

Online Voting in the City of Markham: Patterns & Trends, 2003-2018

November 4, 2019

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Overview

This presentation presents the results of exit surveys of online voters in the City of Markham in the five municipal elections from 2003 to 2018.

The report proceeds as follows:

1. Background
2. Data
3. Analysis
 - Source of online voting information
 - Reason for voting online and voting location
 - Voter satisfaction
 - Digital access & literacy
 - Voter profile & participation
4. Lessons Learned

1. Background

Background

City of Markham a model case of online voting implementation for several reasons:

1. Largest municipality to first trial the technology.
2. Largest community to use the voting method across five elections.
3. Unique approach to partnerships (i.e., CANARIE, Delvinia)
4. Set a precedent in public engagement
5. Extensive research (i.e., Dr. Kim)
6. Only municipality to collect data from voters in five elections.

Background

- Policy learning in other municipalities 50,000+
 - i.e., Peterborough, Burlington, and Guelph.

Online voting period	Advance voting period only			Full election (advance period + election day)	
Voting process	1-step voting			2-step voting Includes online registration	
Ballot types	Ivote remote	Ivote at poll	Telephone	Paper ballot	Mail-in

Opportunity

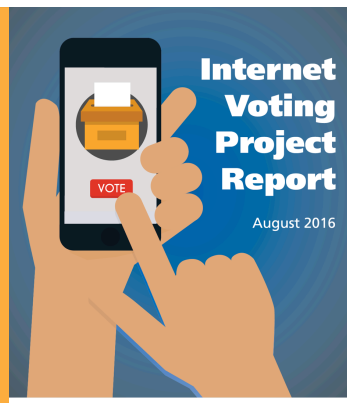
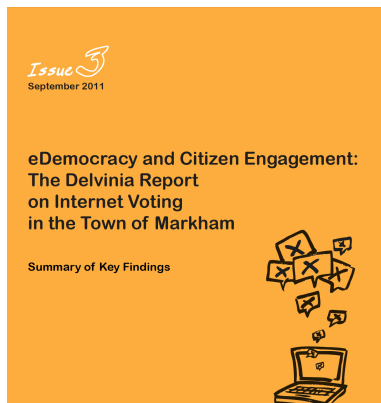
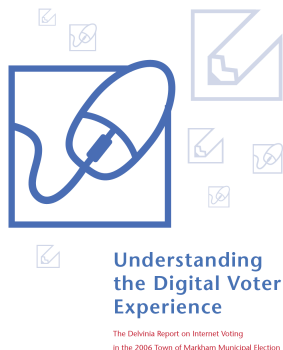
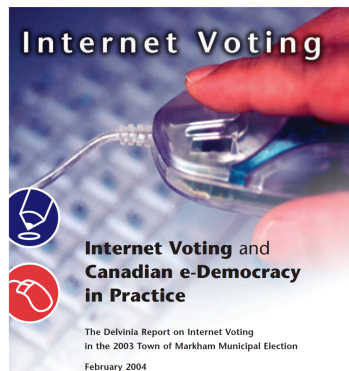
- Data over a 15-year period provides unique insight into the online voter experience.
- Allows the City of Markham to answer key questions:
 - Have voter education preferences shifted?
 - Have there been changes in the reasons for voting online?
 - How has voter satisfaction evolved?
 - How has digital access and literacy evolved among online voters?
 - Has online voting positively affected voter engagement?; and
 - Has the composition of online voters changed overtime?

2. Data

Data

This report draws upon survey results from online voter exit surveys carried out in five elections from 2003-2018 and paper voter data where relevant.

- Some changes in questions across years, but core questions retained
 - These include questions on satisfaction, source of voter information, reasons for voting, future use, voting location, internet access and frequency of use.



Internet Voting Study

AskingCanadians®

City of Markham: Internet Voting Report

2018 Municipal Election Details:

Online Voting Period: October 12th to 22nd
Type of Voting System Used: 2-Step (registration required)
Voter Turnout: 37.82%
Number of Votes Cast Online: 70,784
Number of Completed Internet Voter Surveys: 10,045
Participation Rate in the Internet Voter Survey: 15.46%

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Where did you vote online from?	2
What is the main reason you chose to vote online in the 2018 Municipal Election?	3
If you didn't have the option to vote online, would you still have voted?	4
How satisfied were you with the online voting process?	5
Would you recommend Internet voting to others?	6
Do you have concerns about voting by Internet and if so, what is your top concern?	7
If Internet voting were available in all elections, how likely is it that you would vote online in future municipal elections?	8
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If Internet voting were available in all elections, how likely is it that you would vote online in federal elections?	10
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Information about survey completion

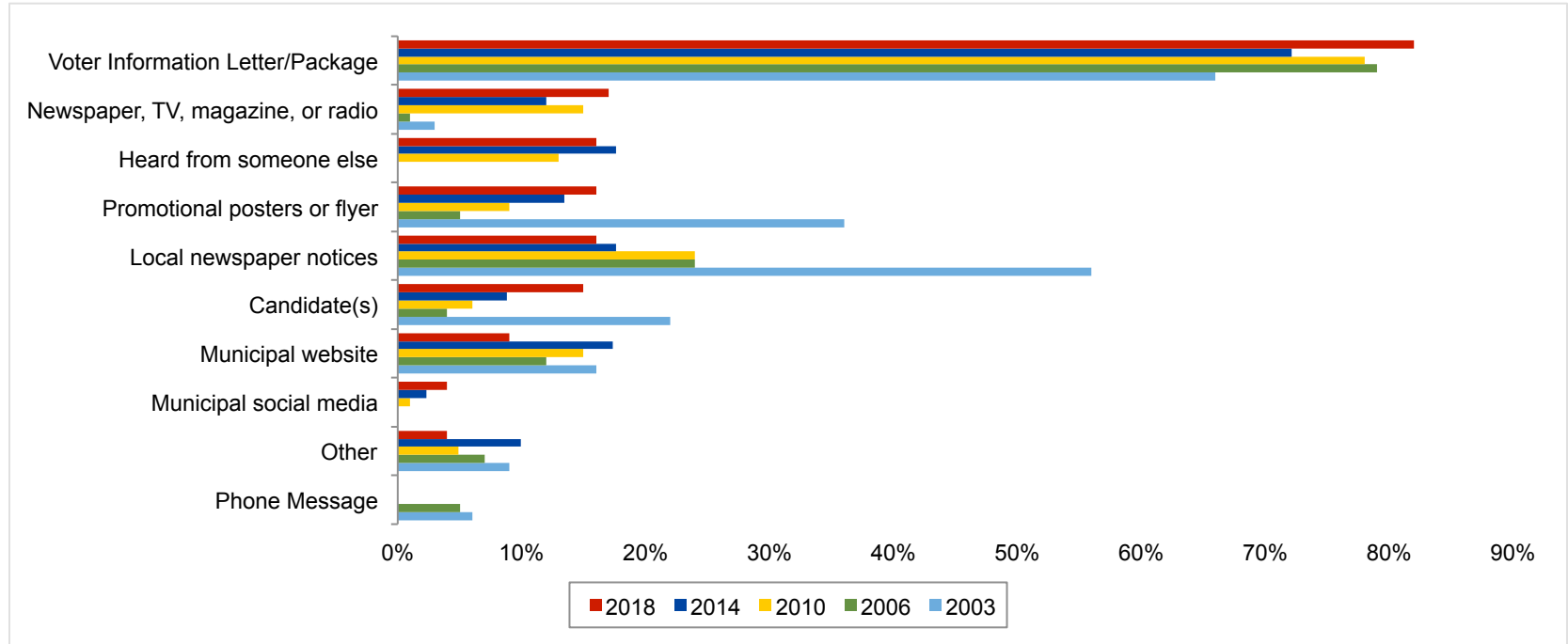
- Response rates across elections:

2003	2006	2010	2014	2018
50.00%	44.00%	29.00%	14.67%	15.46%

- Dates of completion varied but the process was the same.
 - i.e., voters were prompted to take a voluntary survey about their experience after safely exiting the voting system.

3. Analysis

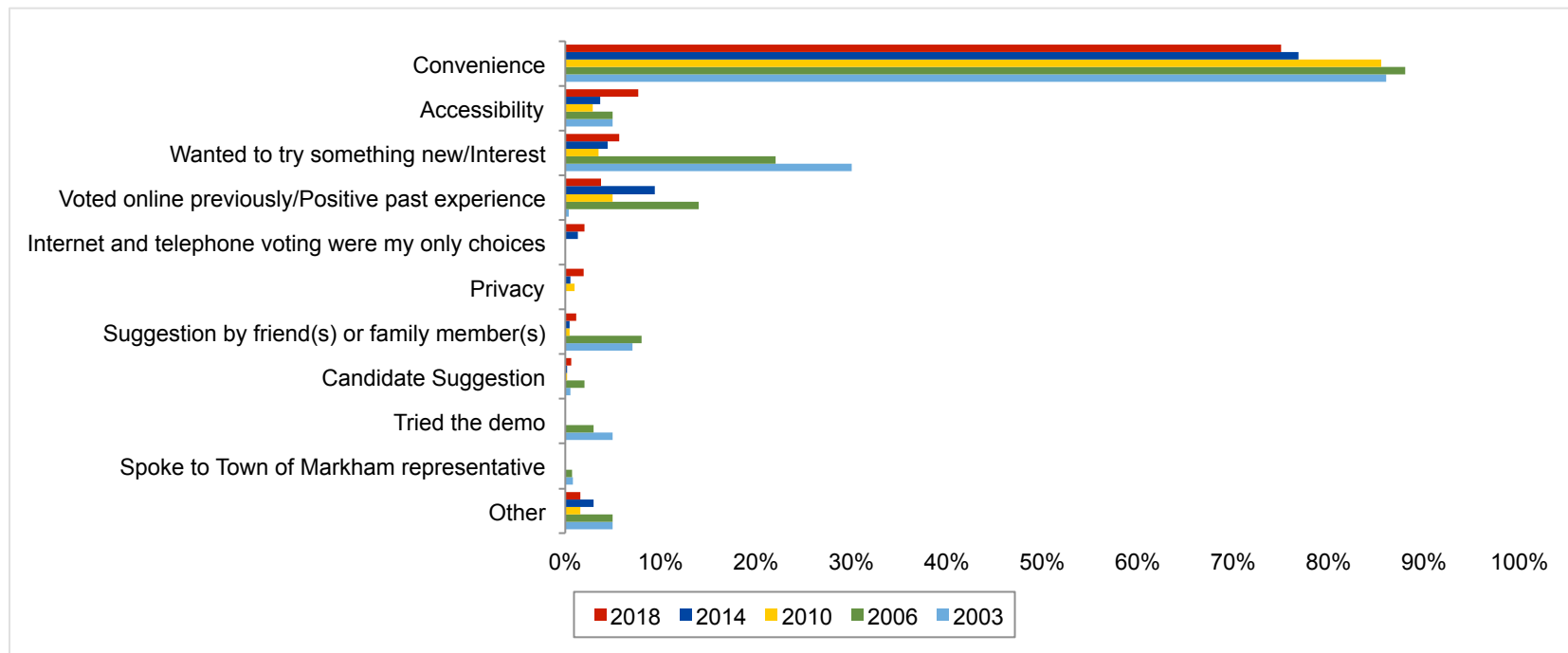
Source of vote information



Source of vote information

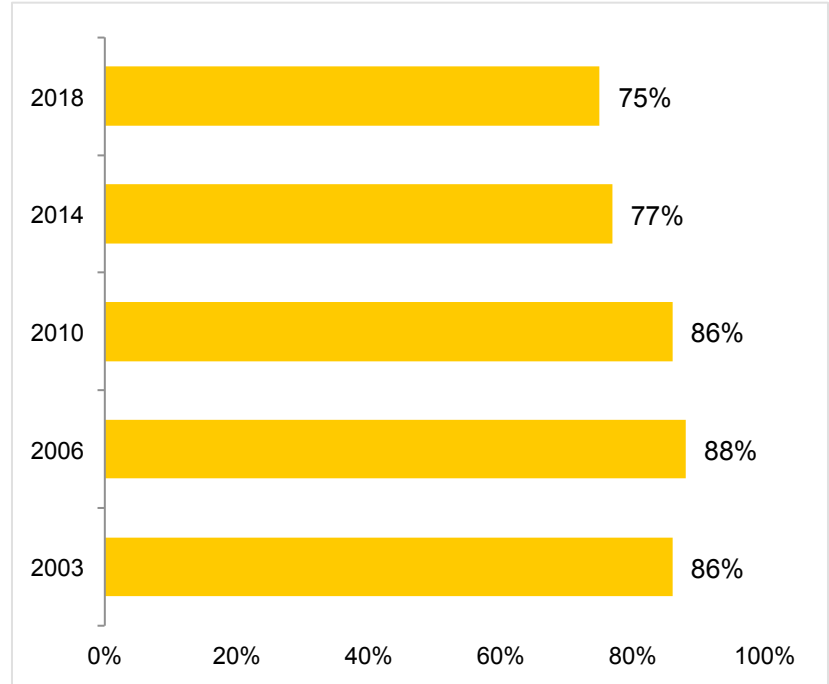
- The Voter Information Package is consistently the most popular source of election information across all elections.
- Traditional information sources such as local newspaper notices continue to be important, but have declined in relevance since 2003.
 - They are especially important for reaching online voters 55+.
- Online platforms such as the municipal website and social media are modest sources of voter information for online voters.
- Young people aged 18 to 34 are much more likely to have heard about online voting from someone else (i.e., a friend, family member or word of mouth).

Reason for voting online



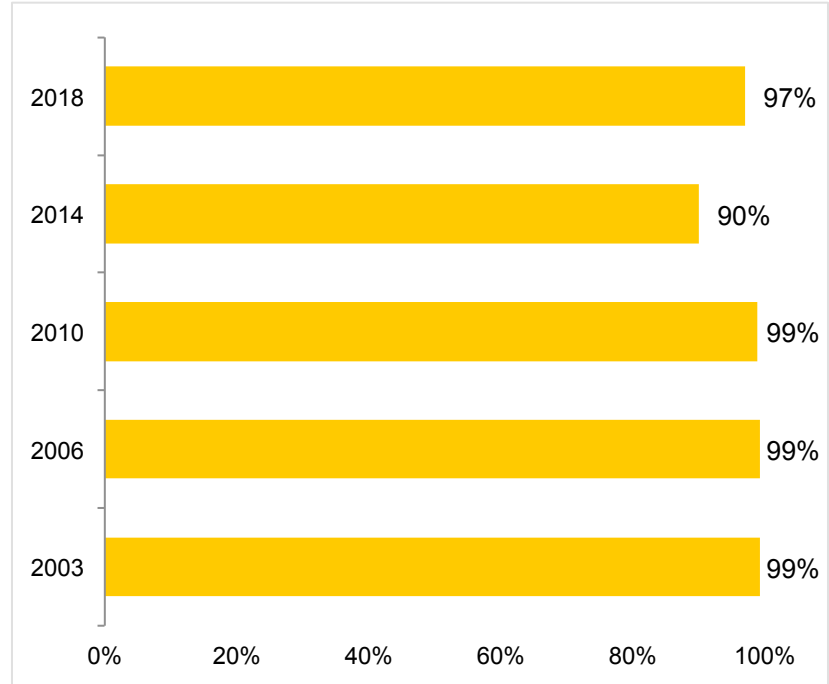
Reason for voting online

- A majority of online voters consistently report choosing to vote online for reasons of convenience.
- Young people (aged 18 to 24) are more likely to say they voted online for reasons of accessibility.
 - These same voters are also more likely to say that they voted online from an 'out of town location.'



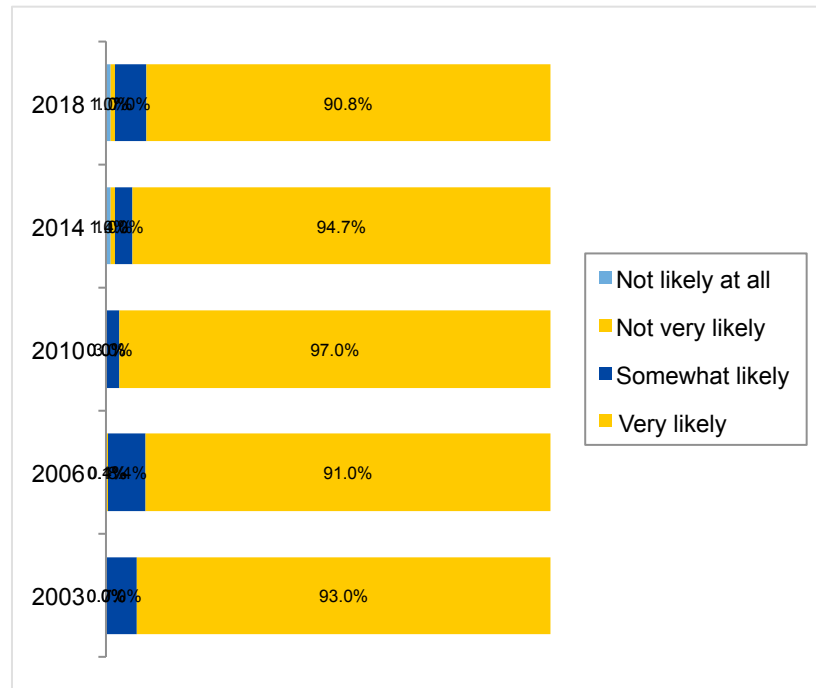
Voter satisfaction

- Data shows that online voting is desired in Markham.
- Strong satisfaction with online voting across election years.
 - At least 90 percent or more of each sample say they are 'satisfied.'
 - In the 2018 election, satisfaction is slightly higher in Markham (97 percent) than the Internet Voting Study average (95 percent).



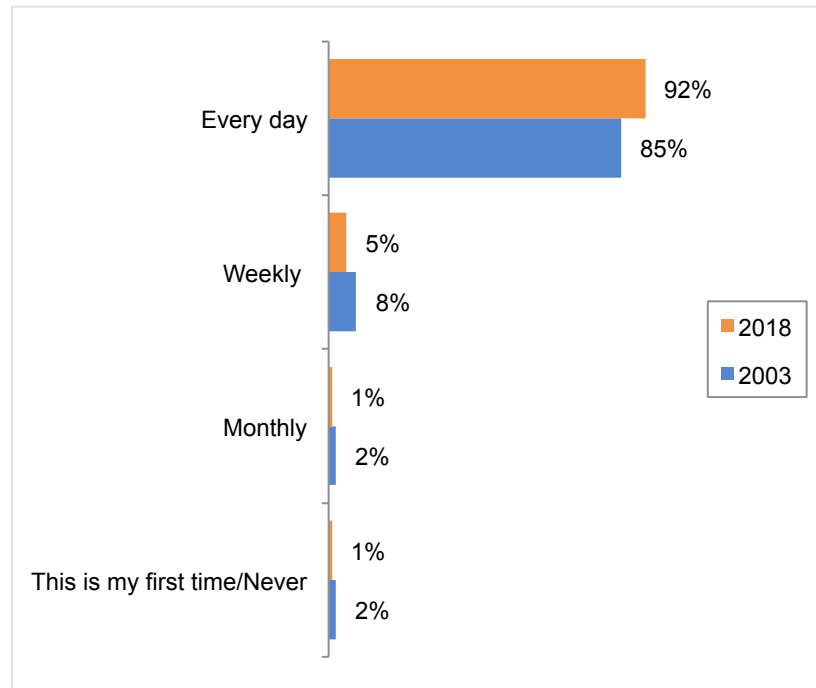
Ideal voting period and future use

- 2018 respondents say the ideal period to offer online voting is in advance polls and on Election Day.
- Across elections, over 90 percent consistently say they would be 'very likely' to vote online in the future.
 - In the 2010, 2014 and 2018 elections at least 98 percent of respondents say they would be likely to vote online in a future municipal election.



Digital access & literacy

- Digital access and literacy was strong among online voters in Markham in 2003 and has continued to strengthen overtime.
- The percentage of online voters claiming to be daily internet users has risen despite already being strong in 2003 (85 percent).
- A majority report having good quality internet access.

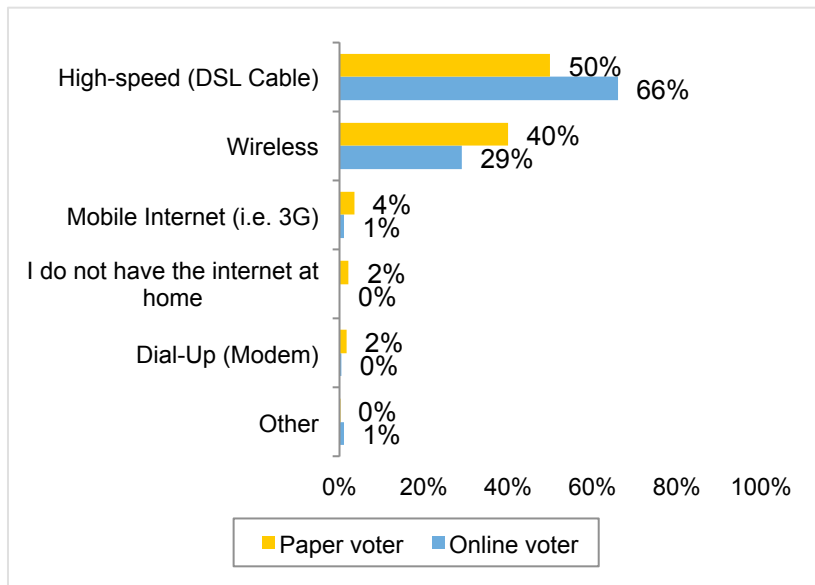


Digital access & literacy

Paper vs online voters

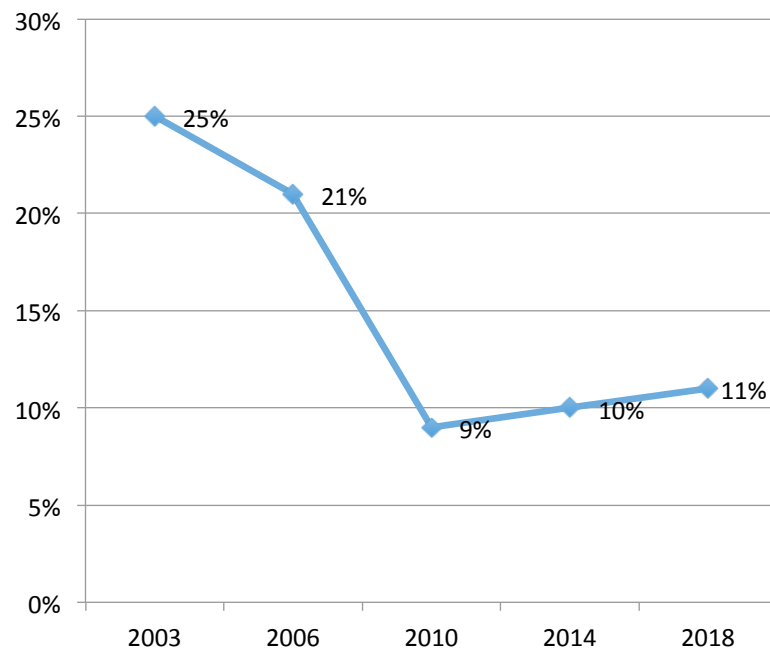
- Data from 2014 shows that while a majority of paper voters report having the internet at home, they are less likely to have high-speed connections than online voters.
- Online voters are also more likely to report using the internet every day (95 percent) compared to paper voters (89 percent).

Type of home internet connection, 2014



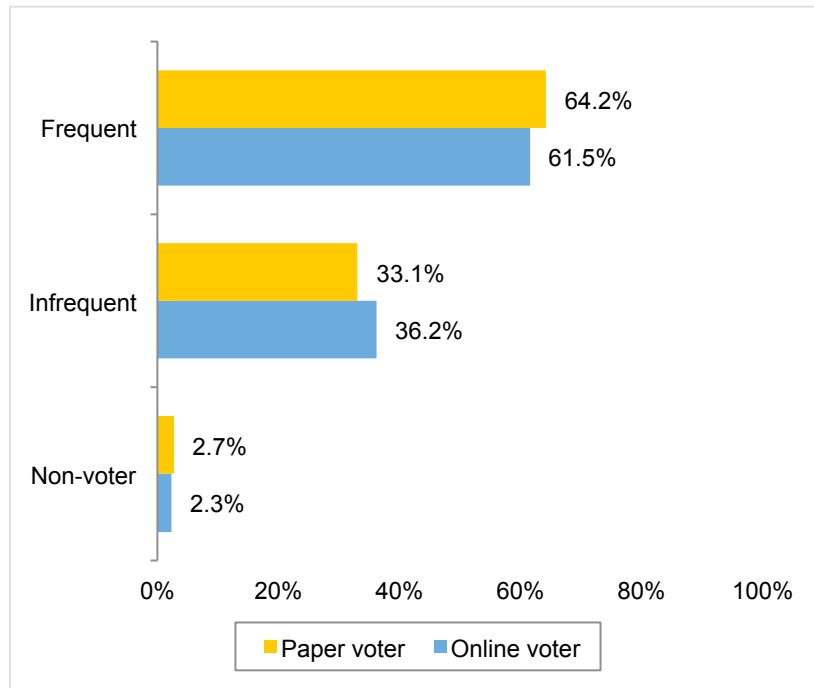
Online voting & voter engagement

- There is a continued group of online voters who report not voting in the previous election, but being eligible to do so.
- This suggests it may be drawing some voters into the municipal voting process.



Online voting & voter engagement

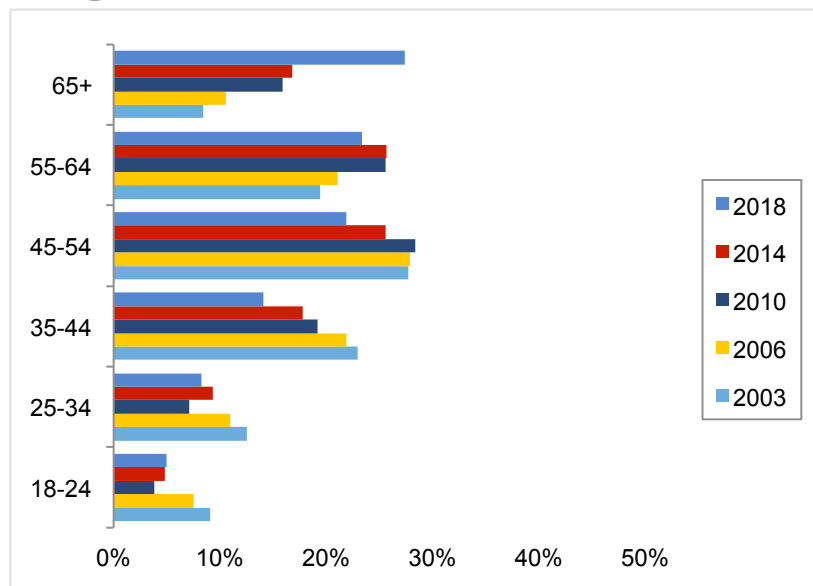
- A modest percentage of respondents (11-13 percent across elections) say they ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ would not have voted had online voting not been offered.
- Over one-third of online voters report infrequent voting histories in the 2014 and 2018 samples.
 - This is slightly higher than paper voting respondents where data is available.



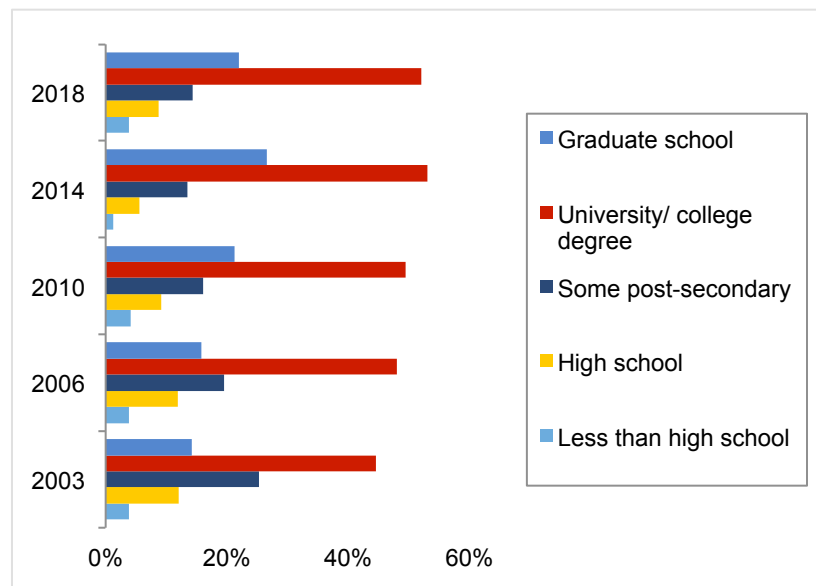
Voter profiles

Online voting respondents report being older and more educated overtime.

Age



Education



Voter profiles

Compared to paper voters in Markham, the average online voter is older, reports a higher household income, and is more educated.

Profile	Characteristics	Online voter, 2014	Paper voter, 2014
Socio-demographic	Age	51 years	44 years
	Annual household income	\$75,000 to \$99,999 before taxes	\$60,000 to \$79,999 before taxes
	Community density	Urban to Suburban	Urban to Suburban
	Education	Some university	Completed technical, community college

7. Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

Voter education

- A balanced approach of traditional (i.e., TV, newspapers) and less conventional mediums (i.e., educating stakeholders, online options) is the best strategy for maximizing voter outreach in future elections.

Reasons for choosing to vote online

- A majority of online voters consistently report choosing to vote online for reasons of convenience.
- For a modest group of young people, online voting enhances the accessibility of the voting process.

Lessons Learned

Voter satisfaction

- **Online voting is desired in Markham.** Satisfaction among online voters in Markham is consistently high across elections.
- Making online voting available in advanced polls and on Election Day in 2022 best meets the needs and wants of electors in Markham.

Digital access & literacy

- Despite being strong in 2003, digital access and literacy among online voters in Markham has further strengthened over the past 15 years.
- Online voters are slightly more digitally savvy than paper voters.

Lessons Learned

Voter engagement

- There is evidence to suggest online voting positively affects the participation of some Markham electors.

Changes in the composition of online voters overtime

- Reported age and education level of online voters in Markham has increased overtime.
- Differences among online and paper voters suggests certain electors may be more drawn to one voting method over another. Being mindful of these preferences is important for ensuring equality and inclusivity of the voting process.

Moving forward

Trend in paperless elections

- Suggest maintaining some aspect of paper voting in Markham to be as inclusive as possible.
- Offering a blended approach with both paper and online voting methods will maintain inclusivity while continuing Markham's leadership of modernizing the municipal election process.

Future policy learning

- As a leader in the digital election space, municipalities across the province and country will continue to watch and learn from Markham.

Questions & bio



Dr. Nicole Goodman, Director at the Centre for e-Democracy and Assistant Professor at Brock University 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 a number of projects studying elections in municipalities and First Nations across Canada. She currently represents Canada on the International IDEA Board of Advisers.