

TRENDS ANALYSIS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS VOTER TURNOUT

FALL 2015



What does this measure & why is it important?

This indicator measures the percent of eligible voters in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region who voted in local government elections. Data for this indicator were gathered from CivicInfoBC's compendium of [local election results](#) which includes data for 2008, 2011, and 2014. Data for municipalities was available for all three years, but data for Regional District Electoral Areas was only available for the 2014 election.

Voter turnout is an indicator of the health of a democracy. Low voter turnout is generally considered bad for democracy, and can be seen as a reflection of the level of capacity and motivation of individual citizens – their level of 'civic mindedness' (Franklin, 2004). Voter turnout is related to cultural and historical factors, as well as the role of institutions and the characteristics and qualities of the electoral system (Jackman & Miller, 1995). Regional identity and the level of jurisdictional authority wielded by a regional or local government are important determinants of electors' willingness to participate in elections (Henderson & McEwen, 2015).

What are the trends & current conditions?

Voter turnout varies across the municipalities and regional district electoral areas of the region. Average voter turnout is shown in Figure 1 below for all three years of available data. 2008 shows the highest voter turnout at 51.1%, followed by 44.8% in 2011, and another decline to 40.9% in 2014. Average voter turnout in the region is higher than the provincial average, which was 27.8% in 2008, and 33.3% for municipalities and 22.8% for electoral areas in 2014.

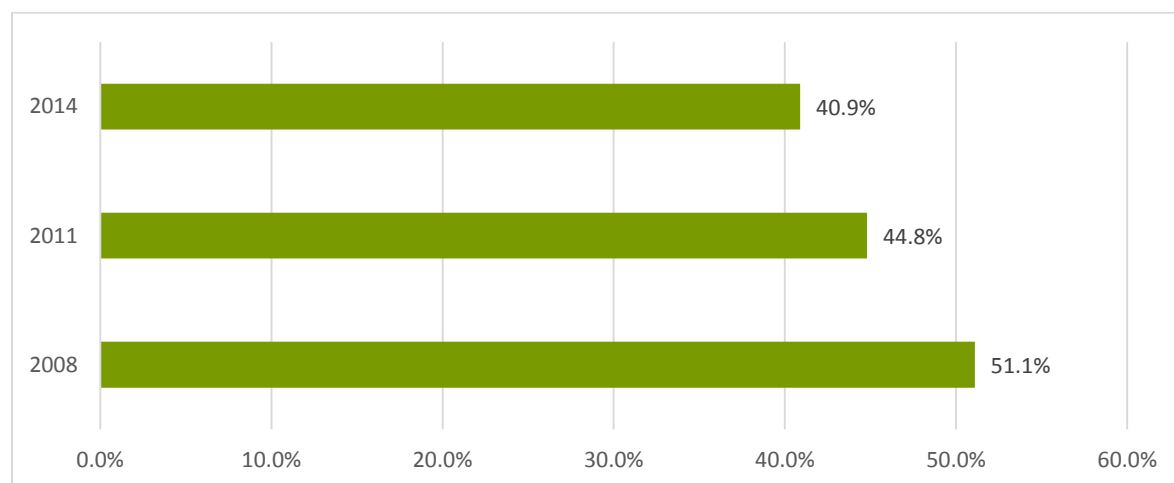


Figure 1: Average voter turnout for Basin-Boundary local government elections

Source: CivicInfoBC, 2015

In 2008, Silverton had the highest voter turnout of the region and province at 81%. The lowest in 2008 was 25% in Trail and Sparwood. Greenwood had the highest turnout at 70% for both 2011 and 2014 municipal elections. Golden had the lowest turnout of Basin-Boundary communities in 2011, and Elkford in 2014, both at 25%. Figure 2 shows the voter turnout for 2008, 2011, and 2014 for all municipalities in the region. Data for regional district electoral areas became available in 2014, and the lowest voter turnout for that election was 17% in East Kootenay – Area C. There were no acclamations in 2008, while in 2011 four municipal councils were acclaimed (Canal Flats, Elkford, Salmo, and Warfield), and in 2014

there were three (New Denver, Silverton, and Radium Hot Springs). In 2014, 11 of the electoral areas were acclaimed, including areas in all four regional districts within the Columbia-Basin Boundary region. To see voter turnout for all local governments in our region, visit the [Digital Basin](#).

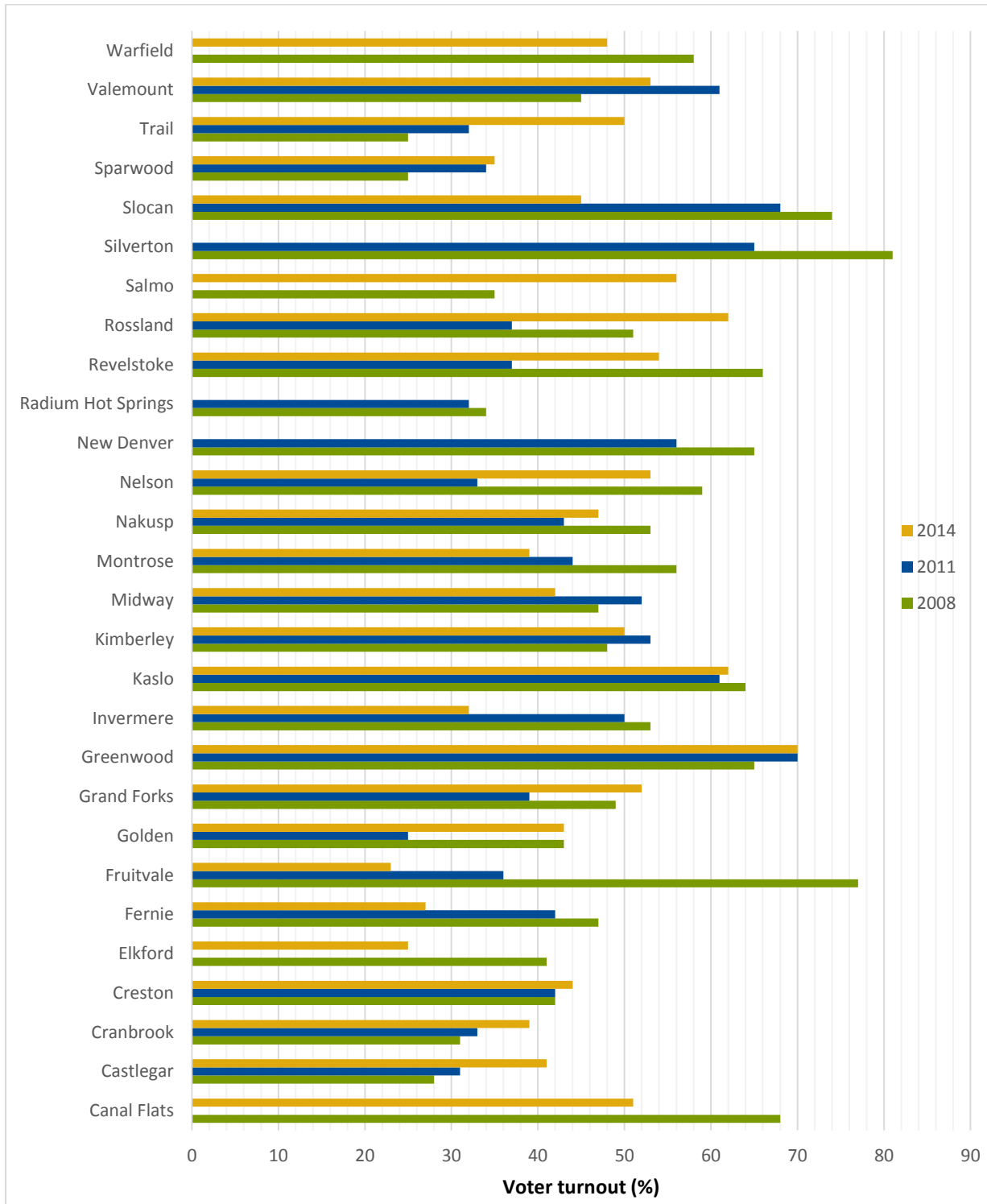


Figure 2: Voter turnout for Basin-Boundary municipal elections
Source: CivicInfoBC, 2015

References

Franklin, Mark. N. (2004). *Voter turnout and the dynamics of electoral competition in established democracies since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Henderson, Ailsa and McEwen, Nicola. (2015). Regions as Primary Political Communities: A Multi-level comparative analysis of turnout in regional elections. *Publius*, 45(2), 189-215.

Jackman, Robert W., and Miller, Ross A. (1995). Voter turnout in the industrial democracies during the 1980s. *Comparative Political Studies*, 27(4), 467-492.



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