Municipal and School Board Elections. Through the tool, you can also add yourself to the Voters' List or correct and update your information. Please note that on Election Day, Monday, October 24, any changes to the Voters' List must be done in-person when visiting a Voting Location." To the right of the text is a dark blue rectangular box containing a white icon of a person sitting at a computer with a checkmark in a speech bubble above them.

Most helpful aspect of Plan Your Vote

Respondents identified locating candidate information such as platforms and biographies as the most helpful aspect of Plan Your Vote (70%).

Finding the nearest voting location (16%) and verifying one's status on the Voters' List (8%) were other key benefits.

Overall, satisfaction at the polls was slightly higher (89%) among those who used Plan Your Vote compared to those who did not (87%).

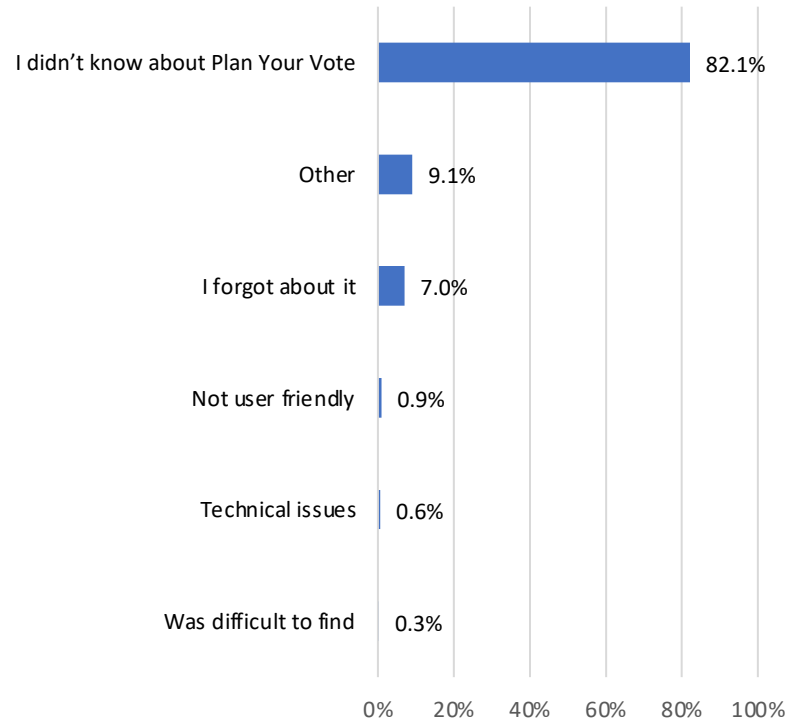


Reasons for not using Plan Your Vote

Respondents were asked why they did not use Plan Your Vote.

Top reasons included not knowing about Plan Your Vote (82%) and forgetting it (7%). This suggests additional education and outreach could help use in 2026.

9% reported not using it for “other” reasons. Respondents who chose this option predominately felt that they “did not need it” or “felt ok already” with what they knew and the information provided on their Voter Notification Card.



Plan Your Vote Use Data

Younger survey respondents were more drawn to using Plan Your Vote than older ones.

The biggest users of Plan Your Vote are 25 to 54 years in age. However, more of those individuals took the survey.

If we look at the proportion of respondents from each age group, however, we see that use of Plan Your Vote is highest among the youngest voters, and slowly declines with age.

Plan Your Vote users are more likely to be college or university educated and have a household income greater than \$90,001 annually.



Summary: Plan Your Vote

Plan Your Vote was a welcome addition that users were satisfied with (96%).

Plan Your Vote users were slightly more satisfied (2%) with the voting process.

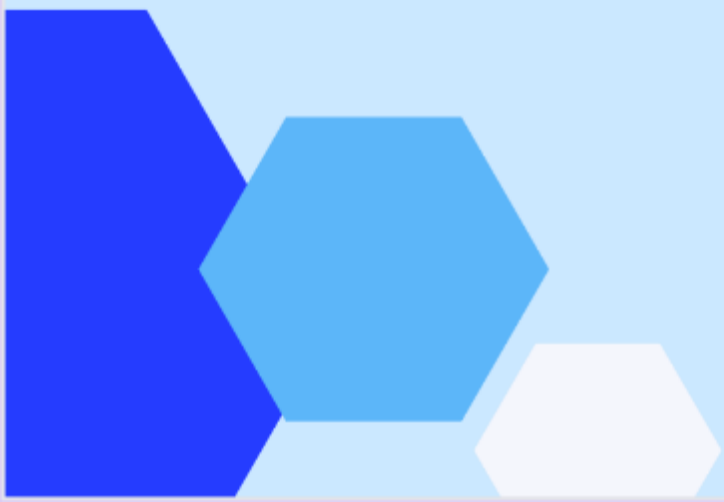
Top features of the webpage included: locating information about candidates (70%), finding voting locations (16%) and checking voter registration (8%).

Respondents felt Plan Your Vote could be improved by including more candidate information, or ensuring completeness, and resolving technical errors.

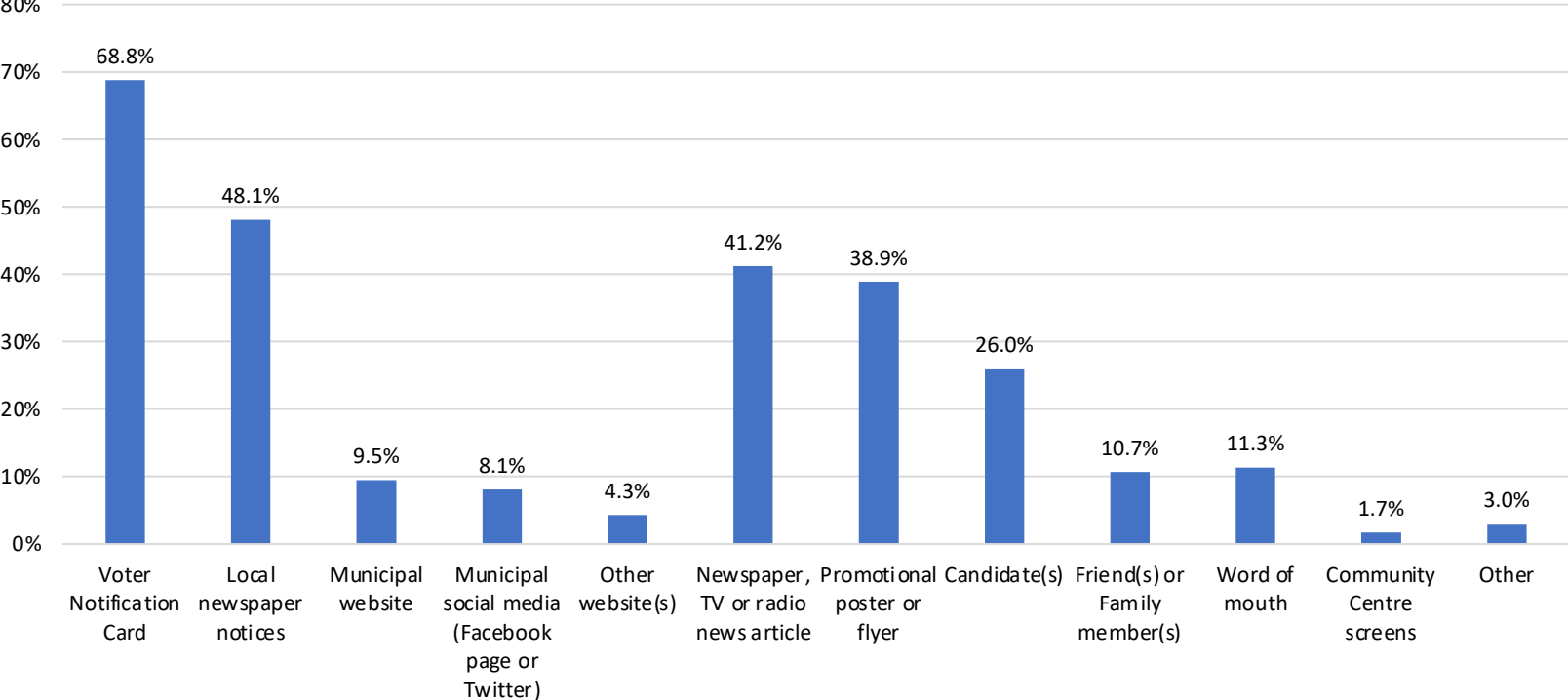
The majority of those that did not use Plan Your Vote did not know about it, suggesting additional outreach is needed for voters to make the best use of this resource in future.

Younger and middle-aged voters are the biggest users of Plan Your Vote.

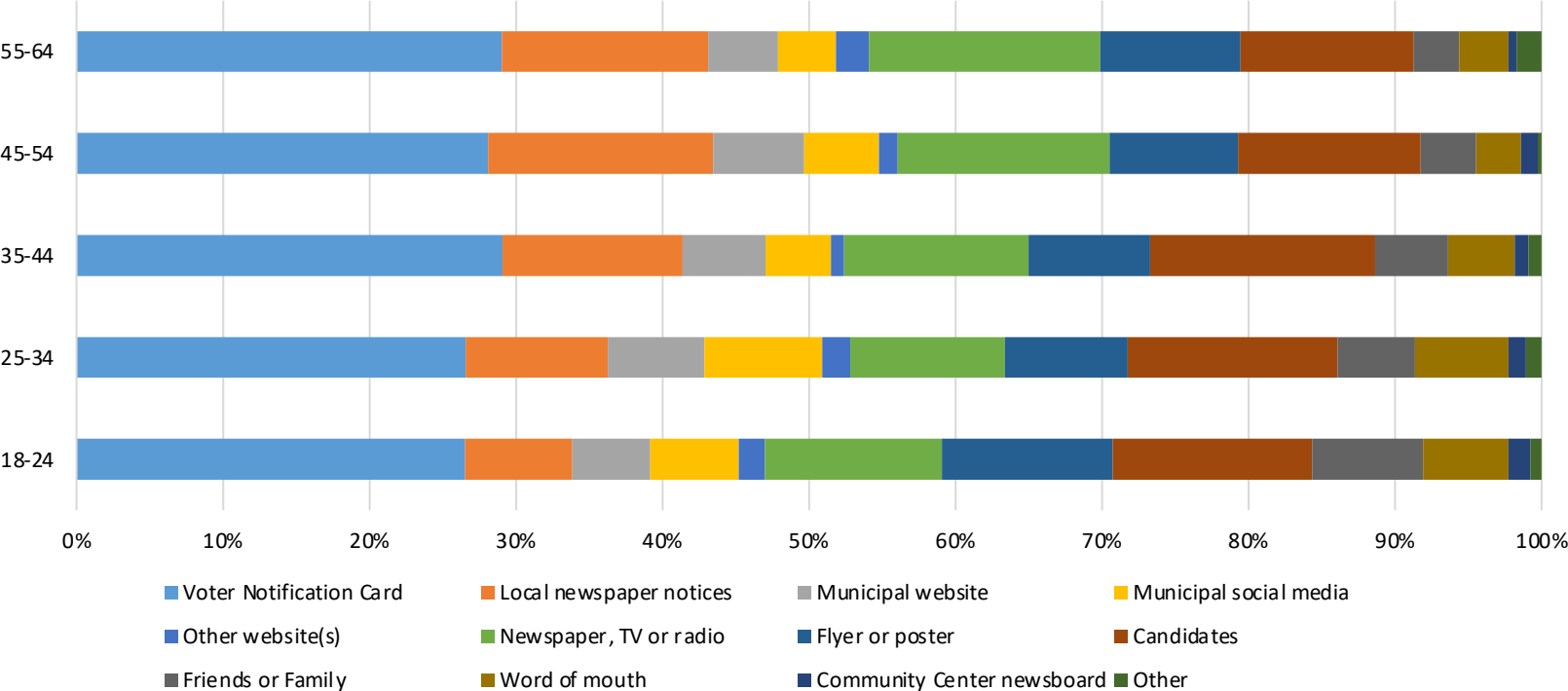
5. Other aspects of the voting process



Source of voting information



Source of voting information by age

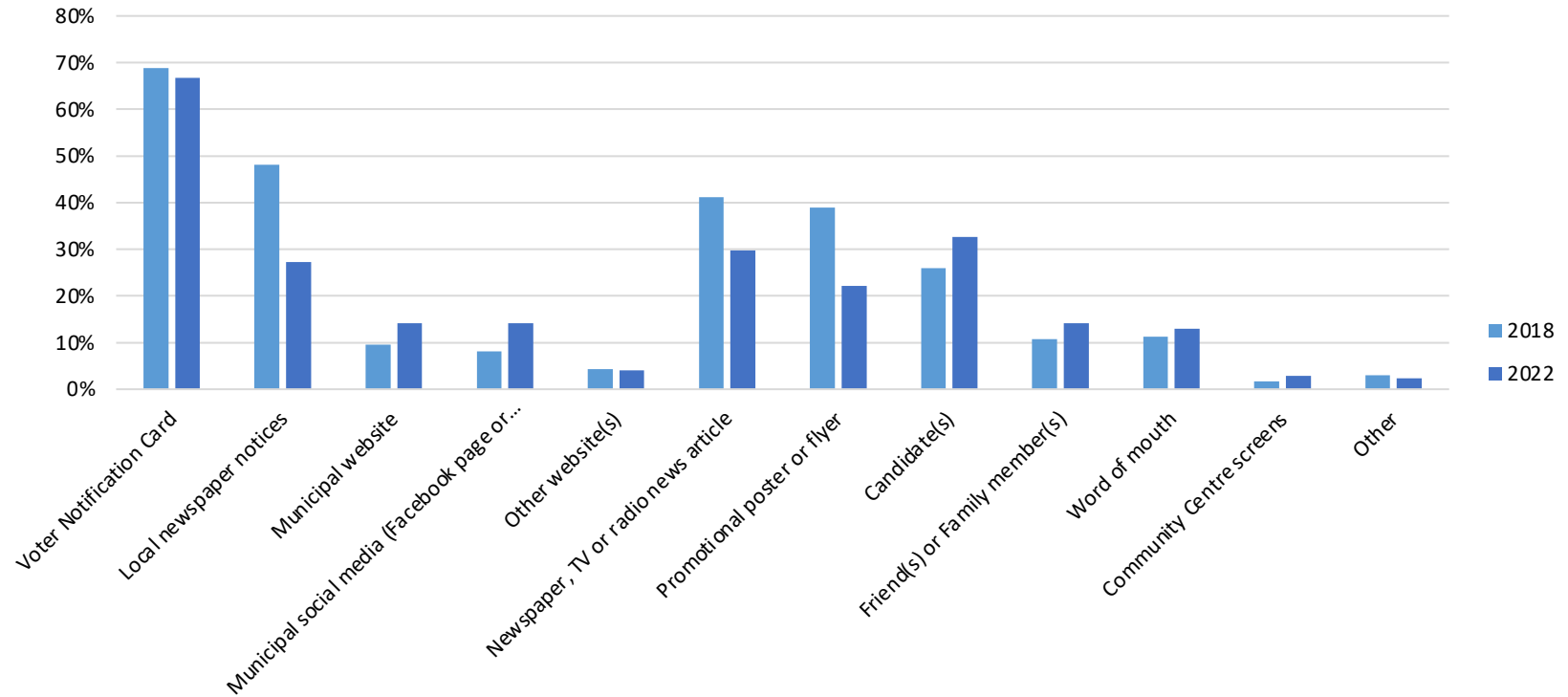


Key sources of information by age

Age Group	Key information sources, in order, aside from the VIL
18-24	Candidates, newspapers/TV/radio, flyers or posters
25-34	Candidates, newspapers/TV/radio, local news notices
35-44	Candidates, newspapers/TV/radio, local news notices
45-54	Local news notices, newspapers/TV/radio, candidates
55+	Newspapers/TV/radio, local news notices, candidates, flyers or posters

There is a diversity of information sources across age groups. Candidates are an influential source for all ages, notably those under 44. Newspaper/TV/radio and local news are also frequently cited, especially by voters 45+

Voting information compared to 2018



Summary: Other aspects of the process



The Voter Notification Card remains the best source to inform Whitby electors about voting.

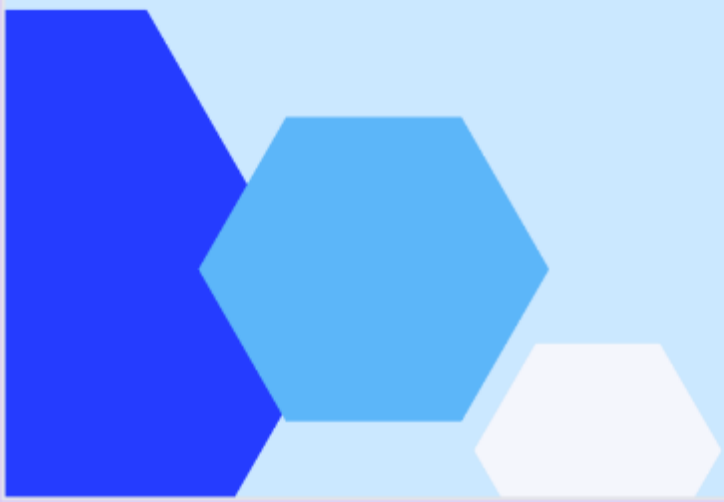
- Candidates, newspaper/TV/radio and local news notices were other top sources.

The Town should be mindful of the following changes in voter information sources since 2018 when planning for 2026:

- A decrease in print media as reported sources of voter information – especially local newspapers and promotional posters and flyers.
- An increase in social sources such as candidates and friends and family.
- An increase in virtual sources such as the municipal website and social media.

A combination of information sources – traditional and virtual – is recommended to continue to reach electors of all ages. A specific focus on informing candidates could also help to support the transfer of election knowledge to voters.

6. Voter profile and attitudes



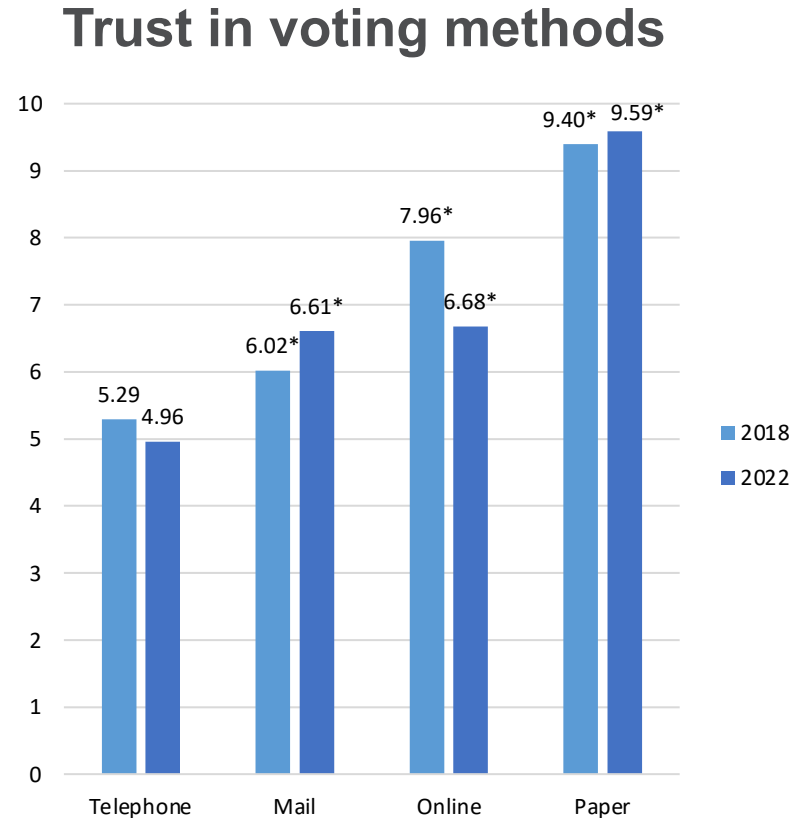
Voter profile from survey data

Profile	Characteristics	Whitby, 2022
Socio-demographic	Age	36 years
	Annual household income	\$90,001 to \$110,000 before taxes
	Education	Some university
Attitudes	Voting history	Very habitual
	Interest level in politics	Somewhat interested

Compared to 2018: Age, education and voting history are the same or very similar. Household income has declined and reported interest in politics is down.

Trust in voting methods 2018 and 2022

- Voters were asked about the degree to which they trust the voting methods used in Ontario municipal elections.
- Mean scores show respondents have the greatest trust in paper voting.
- Since 2018, trust in paper-based voting methods has increased, while trust in digital voting methods has decreased.
- These differences are statistically significant for mail, online, and paper (denoted by *), but not for telephone voting.



Trust: pre and post covid

There has been a shift in voters' trust in voting methods since COVID-19.

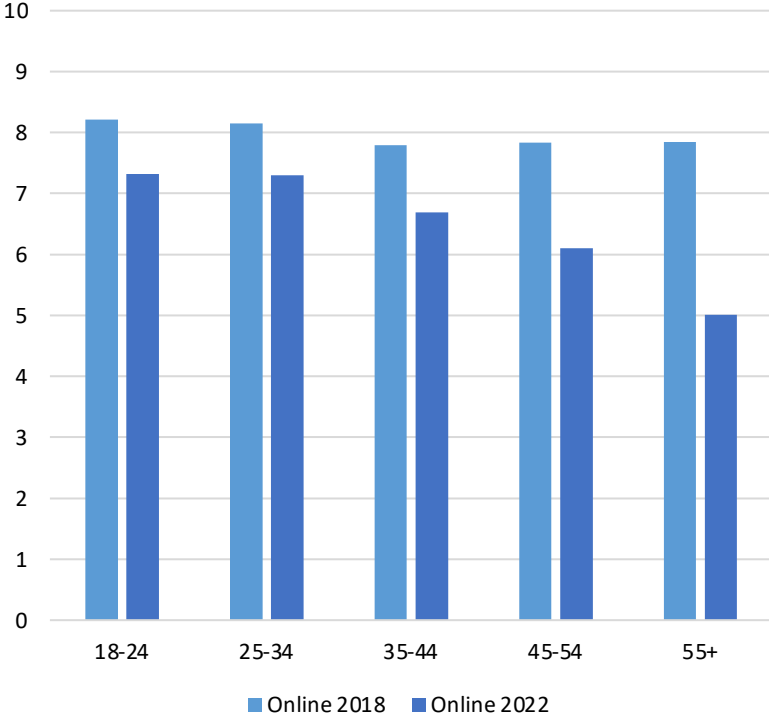
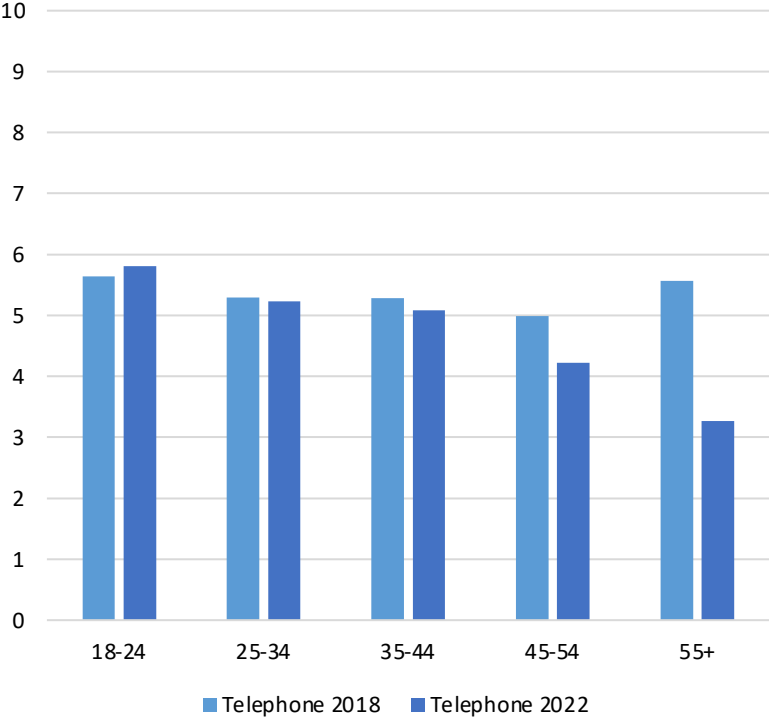
Looking at differences by age (see next slides) we see that trust in paper voting remains strong, however, there are mixed changes in trust of mail and telephone voting. Trust in online voting has decreased among all age groups.

Key differences by age:

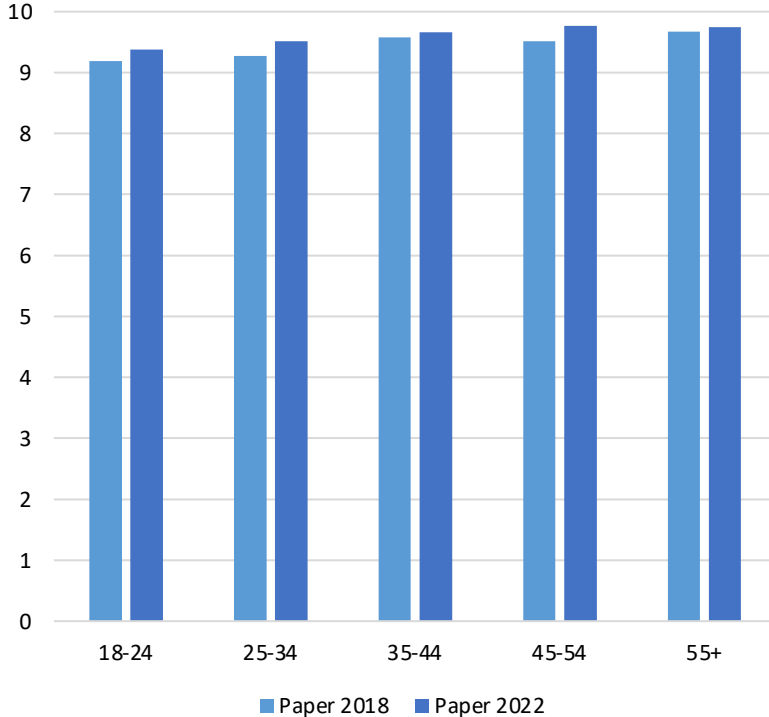
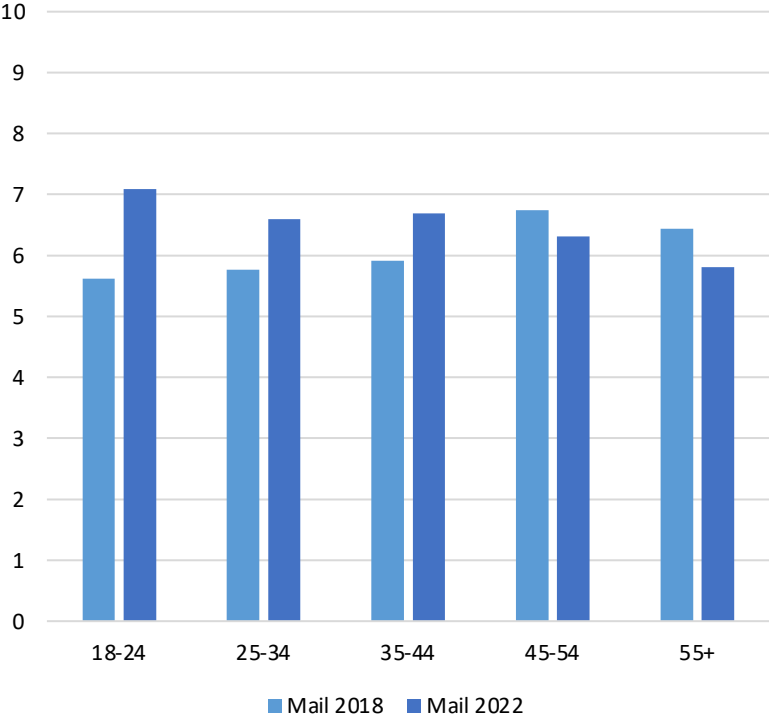
- Trust in telephone voting has increased among those aged 18 to 24 and decreased among other age groups.
- Trust in mail voting has increased among voters aged 18 to 44.
- Trust in paper voting has increased among voters aged 18 to 54.
- Trust in all voting methods has decreased among voters 55+ except for paper voting.

Differences in trust in remote voting methods is an area for further exploration, especially decreased trust in digital voting modes.

Trust in digital voting methods



Trust in paper-based voting methods



Summary: Voter profile and attitudes

Survey respondents in Whitby are educated and have an average household income of \$90,001-\$110,000 before taxes. The median income is slightly higher.

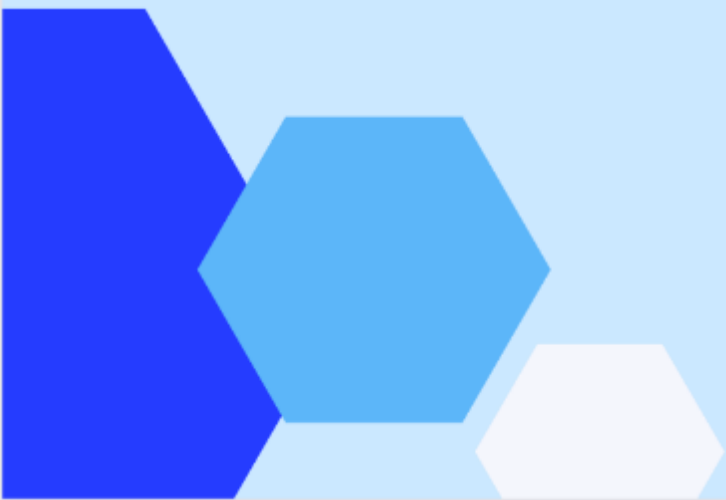
Respondents reported being “somewhat interested” in politics and having relatively committed voting histories, meaning they are inclined to vote in all or most elections.

Income and interest have declined slightly since 2018.

Trust in paper voting has increased. It is the most trusted voting mode by Whitby respondents.

Considering voting methods based on trust, paper voting is the desired method for voters in Whitby.

7. Key comparison of 2022 and 2018



Key items compared: 2018 and 2022

Survey Question	2018	2022	Change
Overall satisfaction with the in-person paper voting process.	98%	98%	–
Very satisfied with the in-person paper voting process.	83%	87%	↑
Advance voters “very satisfied” with the voting process.	91%	89%	↓
Election Day voters “very satisfied” with the voting process.	76%	84%	↑
Satisfaction with the quality of support received... at the poll.	99%	99%	–
Paper voting was a “very positive” experience.	78%	80%	↑
Advance voters “very positive” experience.	91%	81%	↓
Election Day voters “very positive” experience.	66%	78%	↑

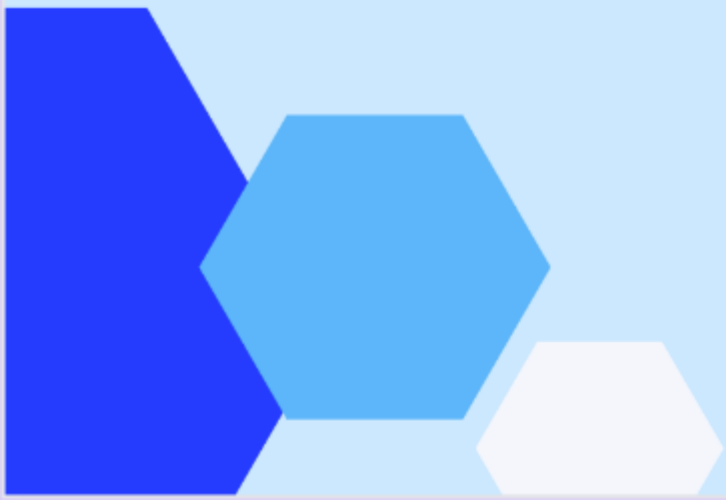
Satisfaction and perception of a positive voting experience increased in 2022. Being “very satisfied” went up among Election Day voters and down among advance voters.

Key items compared: 2018 and 2022

Survey Question	2018	2022	Change
I had no issues voting.	86%	94%	↑
Lack of parking was an issue.	1%	5%	↓
"Other" issue while voting.	2%	4%	↓
Vote in all elections.	80%	75%	↓
Interested in politics.	83%	74%	↓
Trust mail voting "completely".	13%	27%	↑
Trust telephone voting "completely"	9%	15%	↑
Trust paper voting "completely".	74%	79%	↑
Trust internet voting "completely".	45%	28%	↓

Voting issues decreased in 2022. Trust in paper, telephone and mail voting grew while trust in internet voting fell. Interest in politics fell as did committed voting histories, albeit slightly.

8. Takeaways



Takeaways

Whitby respondents are very satisfied with the voting process, support from workers at the polls, and perceive the voting experience as positive.

- There was a notable increase in Election Day voters' satisfaction in 2022.

Most respondents (94%) had no issues voting.

- Reported issues while voting declined from 2018.
- Issues with the voters' list was the top cited issue.

The forthcoming change in voters' list management from MPAC to Elections Ontario will hopefully improve voters' list accuracy and reduce issues.

Issues that staff could consider for future elections include:

1. Issues with the ballot (circle being too small, top option being too high).
2. Troubleshooting for technical issues.
3. Ensuring adequate parking at designated poll locations.

Takeaways

The Plan Your Vote webpage was positively received.

- Biggest users are younger and middle-aged.
- Users reported being 2% more satisfied.

Top attributes include:

1. Locating information about candidates (70%);
2. Finding voting locations (16%); and
3. Checking voter registration (8%).

To improve Plan Your Vote the Town could undertake the following:

- Conduct additional outreach about the tool to boost awareness.
- Include additional candidate information or ensure completeness.
- Test and resolve technical errors, if possible.

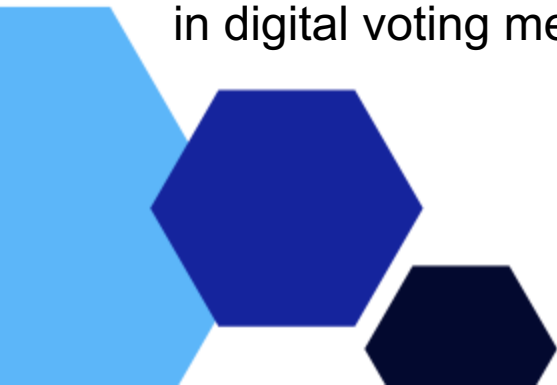
Takeaways

The Voter Notification Card is the top source of voter information.

Respondents reported a decline in using local news and flyers as sources of election information. Candidates, the municipal website, and social media increased as sources of voting information.

A blended model of voter information continues to be the best way to reach all age groups. This includes traditional and virtual mediums.

Trust in voting methods also shifted in 2022. It is highest for paper voting. Trust in digital voting methods has declined for most age groups.



Overall

Survey respondents in Whitby continue to be very satisfied with the way their elections are run, and the support received.

Based on reported trust, paper voting appears to be the clear choice to deploy in the 2026 election.

Changes made to voting locations in 2022 were well-received.

Given their lower satisfaction, the over 55 age group could be a focus for the next election.

Overall, results point to improvements to the 2022 election experience despite already strong ratings in 2018.

About the Author

Dr. Nicole Goodman is an associate professor at Brock University where she holds the Chancellor's Chair in Research Excellence. She is recognized internationally as a leading expert on electoral modernization. She has co-authored reports for EMBs and governments across Canada and has provided advice to governments internationally about the modernization of elections. Dr. Goodman has led projects studying elections in municipalities and First Nations across Canada. She currently represents Canada on the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance Board of Advisers.

