

Democracy in Action - Voter Turnout in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region

Voter turnout is an indicator of the health of a democracy - a measure of citizens' civic mindedness. Our recent federal election is a piece of the larger puzzle of civic engagement.

"73% of the eligible voters in the Kootenay-Columbia voted in this election, including many young first-time voters. I am very proud of all of them", said Wayne Stetski, newly elected MP for the Kootenay-Columbia riding, which covers from Nelson to Fernie, Golden and Revelstoke. This riding is indeed one where 'every vote counts' as Stetski was elected with roughlyly 300 votes more than incumbent David Wilks.



The South Okanagan-West Kootenay also saw a high voter turnout of almost 74%, another newly drawn riding, which covers Castlegar to Nakusp to Penticton. Valemount lands in the Prince George-Peace River-Northern Rockies riding, where voter turnout was 68%.

National voter turnout for the 2015 election was 68%, up from 61% in 2011. The same trend rings true for Basin-Boundary ridings, where turnout was 65% in 2011.

When polled in August 2015, RDI asked Columbia Basin-Boundary residents if they planned to vote in the upcoming federal election. 85% said yes. High voter turnout is generally considered good for democracy, and can be seen as a reflection of the level of capacity and motivation of citizens. It is also related to cultural and historical factors, as well as the characteristics and qualities of the electoral system.

While voter turnout varies across municipalities and regional districts, average voter turnout for local government elections in our region is higher than the provincial average. In 2014, our region saw a turnout of 41%, while the provincial average was 33% for municipalities and 23% for electoral areas. In a region with high voter turnout, we can feel gratified that this is an indication that our citizens are engaged. Local government voter turnout is a State of the Basin indicator of civic engagement. To read our full discussion of this indicator view the related [Trends Analysis report](#).

Richard Cannings, newly elected MP for South Okanagan-West Kootenay, remarks that "the recent federal election engaged thousands of new voters... many people, especially young people, have participated in democracy through issue-based campaigns, and many realized this year that taking part in the electoral process is an essential and effective way for their vote to be heard." Cannings hopes that the "promised reforms to our electoral system to bring in proportional representation will further this process."

FEATURED

2015 Community Profiles are now available for each of the 28 municipalities in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region. The profiles feature statistical data drawing on a variety of sources, including purchased data and primary sourced local data.

[Learn more.](#)

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