



What It Takes to Always Be Ready

*Evaluations, lessons learned,
and opportunities for legislative reform*

2025 Post-Event Report
for the 44th Ontario provincial
general election



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The Honourable Donna Skelly
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Room 180, Legislative Building, Queen's Park
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Dear Madam Speaker:

It is my pleasure to submit the post-event report of Ontario's 44th provincial general election, as prescribed under the *Election Act* and *Election Finances Act*.

This report provides an account of the 2025 general election and presents legislative recommendations to support the ongoing administration of provincial elections.

It also offers a summary of election proceedings and an evaluation of the alternative voting methods, processes, equipment, and technology used in the 2025 general election, incorporating the requirements set out in Sections 4.1(5), 4.4(11), 44.1(9), 44.2(5), 67.2, and 89 of the *Election Act*.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Greg Essensa'.

Greg Essensa
Chief Electoral Officer



Table of Contents

Message from the CEO	6
Introduction Rethinking Readiness	8
Looking Forward	10
Chapter 1 Preparing the Field: The Months, Weeks, and Days Leading up to the Election	12
Resetting the Election Footprint amid Early Election Signals	13
Fixed vs. Non-Fixed Date Elections: What's the Difference?	14
Recruiting and Onboarding Returning Officers and Election Clerks	15
Finding Voting Locations and Returning Offices	16
Case Study: Stress-Testing Election Day Operations	16
Turning Point: A Critical Week in the Lead-Up to the Election	17
Delivering Key Staff Training under Difficult Circumstances	17
Getting Support Networks Up and Running in a Hurry	18
Case Study: The Field Leadership Support Network (FLSN)	19
Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform	20
Chapter 2 Issuing the Writs of Election: Ontario's 44th Provincial General Election Officially Begins	23
Opening Local Election Offices	24
Case Study: Pop-Up Office in Scarborough—Rouge Park (ED 097)	25
Special Ballot Voting Begins	26
What is voting by special ballot?	26
Issuing Vote by Mail Kits	26
Candidates and Nominations	26
Standing Nominations: Easing the Bottleneck	27
Building Awareness of the Election	28
Finalizing Voting Locations	30
Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform	31



Chapter 3 | Readyng the Vote: Overcoming Delays and Winter Disruptions _____ 34

Finalizing the List of Electors _____ 35

Connecting with Local Communities _____ 36

Distributing Voter Information Cards _____ 37

The Personalized Voter Communications App _____ 38

 Case Study: Redesigning the Voter Information Card _____ 39

Getting Ballots Printed and Ready for Advance Voting _____ 39

Recruiting Poll Officials _____ 40

Training Poll Officials _____ 40

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform _____ 40

Chapter 4 | Casting a Ballot: Making Sure Every Elector’s Vote Counts _____ 42

Special Ballot Voting Ramps Up _____ 43

Voting by Mail _____ 44

Home and Hospital Visits _____ 44

Advance Voting _____ 45

Setting Up for Election Day _____ 46

During Election Day _____ 46

 Inside the Voter Experience _____ 46

 Supporting Electors with Accessibility Needs _____ 47

Mitigating the Threat of Mis- and Disinformation _____ 47

Election Day Results _____ 47

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform _____ 48

Chapter 5 | Confirming the Results: From Unofficial Counts to Official Outcomes _____ 51

Official Tabulation _____ 52

Return of the Writs _____ 52

Judicial Recounts _____ 53

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform _____ 54



Chapter 6 Reporting and Compliance: Post-Election Activities and Delivery Costs	55
Compliance Activities	56
Expenditure and Costs	56
Combating Mis- and Disinformation: A New Team	56
Registration and Deregistration	56
Third-Party Political Advertising	57
Quarterly Allowances	59
Criteria for Political Parties	60
Criteria for Constituency Associations	60
Election Delivery Costs	61
Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform	63
Conclusion Rethinking Readiness in a Changing Landscape: What It Means to Always Be Ready	65
Post-Election Insights	66
Integrity in Elections Ontario	66
Political Entities	68
Elector Satisfaction	69
What's Next	70
Appendix 1. Summary of External Stakeholder Surveys	71
Summary of Public Opinion Polling	71
Results from Elector Satisfaction Survey	71
Results from the Political Entities Survey	74
Appendix 2. Accessibility	76
Communications, Information, and Digital Tools	76
Services, Tools, and Technology at the Polls	77
Specialized Voting Services	77



Employment of Persons with Disabilities	79
Elector Feedback	79
Overall Satisfaction	79
Awareness	80
Overall Findings	81

Message from the CEO

In 2024, two billion electors cast their ballots around the world in what was dubbed the “year of elections,” and, in February 2025, the province of Ontario was thrust into its own early election, prompting 11.1 million eligible electors to head to the polls. By all accounts, it was considered a success: electors, political entities, the media, and Elections Ontario staff, both in the field and at headquarters, worked together to deliver a trusted result, only to be reaffirmed by the outcomes of two recounts in Mississauga—Erin Mills (ED 062) and Mushkegowuk—James Bay (ED 124). Long days, long nights, and an unwavering commitment to make voting easy were evident at every step, due in large part to the extraordinary dedication of our team.

Ontario’s 2025 general election was conducted in a fair and free manner, with no instances of foreign interference. At the same time, this election underscored how much the landscape of election administration has changed since I became Ontario’s Chief Electoral Officer in 2008. Public trust in democratic institutions is being tested in new ways, made more complicated by the rapid spread of mis- and disinformation—one of the most pressing threats electoral management bodies around the world are facing. This points to the need for new tools and faster response mechanisms to deal with these challenges, especially as the expectations of electoral management bodies continue to grow; we are expected to be more transparent, more resilient, and more responsive than ever before.

The early call of Ontario’s 2025 general election is one example of how the ground is shifting. Early elections carry significant operational and legislative implications and reinforce a clear imperative: our systems, people, and processes must be ready to deliver an election at any time, under any condition. What was once rare is becoming more common. We are

seeing more early elections in jurisdictions that typically follow a fixed-date model, including Canada’s most recent federal election and provincial elections in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Internationally, countries such as Germany, France, Bulgaria, Sri Lanka, and South Korea have all recently called early elections as well.

This post-event report tells the story of Ontario’s 2025 general election: how it was planned, delivered, and experienced by voters, workers, and stakeholders. It puts forward a set of legislative recommendations that reflects this new reality of administering elections. These proposed recommendations mark a strategic shift, grounded in the long-standing democratic covenants that guide our work: secrecy of the ballot, transparency, one vote per voter, a fair and level playing field, and integrity. The recommendations are designed to give Elections Ontario the flexibility needed to always be ready, no matter what lies ahead.

Sincerely,



Greg Essensa
Chief Electoral Officer



Rethinking Readiness

Throughout the 2025 general election, over 5 million Ontarians cast their ballots at 7,437 voting locations, supported by more than 55,000 election workers.



Delivering an election at this scale is always complex, particularly in a province as vast, diverse, and mobile as Ontario.

But in 2025, the path to election day was shorter and the demands greater.

Called more than a year ahead of schedule and in the middle of winter, this election was delivered under timelines that challenged every part of the Elections Ontario organization. In a matter of days, 3,000 key staff had completed virtual onboarding, and in the final weeks before election day, over 10.6 million voter information cards had been printed and delivered across the province. Headquarters staffing had increased by 150 per cent just before the writs were issued to meet the demands of early election readiness.

While media speculation pointed to an early election call, core tasks, such as securing voting locations, finalizing leases, onboarding field staff, and mailing voter information cards, could not begin until the writs were officially issued and the date of the election was known. This constraint placed significant pressure on teams across the organization, from headquarters to the front lines.

The early election also impacted the voter experience. By law, Returning Officers were required to offer in-person special ballot voting the day after the writs had been issued, often before securing their local election office and as staff were still being trained. High turnover and recruitment gaps among some Returning Officers further affected our ability to deliver consistent service at the local level. There was also no opportunity to run the annual Register to Vote campaign, which is a key tool for maintaining an accurate voters list. The vote by mail program faced similar pressures; the legislated deadline to request a vote by mail kit left many electors without enough time to receive, complete, and return their ballots.

Our ability to adapt in 2025 came down to the dedication of staff and years of election knowledge. But relying on that level of extraordinary effort is not a sustainable model for election delivery, especially as democratic institutions worldwide are put under greater scrutiny.



10.6 million
voter information cards
delivered across Ontario



5 million
Ontarians cast their ballot
during the election



7,437
advance and election day
voting locations



3,000
key staff completed
virtual onboarding



55,000
election workers
on election day



150%
increase in staffing
at headquarters

Looking Forward

The current legislative framework under which we operate was built for predictable fixed-date elections. The 2025 general election made it clear that it's time for Ontario's electoral system to evolve. Without the flexibility to respond to non-fixed date elections and with the new demands of administering an election for a province of our size, essential tasks such as staffing local election offices, printing ballots, and securing voting locations are challenging.

This is the story of the 2025 Ontario provincial general election. It is a story shaped by urgency, uncertainty, and a relentless drive to be ready. What follows is a detailed account of how the election was delivered, including what worked, where pressure points emerged, and how we are preparing for the future. It draws on the perspectives, first-hand accounts, and evaluations of those who made it happen. While the recommendations in this report do not address every possible legislative change, they lay the important groundwork for strengthening the integrity and adaptability of Ontario's provincial elections.





Preparing the Field: The Months, Weeks, and Days Leading up to the Election

Elections Ontario typically follows a four-year planning cycle, as outlined in Section 9(2) of the *Election Act*. Planning for the 44th general election began in fall 2022, informed by feedback from field staff, political entities, the public, and internal teams. Using these insights, the Chief Electoral Officer introduced a strategic framework—known as the “election footprint”—to guide preparations for the next provincial election.

The June 2026 election footprint identified four core priorities: simplify procedures to reduce complexity, standardize systems to support consistent information sharing, strengthen field operations by building capacity at headquarters, and improve stakeholder understanding of the electoral process. Seventeen key projects were selected to advance these goals.

Before the 2025 general election was underway, several initiatives were already in progress.

These included redesigning the voter information card to improve clarity, implementing a new ticketing system to streamline support coordination, transitioning poll technology in-house, and piloting a new support model for Returning Officers known as the Field Leadership Support Network (FLSN). Forming a key part of our broader effort to modernize election delivery, each project was scheduled for completion in time for the 2026 fixed-date election.



Resetting the Election Footprint amid Early Election Signals

In the winter of 2023, the global geopolitical landscape began to shift.

Escalating regional conflicts, mounting pressure on international institutions, and ongoing economic uncertainty was creating instability in electoral systems across Western democracies. In response, several governments around the world called or considered early elections. At the same time, media in Ontario began to speculate that a provincial election could also be called ahead of schedule.

By June 2024, as the likelihood of an early election grew, Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer directed Elections Ontario staff to prepare for the possibility of an April 1, 2025, election, more than a year ahead of the scheduled June 2026 fixed-date. A planning cycle that normally unfolds over four years was suddenly compressed into months.

The shift was immediate, and its impact was felt across the organization.

As staff at headquarters adjusted election planning to meet new deadlines, the executive team made a series of strategic decisions over the summer that would later prove to be critical to our readiness:

1. We would use the same number of voting locations as in the 2022 general election and maintain the existing ratio of polls with technology—using vote tabulators and electronic poll (ePoll) books—to polls without technology. This also meant that polling divisions would stay the same.
2. Local election offices were required to open by April 1, 2025, and be fully operational by April 15 to support the pre-writ Register to Vote campaign. To meet this timeline, election materials would need to start being prepared for shipment to Returning Officers in January 2025.
3. Lastly, several major projects originally scheduled for completion by June 2026 were put on hold, including a large-scale IT and finance system upgrade and implementation of a new ticketing platform. This allowed us to focus on the immediate task of ensuring we could launch an early election.



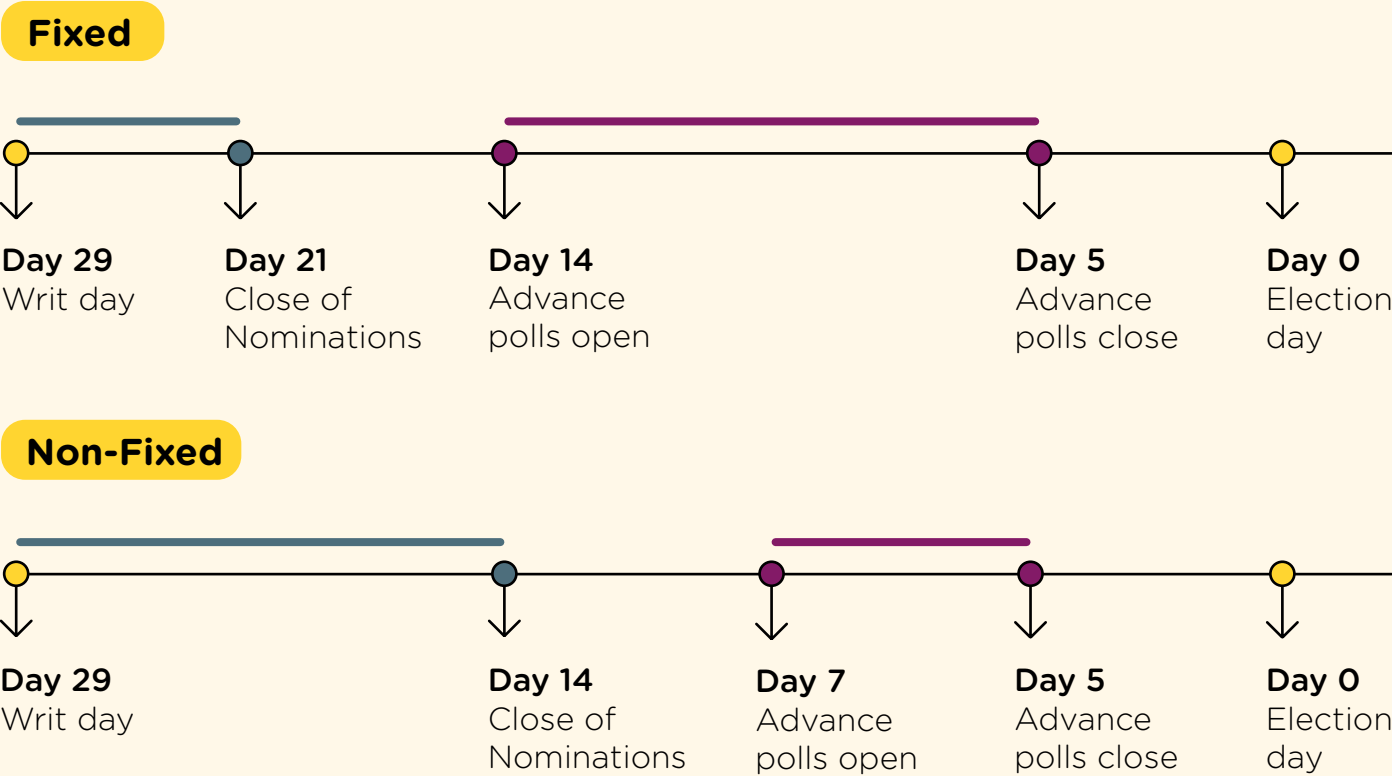
Fixed vs. Non-Fixed Date Elections:

What's the Difference?

As per the *Election Act*, Section 9(2), general elections in Ontario are held every four years on the first Thursday of June. This fixed-date system offers stakeholders the predictability they need to plan election-related activities in advance.

However, under the *Election Act*, Section 9(1), an election can be called earlier if the government loses the confidence of the Legislature or it requests dissolution. These are known as non-fixed date elections.

Election activities must follow a clear sequence as outlined in the *Election Act*. Organized around a countdown to Day 0 (election day), the timelines for key election milestones vary depending on whether the election is fixed-date or non-fixed date. For fixed-date elections, advance polls last for 10 days (from Day 14 to Day 5), with nominations taking place from Day 29 to Day 21. In non-fixed date elections, advance polls are held for three days (from Day 7 to Day 5), and nominations run from Day 29 to Day 14.



The new election plan was introduced to Returning Officers during the annual regional road tour, which began in Thunder Bay on September 4, 2024. At each stop, the Chief Electoral Officer outlined key changes to field operations, notably that assignments typically completed closer to the writ period would begin within weeks.

“Looking back, I believe resetting the election footprint starting in summer 2024 was the most consequential decision I made during the election cycle. The head start gave us the margin we needed to absorb the shocks that followed.”

— Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario

Recruiting and Onboarding Returning Officers and Election Clerks

To staff key roles early, applications for Returning Officers opened in August 2024. By the end of the month, we had received 3,579 applications for 24 vacancies. Sixty-four candidates were interviewed by Elections Ontario leadership throughout the month. As the hiring process progressed, however, we encountered some challenges. Some Returning Officers who also

hold positions with Elections Canada withdrew their applications amid speculation that a federal election was also approaching, while others planned to travel out of province over the winter. As writ day approached, seven positions remained unfilled and required last-minute appointments.

Recruitment for Election Clerks, another key role, began in early October. While all positions were technically filled before the writs were issued, staffing levels on the ground were more complicated. Many first-time Election Clerks were uncertain about when they would be called to work, and several experienced Election Clerks were unavailable due to seasonal travel. As a result, turnover was high, and we had to continue recruiting and training for the role well into the pre-writ period.

Despite the pressures, field leaders were brought up to speed quickly. A five-day onboarding program from October 7 to 11 introduced 24 Returning Officers to their roles. On November 25, three concurrent sessions were held for six additional Returning Officers and 74 Election Clerks. In January 2025, seven more Returning Officers were appointed and received one-on-one coaching from the Field Operations Management team to ensure they were ready to step into their responsibilities.



Finding Voting Locations and Returning Offices

Within weeks of their October 2024 appointments, Returning Officers began their first major field assignment: identifying, inspecting, and selecting voting locations. They recruited and organized inspection teams to map proposed sites, identify accessibility remediations, and enter data into the Election Management System. A total of 6,885 election day voting locations were needed to match the 2022 election footprint, which the Chief Electoral Officer had set as the baseline for 2025.

By the end of the first assignment, Returning Officers had identified all the required voting locations; however, these sites could not be secured until the date of election day was known. The next task, scheduled to begin mid-January 2025, was to secure local election offices for a spring lease date.



Case Study:

Stress-Testing Election Day Operations

On January 15, 2025, we conducted a province-wide simulation to test our operational readiness. Held at three locations across the province, the full-scale exercise replicated every major step of election day—from opening voting locations, to processing voters, to counting ballots.

To perform the simulation, 14 headquarters staff served as poll officials, and another 269 acted as electors who cast multiple ballots to simulate 888 scenarios. The team designed scenarios to reflect real-world conditions, including challenges with identity verification, accessibility, checking voter registration, and line management. We stress-tested technology systems by simulating modem failures and tabulator outages, and we triggered escalation protocols to assess how quickly information moved through the system. Observers from Cyber Security Ontario were also on-site to identify any potential system vulnerabilities, and other key stakeholders attended in person to gain insights into election day operations and the scope of logistical coordination required.

Exercises such as this are an essential part of election preparation. They offer a controlled setting to test contingency plans, uncover pressure points, and confirm that staff, systems, and procedures are ready to respond when the unexpected happens.



Turning Point: A Critical Week in the Lead-Up to the Election

By the end of January 2025, headquarters was on track to meet the early election readiness schedule. Most Returning Officer and Election Clerk positions had been filled, and a full-scale simulation of the election process had been completed. Field staff and headquarters teams had made steady progress. But the political environment remained uncertain. Media reports pointed to the possibility of a winter election, which would break with the long-standing convention of avoiding winter campaigns due to their logistical risks. Inside Elections Ontario, preparations accelerated as teams braced for what might come next.

Early into the week of January 20, we received unofficial confirmation that an election call was imminent. On Thursday, January 23, the general election Command Centre was activated at headquarters and preparations were accelerated. By Friday, public remarks from an elected official confirmed what many had anticipated: Ontario's next general election would take place on February 27. With writ day set for January 29, our teams had just five days to launch Ontario's next general election.

Delivering Key Staff Training under Difficult Circumstances

Trainers were onboarded on January 21, 2025, to assist the headquarters team with regional training delivery. Although Elections Ontario had scheduled four weeks of "train-the-trainer" sessions, a decision was made to have field staff ready by January 26. In response to the compressed timeline, the team transitioned to an entirely virtual training model.

In the lead-up to writ day, 1,358 of the 1,770 targeted field staff members (77 per cent) successfully completed live online training.

“Reworking training sessions that were originally designed for in-person delivery into virtual formats with just three days’ notice was incredibly stressful. We had to revise materials, coordinate technology, and keep up with the election’s pace, all while supporting thousands of learners. It was a significant challenge, but the teams’ knowledge from 2022 made it possible.”

— Team Member, Business Processes and Training

Getting Support Networks Up and Running in a Hurry

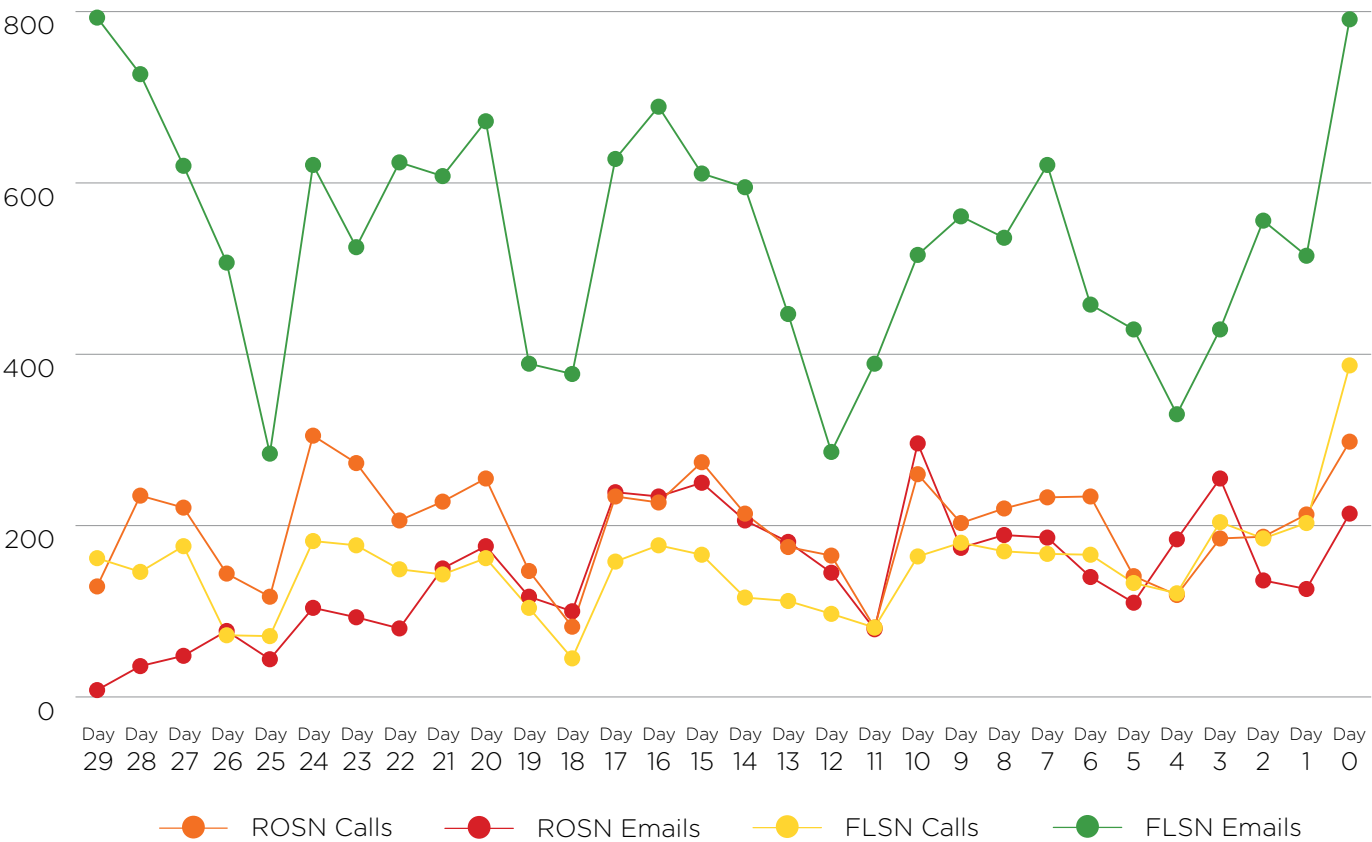
While field staff were getting trained, our support networks were quickly activated. Call centre equipment was installed within hours, and 120 support network staff were immediately onboarded.

One area that proved especially valuable in these early days was the contribution of Geospatial Service Analysts, who initially assisted Returning Officers with finding voting locations. Equally

important was the new Field Leadership Support Network (FLSN), consisting of full-time Elections Ontario headquarters staff pulled from various operational and program areas.

In the first few days, 484 calls and 2,134 emails received by FLSN were triaged. Initial inquiries focused on troubleshooting field IT and setting up local election offices. Soon after, additional parts of the Returning Office Support Network (ROSN) came online to provide targeted support for specialized roles such as Special Ballot Revision Officers (SBROs) and Finance Officers.

Total number of calls and emails received by FLSN and ROSN per day



Total number of calls and emails recieved by FLSN and ROSN per day of the 2025 general election calendar.

Case Study:

The Field Leadership Support Network (FLSN)

The FLSN, launched just in time for the 2025 general election, changed how Elections Ontario assisted Returning Officers and Election Clerks in the field.

The FLSN provided direct, real-time support through 16 experienced FLSN Leads based at Elections Ontario headquarters. Each FLSN Lead was responsible for a region that included between eight and 11 Returning Officers. They served as the single point of contact for their assigned Returning Officers and Election Clerks, providing dedicated support throughout the election period.

This new model marked a significant change in how we work with field leaders to resolve issues. Satisfaction among Returning Officers with Elections Ontario support increased to 90 per cent, a 25-point increase from the 2022 model.

These outcomes showcase the dedication and expertise of the FLSN Leads, who worked to build trust, reduce friction, and ensure that field leaders received the support they needed. Looking ahead, ensuring that field leaders are well-supported will remain vital to our readiness and resilience planning as elections grow more complex.

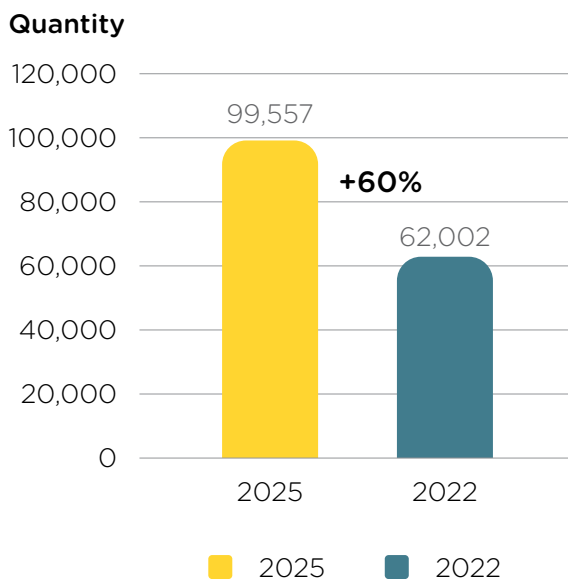
Open seven days a week, ROSN provided support through a tiered phone and email system. The team scaled rapidly in response to the early election call, onboarding 48 agents within days. In total, ROSN responded to 6,858 calls and 5,147 emails during the election period.



The Technical Support Call Centre (TSCC) was managed fully in-house for the first time. Throughout the election period, TSCC agents answered 7,196 calls, helping Poll Technicians troubleshoot issues, supporting on-site training for polls with technology, and guiding the set-up and synchronization of ePoll books and other equipment to ensure everything was ready for election day.

While ROSN and TSCC provided direct support to field staff, a parallel effort was in progress to ensure voters could access timely information and assistance. The Public Contact Centre (PCC) was fully operational by January 28 and stayed open throughout the election period.

Total calls received by PCC



Total number of calls received by the PCC during the 2025 and 2022 general elections.

The PCC was staffed by a vendor, with 170 agents who were available to respond to inquiries from electors in both English and French. Within the first few days of the writ period, agents received 4,759 phone calls. In total, the PCC handled 99,557 calls over the course of the election—an increase of 60 per cent from 2022. The surge in PCC call volume was driven by several factors, including severe winter storms, delays in setting up phone lines in local election offices, and questions about vote by mail deadlines and voter registration.

Our internal call centre (“Level Two” support), staffed by 15 Escalation Support Representatives, handled complex public inquiries escalated from the PCC. Compared to 2022, volumes for this internal team grew significantly: public inquiry calls rose by 214.3 per cent (from 3,244 calls to 10,200), and emails increased by 92 per cent (from 7,591 emails to 14,582). The combined efforts of the PCC and the “Level Two” support teams enabled Elections Ontario to manage unprecedented call volumes and ensure electors received timely and accurate support.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform

As writ day approached, most Returning Officers were in place, voting locations confirmed, support networks activated, and many local election offices ready to open. Yet, the lead-up to the election exposed limitations in Ontario’s legislative framework. Rigid timelines, delayed appointments, and constrained authorities created avoidable risks—especially in the early days of mobilization.

These challenges highlighted the need for targeted legislative reforms to support true election readiness. The following recommendations outline places where greater flexibility is essential for Elections Ontario to respond effectively under any electoral scenario.

1 The Returning Officer Appointment Process Lacks the Flexibility Needed to Always Be Ready

The current Order in Council (OIC) process requires a 10-year term and Cabinet approval, delaying hiring, limiting agility, and restricting Elections Ontario’s ability to respond to shifting operational demands. These constraints are particularly acute during non-fixed date elections when rapid deployment is essential.

Ontario is the only electoral management body in Canada where Returning Officers are not appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer. In other jurisdictions, Chief Electoral Officers directly make these appointments. Élections Québec, for example, uses a five-year term that is renewable with a positive evaluation. Elections British Columbia hires Returning Officers on 18-month contracts before a general election, with appointments ending six months after election day.

A modernized appointment framework would allow Elections Ontario to recruit, train, and retain qualified local leaders based on operational need. Removing the OIC requirement would enhance flexibility, improve regional readiness, and ensure consistent service delivery across all 124 electoral districts.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Remove the Order in Council (OIC) process for Returning Officer appointments.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* to remove the OIC requirement and granting authority to the Chief Electoral Officer to appoint Returning Officers directly. This change would improve flexibility in recruiting and retaining qualified, trusted local leaders who can be deployed when an election is called.

2 Expand the Election Calendar to Reflect the Realities of Modern Election Delivery

The legislated minimum writ period of 29 days does not allow enough time to meet critical milestones—especially in a non-fixed date election. Completing essential activities such as hiring and training staff, finalizing voting locations, and setting up local election offices within this timeframe places significant pressure on both field and central operations.

To ensure sufficient runway under any circumstance, the writ period should be extended to a minimum of 36 days, with flexibility to reach up to 42 days if warranted, while maintaining 28 days of continuous voting. A longer writ period would support more deliberate planning, reduce operational risk, and improve the overall voter experience.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Extend the writ period to a minimum of 36 days and a maximum of 42 days.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* to set a flexible writ period of 36 to 42 days, while maintaining the current 28-day voting period. This would give Returning Officers enough time to secure voting locations, recruit and train staff, and support electors.



3 Establish Predictable Redistribution to Create a Predictable Elector Experience

Clear, consistent electoral boundaries create a reliable voter experience. When an elector knows their electoral district, they can more easily find their voting location and identify their Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). Aligning provincial boundaries with federal ones where feasible would provide both electors and political entities with greater consistency and earlier planning certainty.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Schedule the redistribution of Ontario's electoral district boundaries.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that *Representation Act* be amended to provide a regularly scheduled process for reviewing electoral districts and boundaries.



Issuing the Writs of Election: Ontario's 44th Provincial General Election Officially Begins

On the morning of Wednesday, January 29, 2025, the Lieutenant Governor met with the Chief Electoral Officer to sign the writs.



A total of 124 writs—one for each electoral district—were signed and sealed with the Great Seal of Ontario. This act marked the official start of the 29-day election period. Each writ was then couriered to its respective Returning Officer, who would hold it for the duration of the election. When the vote concluded and a candidate was declared elected, the Returning Officer would record the winner’s name and return the completed writ to the Chief Electoral Officer, officially closing the election process for that electoral district.

With the formalities completed, our focus shifted to key operational milestones: opening local election offices throughout the province, initiating special ballot voting, and finalizing candidate nominations. The stakes were high. Any delay in these steps could cause ripple effects on important parts of the election process, such as the distribution of voter information cards, providing final voting location lists to political entities, and assigning electors to their voting locations.

Opening Local Election Offices

In a typical fixed-date election, Returning Officers have months to secure and prepare their local election offices—though even with that lead time, finding a suitable location can be challenging. In 2025, they had six days.

Forty-four electoral districts—about 35.5 per cent—were able to reuse their 2022 local election offices, helping to ease some of the pressure. In a few cases, leases had been secured within the first five days, which allowed for a smoother set-up, despite ongoing furniture deliveries and IT installation. Elsewhere, Returning Officers were still finalizing agreements or making temporary office arrangements late into January. In some cases,



property owners raised rents at the last minute, taking advantage of our urgent need to secure office space before the election.

By writ day, 112 local election offices were ready to open to staff and voters. The remaining 12 operated out of temporary “pop-up” spaces in community centres, hotel meeting rooms, or mobile units. In a non-fixed date context, where timelines can shift with little notice, getting field infrastructure ready on time proved especially difficult.

In addition to securing a local election office, some Returning Officers were also responsible for finding furniture and onboarding new staff. These tasks were most challenging in rural and remote areas where fewer suppliers and service providers are available.

As local election offices opened, at headquarters we coordinated with vendors to accelerate delivery schedules for key items such as furniture, computers, and training supplies.

Throughout the election, more than four million items were shipped to 124 election offices across the province, totalling more than 3,300 skids. While these materials are typically shipped in a single bulk delivery, this election required us to stagger shipments.

It wasn't until February 8 that all Returning Officers were fully settled into their permanent local election offices. To open on time, some had to make difficult trade-offs and select locations that were less than ideal. This had a noticeable impact on the voter experience. While 95 per cent of voters reported a positive experience overall, only 74 per cent strongly agreed that their local election office was easy to find, and only 73 per cent strongly agreed that the signage clearly identified it as a voting location. These results demonstrate that last-minute office set-ups impact the voter experience.



Case Study:

Pop-Up Office in Scarborough—Rouge Park (ED 097)

As Returning Officers worked to get their local election offices operational by January 25, the Returning Officer for Scarborough—Rouge Park (ED 097) was out of the country. The permanent location used in the 2022 general election was no longer available, and a legal review required by a new landlord delayed the lease by 11 days.

With just four days' notice, the Election Clerk stepped in to lead the lease process. On January 29—writ day—a temporary office was secured at Grace Presbyterian Church and was ready to serve electors without delay.

At the same time, a 700-kilogram shipment of election supplies was already en route to the still-unconfirmed permanent site. The logistics team acted quickly to reroute the delivery and loop the Election Clerk into all further communications.

Keys to the permanent local election office were finally handed over on February 7, nine days after the writs were issued. The team moved in that same day, transferring operations from the pop-up site without any disruption to service.

This case underscores a key limitation in the current system: timelines under the *Election Act* do not reflect the real-world complexities of setting up local election offices on short notice, which could be addressed by a more flexible writ period.

Special Ballot Voting Begins

Under Section 45.2(2) of the *Election Act*, special ballot voting—including in-person voting at local election offices—must begin on Day 28 of the election calendar. This requirement assumes that local election offices will be fully operational by that date. During the 2025 general election, the early start of the writ period made it difficult to meet that standard. On Day 28, several local election offices were still being secured, set up, or staffed, leaving Returning Officers and Special Ballot Revision Officers (SBROs) to facilitate in-person voting with incomplete infrastructure.

Despite the challenging conditions, demand for special ballot voting increased significantly. In 2025, a total of the 401,043 special ballots were submitted at local election offices—an increase of 23.6 per cent compared to 2022. On Day 28 alone, 445 electors voted in person.

What is voting by special ballot?

Special ballot voting provides options for electors who cannot vote during the advance voting period or on election day. It allows electors to vote in person at their local election office, by mail, or through home and hospital visit programs.

Returning Officers facilitate these opportunities for electors in their electoral districts. Our special ballot team provides information about voting by special ballot to post-secondary students, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, Ontarians living abroad, unhoused electors, and electors in correctional facilities.

Issuing Vote by Mail Kits

Electors could apply to vote by mail between Day 29 and Day 6 of the election calendar. Each applicant received a voting kit that included a write-in ballot, a secrecy envelope, an elector confirmation card with detailed instructions for completing and returning their ballot, and a pre-addressed return envelope.

Within the first 24 hours, 7,410 applications were submitted. On Day 29 alone, more than 700 voting kits were mailed to electors listed on the Ontario Register of Absentee Voters, which includes Ontarians who are eligible electors living abroad and intend to return within two years.

Candidates and Nominations

The challenges we encountered during early voting were compounded by delays in finalizing the list of candidates. Under the non-fixed election calendar, the deadline to nominate candidates is extended to Day 14, well after special ballot voting has already begun.

Under the *Election Act*, electors must write the candidate's first and last name (or initials and last name) and include the party name if another candidate shares the same name. Ballots that list only the party name or party leader are rejected.

Overlapping voting and nomination timelines meant some electors cast special ballots before their preferred candidate was officially nominated, raising the risk of their ballot being rejected because it was not completed correctly.

Under the non-fixed date election calendar, the deadline to submit nominations was extended to Day 14, as per the *Election Act*, to give candidates more time to prepare their nomination packages.

Despite the extended nomination window, a significant share of candidates registered at the last possible moment. In 2025, 146 nominations were filed in the final 48 hours, up from 109 during the same period in 2022.

This late surge meant nearly one-fifth of all candidates entered the race just before the deadline, leaving field staff little time to verify submissions, notify candidates of errors, and finalize corrections ahead of ballot printing.

Once nominations closed, we had just three days to finalize candidate lists, print and quality-check 13.2 million ballots, and distribute materials to 124 field offices. There was no margin for error. Despite the short timeline, 768 nomination packages, representing 20 registered political parties and 41 independent candidates, were successfully processed within 15 days. No nomination papers were vacated in the 2025 general election.

Although the 14-day extended nomination period is designed to support participation, 28 per cent of candidates still struggled to meet the deadline—particularly first-time candidates and those from smaller parties. Only two political parties ran a full slate of 124 candidates, and five political parties were mandatorily deregistered for failing to meet the two-candidate threshold. While 96 per cent of political entities were satisfied with nomination timelines, six per cent raised concerns about fairness.

“This election was very quick. It didn’t allow all the candidates to get on the ballot before people started voting at the [local election office]. In my riding, people were voting with one name on the ballot.”

— Submitted as part of Elections Ontario's 2025 post-election feedback survey

Standing Nominations: Easing the Bottleneck

Since 2018, Elections Ontario has used a “standing nominations” process that allows candidates to submit their nomination papers to headquarters for verification before the writs are issued. This gives candidates more time to focus on campaigning. Once the election period begins, candidates still have 15 days to file their nomination papers with the Returning Officer in their electoral district, as required under the *Election Act* in a non-fixed date election.

Ahead of the 2025 general election, only 218 nominations were processed centrally before the writs were issued—a sharp decrease from 589 in 2022. This drop was likely the result of the early election call, which shortened the window for candidates to prepare and submit their paperwork in advance.

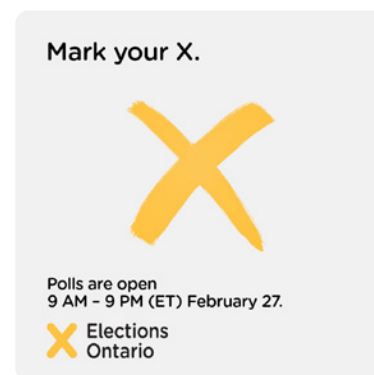
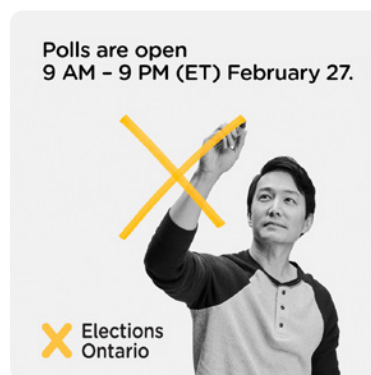
Total number of candidates nominated by each political party for the 2025 general election

Political party	# of candidates
PC Party of Ontario	124
Green Party of Ontario	124
Ontario New Democratic Party	123
Ontario Liberal Party	123
New Blue Party	108
Ontario Party	44
Independent Candidates (no party affiliation)	41
Libertarian Party	17
None of the Above Direct Democracy Party	13
Ontario Moderate Party	12
Communist Party	7
Ontario Centrist Party	5
Ontario Alliance	5
Freedom Party of Ontario	5
Populist Party of Ontario	4
Northern Ontario Party	3
Canadians' Choice Party	2
Stop the New Sex-Ed Agenda	2
Party for People with Special Needs	2
Electoral Reform Party	2
Progress Party Ontario	2
Total	768

Since official campaigning cannot start until a candidate is formally nominated, some candidates had little time to connect with voters. A total of 87 per cent of political entities said the early election hindered their ability to reach electors. Similarly, nine per cent of non-voters cited a lack of information about party platforms and campaign issues as a reason for not voting in the 2025 general election—up three per cent from 2022.

Building Awareness of the Election

The Register to Vote campaign and the Chief Electoral Officer's media tour are typically launched in the month leading up to an election to build public awareness. However, the early election call meant these activities could not proceed as planned. Advertising campaigns were also limited, as they could not begin until the writs were issued on January 29, further narrowing the window for outreach. Compounding this challenge, the election period coincided with heavy media coverage of Canada-U.S. trade disputes and federal political developments, creating significant competition for advertising space. Together, these factors likely contributed to voter confusion in the early days of the election period.



The Mark Your X campaign was delivered across a wide range of media channels, including television, radio, print, websites, social media, and digital out-of-home placements. To maximize reach and engagement, it leveraged major digital platforms, including YouTube, Google, Meta, Reddit, and Snapchat.

Messages were delivered in both English and French, with many digital ads also translated into 13 additional languages. Altogether, the campaign generated over 450 million impressions across digital platforms, demonstrating the reach and scale of Elections Ontario's communications strategy.

On writ day, Elections Ontario's website and web applications provided information on when, where, and how to vote. During the writ period, 6.2 million users visited the website and web applications, generating 37.6 million page views.



450 million
impressions across
digital platforms



6.2 million
visits to the website and
web applications



37.6 million
page views

**Vote at an advance poll
in the provincial election
from February 20 to 22.**



**X Elections
Ontario**

Get ready to mark your X.



**Learn where and
how you can vote.**

Election day is tomorrow.



**Learn where and
how you can vote.**

**A provincial election
has been called for
February 27.**

**X Elections
Ontario**

[Learn More](#)



Alongside paid advertising, the Ontario Voting Guide was mailed to over six million households across the province, which played a critical role in increasing voter awareness. Nearly half (46 per cent) of voters recalled receiving it, and 76 per cent said it encouraged them to vote. Among recipients, 58 per cent saved or shared the guide, and 44 per cent used it to register, confirm, or update their voter information. Still, the voter information card was the most effective tool in our communications toolkit. A total of 67 per cent of voters recalled receiving it, and 74 per cent said it motivated them to vote.

Our advertising campaign boosted awareness and helped voters find the information they needed to participate in the election. By the end of the election period, 81 per cent of Ontarians reported that they were aware of details about when, where, and how to vote, as well as what identification was required.

Finalizing Voting Locations

Efforts had been made to secure voting locations early, but most sites were selected with a spring 2025 general election in mind. When the election was called in late January, many of those arrangements no longer held. In one case, in Haldimand—Norfolk (ED 034), a hockey arena that had previously been available during spring elections could not be used because the hockey season was already underway and events had been scheduled.

By writ day, Returning Officers needed to reassess whether the voting locations they identified in fall 2024 were still viable for the new election schedule. By the start of the second week, fewer than 50 per cent of private lease agreements had been finalized, well below our operational benchmark. This created a challenge, as voter information cards cannot be distributed before voting locations are confirmed.

To quicken the pace, headquarters provided direct support to Returning Officers still working to finalize leases. Staff were deployed to assist in the field where needed, and all employees were encouraged to volunteer through the Command Centre to help verify and secure outstanding locations. These efforts helped bring the total number of advance voting locations to 552 and election day voting locations to 6,885, for a total of 7,437 voting locations during the 2025 election.

Each voting location was assessed for technical capability and remediations to ensure it met Elections Ontario's Site Accessibility Standards. A total of 4,171 advance voting and election day locations were designated as technology-enabled and required reliable internet connectivity and sufficient electrical capacity to support vote tabulators and ePoll books. These technical demands, combined with accessibility compliance requirements and the urgency of finalizing leases, placed significant pressure on Returning Officers in the early days of the writ period.

Election day voting locations by type during the 2022 and 2025 general elections

	2022	2025	Change from 2022
Schools	1,849	1,905	3% increase
Places of worship Churches, Mosques, Temples, Synagogues	685	664	3.31% decrease
Recreational Centres Community centres, libraries, legions, arenas, etc.	1,637	1,584	3.2% decrease
Apartments/Condos 400-series polls, other institutions	1,067	1,151	7.9% increase
Other buildings used as VLs Multi-residential buildings, post-secondary institutions	234	165	29.49% decrease
Number of Nursing/Retirement homes used as VLs 700-series polls; institutional properties - LTC, hospitals, etc.	1,413	1,416	0.26% decrease
Total	6,885	6,885	

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform

During the early weeks of the writ period, the Chief Electoral Officer and senior leaders visited sites across Southwestern, Central, and Eastern Ontario to assess field readiness. These visits offered a first-hand view of the pressures faced by local teams. Returning Officers described this as one of the most challenging elections they had ever delivered, citing compressed timelines, winter weather risks, and significant logistical demands. Concerns about snowstorms and their impact on turnout and accessibility were especially pronounced.

Many of these perspectives are reflected in the accounts presented here. They highlight persistent challenges in several critical areas during the early part of the writ period and point to the need for targeted legislative reform.

1 Allow More Time between Writ Issuance and the Start of Special Ballot Voting in Non-Fixed Date Elections

Under the current *Election Act*, Returning Officers must offer in-person special ballot voting services in their local election offices the day after writs are issued. In 2025, this meant some electors voted before the full slate of candidates was confirmed and while offices were still being finalized, equipment installed, and staff hired.

Introducing a one-week buffer between writ day and the start of in-person special ballot voting in non-fixed date elections would give electors a more complete list of candidates. It would also give Returning Officers time to set up offices and deliver a stable, accessible voting experience—especially when timelines are unpredictable.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Start in-person special ballot voting on the second Thursday of the writ period in non-fixed date elections.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* to require in-person special ballot voting to begin on the second Thursday of the non-fixed date election period, which falls on the 21st day before election day.

2 Create Predictably on Election Day to Make Securing Voting Locations Easier

The *Election Act* specifies that election day must occur on the fifth Thursday after writ day. It also grants the Chief Electoral Officer authority to use schools as advance and election day voting locations, if available. However, when elections are held during the school year, access to school spaces can be challenging and may require added security measures or result in difficulties confirming sites. Amending the legislation to schedule election day when students are not in school would improve predictability and make it easier to secure voting locations early on.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Establish an election day that is not a school day.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* to change the election day to a time when schools are not in session (weekend or school holiday).

3 Adjust Standing Nomination Deadlines to Facilitate Seamless Special Ballot Voting

Standing nomination papers may be filed at any time up until the beginning of the nomination period, which starts when the Writ of Election is issued, while in-person special ballot voting begins the following day. As a result, electors casting early ballots often do so without access to the full slate of confirmed candidates, which may not be available until nominations close later in the writ period. This was evident during the 2025 general election, where the timeline did not always allow electors to choose from a complete list of candidates.

Moving the standing nomination deadline earlier for fixed-date elections would allow sufficient time for nomination papers to be verified and fully processed before the writ, ensuring that candidate lists provided in the field are as complete as possible at the start of early voting. This adjustment would give electors a clearer, fairer choice from the outset while also supporting Returning Officers in preparing materials and ensuring smoother operations.

Proposed Legislative Change:
Modify the deadline date for candidate standing nomination submissions by one week.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* to close standing nomination filings with the Chief Electoral Officer one week before writ issuance in fixed-date elections, which marks the start of the nomination period with Returning Officers.

4 Adjust Vote by Mail Application Deadlines to Ensure On-Time Delivery

Voting by mail requires two time-sensitive deliveries: kits must reach electors, and completed ballots must be returned by the deadline to be counted. Electors who apply on the first day of the application window currently receive a more reliable service than those who apply closer to the deadline, when they face a greater risk of late delivery and their ballots not being counted. International addresses and severe weather further complicate delivery timelines. In 2025, winter storms, postal delays, and short turnaround times amplified these issues.

Advancing the application deadline to four days earlier in the writ period would widen the delivery window for applications made at the deadline and provide a more predictable service for electors.

Proposed Legislative Change:
Modify the deadline date for vote by mail applications by four days.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* to modify the application deadline to vote by special ballot kit from the sixth day before election day to the 10th day before election day.

5 Strengthen and Streamline Candidate Nomination Requirements to Protect Process Integrity

While the nomination period in 2025 was delivered effectively, it highlighted opportunities to modernize the framework and reduce exposure to misuse. The current requirements do not reflect the realities of a modern electoral environment and place unnecessary burdens on candidates, Returning Officers, and political parties. Legislative updates are needed to simplify legitimate participation while introducing safeguards.



Proposed Legislative Changes:

Introduce candidate endorsement thresholds for political party registration.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that political parties be required to endorse candidates in at least 20 per cent (i.e. 25 of 124) of Ontario's electoral districts to either register or maintain their registered status. This would help ensure that registered parties demonstrate meaningful public engagement and organizational capacity.

Introduce identification and deposit requirements for candidate nominations.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends that individuals submitting a candidate nomination paper be required to:

- Present valid identification showing their name and address.
- Provide a financial deposit.

These requirements would help confirm the identity of individuals participating in the process.

Readying the Vote: Overcoming Delays and Winter Disruptions

After the writs were issued, candidates nominated, and local election offices operational, we moved to the next phase of election delivery: preparing electors to vote.



This phase was shaped by delays earlier in the election timeline. Because voter information cards could not be printed until all voting locations were confirmed, setbacks in finalizing sites pushed back the cards' production and delivery. External factors, such as winter storms, added to logistical challenges and made it difficult for vendors to keep pace with the mailout schedule. Telecommunication vendors also struggled to meet the demands of rapid deployment, with internet and phone set-ups for local election offices taking longer than expected in some areas.

Delivering an election in the heart of winter also required additional coordination and contingency planning. In the weeks leading up to election day, we met with Emergency Management Ontario daily to monitor storm systems and assess regional weather risks. Although no major storms impacted voters on election day, winter conditions stretched the resources of Returning Officers managing local logistics. During the week of February 12, a total of 28 local election offices had to close because of winter storms.

At headquarters, we accelerated other critical readiness activities. Voter registration efforts prioritized maintaining the accuracy of the Permanent Register of Electors for Ontario (PREO) and encouraging electors to update their information. Ballot printing and distribution were fast-tracked, and the recruitment and training of poll officials continued at full pace to ensure tens of thousands of workers were ready to serve electors ahead of advance and election day voting.

Together, these efforts marked the final phase of readiness and underscored the need for systems, vendors, and service providers that can operate with speed, flexibility, and resilience.

Finalizing the List of Electors

This was the first general election since Elections Ontario assumed full responsibility for maintaining a single, province-wide PREO in January 2024. In collaboration with municipal clerks and supported by new digital tools, we focused on improving data quality and enhancing accessibility across the system.

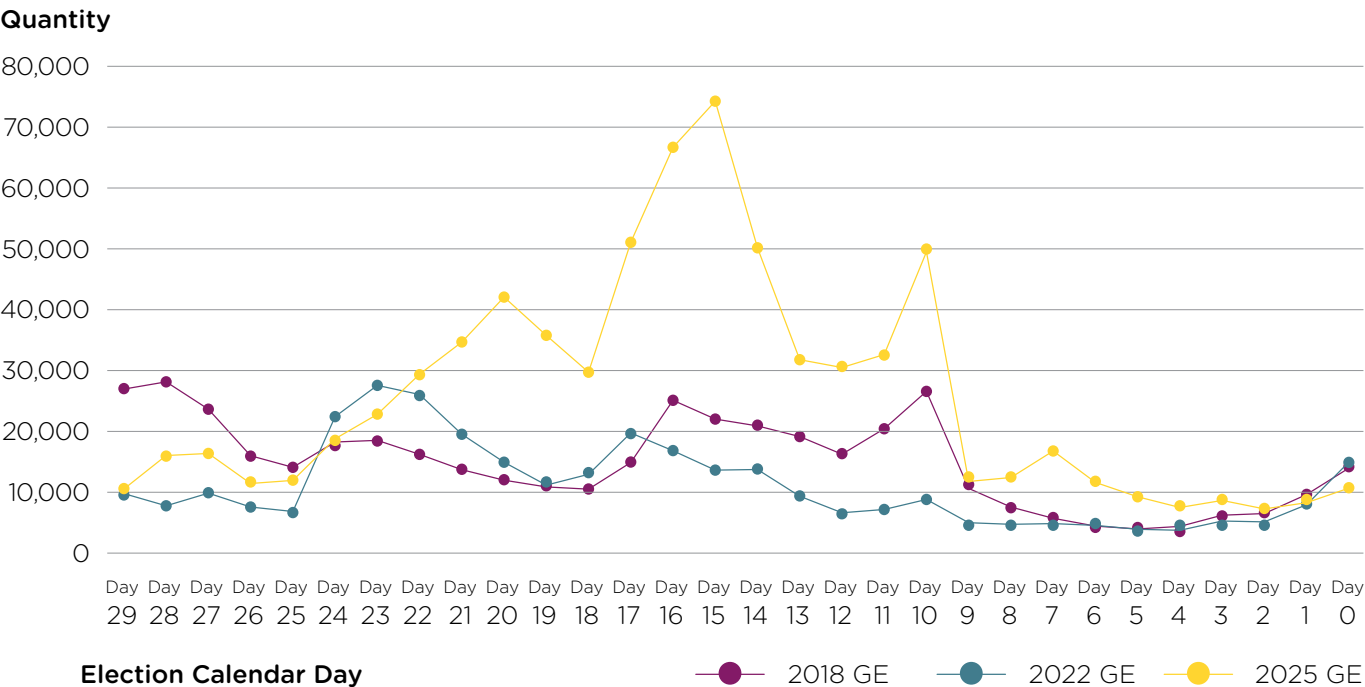
Elector data comes from various sources, including Elections Canada, Canada Revenue Agency, the Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Health, assessment rolls, property records, utility files, and Canada Post. These inputs must be reconciled and matched to unique elector profiles. Adding to the difficulty, Ontario's 444 municipalities use different addressing standards. As a result, up to 800,000 addresses in Ontario cannot be reliably geolocated.

By February 17, just ahead of advance voting, more than 600,000 registration and revision requests had been submitted through Elections Ontario's online portal, vRegistration (vReg). Nearly three-quarters were processed automatically. The remainder required manual review, reflecting the complexity of managing a dynamic, province-wide database. However, 91 per cent of cases were resolved within 24 hours, ensuring the PREO remained accurate and up to date as voting began.

As prescribed in the *Election Act*, political entities receive three scheduled releases of the PREO:

- On writ day, the Preliminary List of Electors is distributed to registered political parties with approved privacy policies.
- Two days before advance voting begins, the Advance Poll List of Electors shows who is eligible to vote early.
- Three days before election day, the Polling Day List of Electors indicates which electors have already voted in advance or by special ballot.

Number of additions, revisions, and deletions of registered electors made online



Total number of additions, revisions, and deletions of registered electors per day in the 2018, 2022, and 2025 election calendars.

Each updated list of registered electors enables political entities to reach more voters and track turnout. In 2025 post-election surveys, 78 per cent of political entities—including candidates and Chief Financial Officers—were satisfied with the list quality, matching 2022 levels.

As efforts to improve the PREO continued, data quality remained a persistent challenge. Inconsistent and duplicate addressing was a significant source of the problem. For example, in Greater Sudbury, the label “20 Nickel Street” refers to three separate properties in Levack, Coniston, and Copper Cliff. Without a postal code and with mail delivered by general delivery, this address lacks the necessary identifiers for automated processing and requires manual correction. Adding to the challenge, Sudbury (ED 103) is an enclave surrounded by Nickel Belt (ED 071). This ambiguity led some voters to the wrong electoral district or voting location.

Connecting with Local Communities

Ahead of the 2025 general election, Elections Ontario carried out a range of outreach activities to help more people learn about when, where, and how to vote—and to support those who may have faced barriers to voting.

In early 2025, we partnered with two Indigenous-led vendors to reduce voting barriers in First Nations communities. Outreach efforts were especially critical in remote regions where winter conditions, fly-in access, and limited infrastructure posed logistical challenges.

Working closely with community leaders, vendors provided multilingual election information in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibway), Anisininew (Oji-Cree), Kanien kéha (Mohawk), and nēhinawēwin (Swampy Cree). To support electors without traditional forms of

identification, a Confirmation of Residency form was developed for use by band administrators.

Despite these efforts, the short outreach period made it hard to achieve deep community engagement. In a fixed-date election cycle, we begin work up to 14 months before an election to build trust, register voters, secure voting locations, and recruit local field staff. This year, that work was compressed into 29 days. In some First Nations communities, travel was delayed or cancelled due to weather, pilot unavailability, or logistical issues, highlighting the need for better planning and stronger infrastructure to support fly-in coordination.

During the writ period, headquarters assigned 104 Public Engagement Liaisons (PELs) to conduct over 1,000 outreach events across the province, reaching about 50,000 Ontarians. As part of this effort, PELs also engaged with local accessibility organizations within their electoral districts to promote accessible voting options. With support from headquarters, we reached 603 accessibility organizations throughout the province, helping ensure more Ontarians were aware of the tools and supports available to make voting accessible.

On post-secondary campuses, a partnership with Toronto Metropolitan University reached over 16,000 students through events and outreach. CIVIX, a registered charity working to strengthen democracy through civic education, engaged

over 267,000 students from nearly 2,400 schools through its Student Vote initiative and promoted registration through the Ontario Register of Future Voters.

To assist voters without a fixed address, we partnered with 243 community service providers—up 62 per cent from 2022—to issue Certificates of Identity and Residence. Election information and voting materials were also shared with 118 correctional and youth justice facilities across the province.

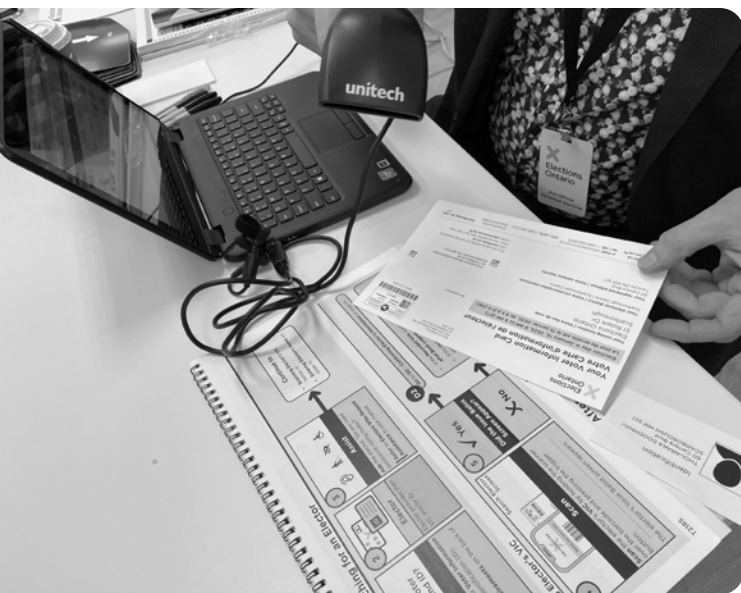
Distributing Voter Information Cards

Voter information cards are one of the most recognized and relied-upon tools in Ontario's election process. While not required under the *Election Act*, they provide essential information—where and when to vote and what ID to bring—and are accepted as proof of address at voting locations. For many Ontarians, receiving their voter information cards is the moment an election feels real.

For the 2025 general election, we printed and mailed 10,668,492 voter information cards to registered electors across the province. An additional 159,726 revised cards were issued after the initial mailout; these are sent when electors update their information and have not yet voted, or when voting locations change—a downstream impact of not finalizing voting locations early.

Delivering voter information cards ahead of advance voting is a complex, time-sensitive process that hinges on having confirmed voting locations, coordinated production, and reliable distribution. Most locations were finalized between February 11 and 12, which left a narrow window (February 13–16) for our teams to quality-check, print, and prepare cards for delivery. To ensure electors received them in time, cards were scheduled to arrive in mailboxes by February 19, one day before advance voting began.





Importantly, not receiving a voter information card was the most commonly reported barrier to voting, cited by three per cent of all voters. Of the more than 10 million cards mailed, a significant number were returned because addresses were incorrect or outdated.

The Personalized Voter Communications App

To help address voter information card delivery risks and modernize service, we also offered a digital alternative through our mobile Personalized Voter Communications (PVC) app, first piloted in 2022. The app provides a secure, scannable version of an elector's voter information card with personalized voting details and real-time updates. In the 10 days leading up to election day in 2025, there were 7,675 downloads, a 71 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2022. The spike suggests that there is a growing interest in mobile-accessible, last-minute voting information. For those using the app, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with 93 per cent of users stating that they would use the app again, and 83 per cent recommending it to others.

Together, these findings reaffirm the critical role voter information cards play in the voting experience as well as the need to modernize both physical and digital delivery systems to ensure every elector is informed and empowered to participate in Ontario elections.

Despite meeting all internal production deadlines, external factors caused inconsistent delivery of voter information cards in some areas of the province. The delay was largely attributed to a severe winter storm that halted a Canada Post vehicle carrying more than one million voter information cards during a critical stage of distribution.

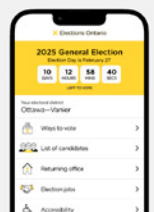
Post-election data provides more insights into how much the voter information card impacts the voter experience. Survey results show that 92 per cent of voters consider receiving their card during an election to be very important. In 2025, 67 per cent of electors recalled receiving a voter information card—a rate consistent with past elections. Of those who received one, 83 per cent brought it with them to vote, and 63 per cent kept it for future reference.

Total number of voter information cards returned to Elections Ontario for the 2022 and 2025 general elections

2022	2025
211,258	164,985

Download the Elections Ontario app!

Get personalized information about when, where and how to vote.



Elections Ontario

Case Study:

Redesigning the Voter Information Card

The voter information card is one of Elections Ontario's most visible tools for informing electors about where, when, and how to vote. In early 2023, a formal redesign project was launched to address elector concerns around accessibility, readability, and information layout.

The redesign process brought together a cross-functional working group from across Elections Ontario to address several persistent challenges:

- **Space constraints:** The previous format could list only six advance voting locations—insufficient for many electoral districts.
- **Accessibility issues:** Letter case structure for voting locations did not meet accessibility standards.
- **Confusing layout:** Electors found it difficult to locate key information quickly.
- **Formatting limitations:** System defaults displayed names and addresses in all capital letters, reducing readability.

To align the redesign with public expectations, Elections Ontario held two phases of focus groups in late 2023 and early 2024. Feedback shaped design concepts that were refined, with the final voter information cards completed and tested with Canada Post ahead of the 2025 general election.

Elections Ontario

Your Voter Information Card
Votre Carte d'information de l'électeur

Election day is February 27, 2025, 9 AM to 9 PM (ET)
Le jour du scrutin est le 27 février, 2025, de 9 h à 21 h (HE)

Your voting location / Votre lieu de vote
Manitouwadge High School
200 Manitou Road West
Manitouwadge

Your electoral district / Votre circonscription électorale
Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes
Leeds—Grenville—Îles de la Thousand et Rideau

Your registered address / Votre adresse inscrite
9 Warbler Rd
Manitouwadge ON
K0T 2C0

Return address:
PO BOX 190
JOSH BROOKS ON
K0B 3A0

0020000387

0007799

ELISE JEAN
26 PRINCE ANDREW PL
NORTH YORK ON M2C 2H4

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Poll / Bureau de vote
001

Getting Ballots Printed and Ready for Advance Voting

Ballot production is a time-sensitive and high-risk process.

Once nominations closed, our focus immediately shifted to preparing ballots—a process that had to be completed in three days. It was a fast-paced sprint that left no room for delays.

At headquarters, employees examined each ballot face closely, verifying candidate names and political affiliations within a two-hour period. Immediately following quality control, the files were released to four certified printers. Once ballots were at the printers, staff worked around the clock, travelling to sites to supervise proofing and oversee production in person. Elections Ontario maintained an on-site presence at each facility to inspect ballot sheets and flag minor defects for correction.

Through our certified vendors, ballots were printed, packed, and shipped to electoral districts across the province, with nearly all deliveries arriving on time. However, dozens of last-minute changes to polling divisions, voting locations, and elector assignments required repeated recalculations of print quantities. In one instance, 48 hours before advance voting began, a snowstorm in Ottawa caused a scheduled shipment of 735,000 ballots to be cancelled. Staff responded quickly, securing an alternative carrier to ensure ballots were delivered on time.

Producing audio ballots for all 124 electoral districts also had its challenges. Staff had to record, edit, and quality-check about 37 hours of narration for 768 candidate names, the party names, and all electoral district names in English and French. Despite these pressures, ballot production was completed on time, ensuring every advance voting location opened on schedule.

Recruiting Poll Officials

Once the writs were issued, a province-wide sprint was launched to recruit and train thousands of poll officials. Interest was unprecedented: more than 174,000 applications were received—over twice the number from 2022—and over more than 55,000 poll officials for advance voting and election day were ultimately hired.

Recruitment went smoothly in most electoral districts, although 16 ridings required targeted advertising to fill more than 585 positions. Challenges were greatest in northern and remote areas, especially within First Nations communities. Collaboration with Indigenous service providers focused on outreach played a key role in helping us meet our recruitment goals, successfully staffing 53 poll official positions. In total, 65 roles across northern and remote electoral districts required targeted recruitment support.



Total numbers of poll officials required and the total number of applications received to work during the 2022 and 2025 general elections

	2022	2025
Number of poll officials required	56,956	55,413
Number of applications to work as poll officials	49K+	174K+

Training Poll Officials

Mandatory in-person training sessions also faced disruptions due to winter storms. Severe winter weather over the Family Day long weekend affected training in 90 electoral districts in Southern and Eastern Ontario.

Despite these challenges, poll officials rated their training experience positively, with an average satisfaction score above eight out of 10. Satisfaction levels varied by the type of voting location. Officials assigned to polls with technology reported the highest satisfaction, supported by role-specific training and digital tools. In contrast, officials at polls without technology reported lower satisfaction.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform

The first two weeks of the election were a flurry of activity unlike anything long-time Elections Ontario staff had ever experienced. But as key milestones were completed, staff found their footing and began to settle into a familiar rhythm of activity. The election was fully underway, and the first real test of readiness would take place

when electors began casting their ballots outside of special ballot voting. However, the events in the first few weeks of the election brought into focus areas that require legislative reform.

1 Create a Single Address Authority That Will Enable the Most Accurate and Consistent List of Electors

Much of the success of an election depends on the quality of the voters list. Electors expect that if they have registered to vote and have lived at the same address for a consistent number of years, they should receive a voter information card and not need to register again. In some cases, it may even discourage participation in the election.

The lack of a single authoritative address source introduces inconsistencies across systems and increases the likelihood of errors in critical election milestones, such as issuing voter information cards. A standardized approach to collecting and managing addresses is required to bring the predictability and consistency that both electors and political entities expect.

Proposed Legislative Change: Establish an Address Authority for the province of Ontario.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends establishing a single Ontario Address Authority, housed in a designated body, empowered to set province-wide address standards, maintain an authoritative address database, and require all municipalities and public bodies to use it.

2 Create a Mandatory Civics Program in Secondary Schools to Educate the Next Generation of Voters

Elections Ontario conducts ongoing outreach to secondary and post-secondary students, a task that must continue. However, educating students about when, where, and how to vote, as well as why voting matters, should not be the sole responsibility of electoral management bodies. Preparing the next generation of voters is a shared duty, with secondary schools playing a vital role. A comprehensive civics program delivered from Grade 9 to Grade 12 can help establish voting habits early in a young person's life, increasing the likelihood of participation as adults.

Proposed Legislative Change: Create mandatory civics curriculum for secondary students.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends enabling the province's secondary school curriculum to include civics education every year from Grade 9 to Grade 12.

Casting a Ballot: Making Sure Every Elector's Vote Counts

With voter information cards in hand, ballots printed, and thousands of election workers trained, our focus shifted to providing an accessible and efficient voting experience.

X Elections
Ontario

Voting Screen
Écran
X Elections
Ontario

Field staff were prepared for a strong turnout. Widespread media coverage and a short but busy advance voting period kept the election at the forefront of many Ontarians' minds. Returning Officers also reported a growing demand for in-person special ballot voting, suggesting that many voters viewed it as an alternative to advance voting. In another sign of heightened engagement, vote by mail applications exceeded those of all general elections before 2022.

Election day is the heart of Ontario's elections. To ensure systems were fully prepared, headquarters and field teams carried out two province-wide, end-to-end testing exercises for results reporting. These exercises simulated the entire results process in real-time, involving election day staff, every electoral district, and key support teams. Meanwhile, the Chief Electoral Officer worked with legal counsel to assess legislative options if severe winter weather impacted voting.

On February 27, staff arrived at headquarters and local election offices before sunrise to ensure voting locations opened on time—delays at opening can trigger a cascade of issues, from extended voting hours to late results reporting. These early hours brought a sense of urgency and focus. As teams concentrated on resolving voting disruptions and supporting poll officials, the Public Contact Centre (PCC) managed 10,778 inquiries from electors across the province.

Special Ballot Voting Ramps Up

While advance and election day voting receive the most attention, we offer 28 days of continuous voting. Special ballot voting provides electors with greater flexibility in when, where, and how they vote. Options include voting in person at a local election office starting the day after the writs are issued, voting by

mail, or participating in home and hospital visit programs. These options are promoted to support a wide range of electors, including students, military personnel, unhoused electors, people who are incarcerated, and Ontarians temporarily residing outside of the province. All special ballots are counted on election night.

During the 2025 general election, 533,508 electors voted by special ballot—an increase of 15.9 per cent compared to 2022. More than 401,043 of these votes were cast in person at local election offices, reflecting a growing preference for voting options that are accessible and convenient.



533,508
electors voted by
special ballot



401,043
special ballots cast in
person at local election
offices

Voting by Mail

Special ballot voting also includes voting by mail. Electors could apply for a vote by mail kit between Day 29 and Day 6 of the election calendar. In 2025, Elections Ontario issued 116,034 kits. International applications saw the sharpest increase, rising from 1,792 in 2022 to 16,606 in 2025, likely reflecting winter travel patterns.

Of the total vote by mail kits issued, 66,750—approximately 58 per cent—were returned by the 6 PM deadline on election day. Winter storms, postal delays, and short turnaround times made it especially challenging for electors to return their ballots on time.



116,034
vote by mail kits issued

Home and Hospital Visits

In 2025, we continued to support electors unable to travel to a voting location through home and hospital voting services and also provided voting options for incarcerated individuals. Demand for these services increased in 2025, particularly for the home visit program, which supported 8,357 electors—up from 5,516 in 2022. The rise was likely influenced by winter conditions that made travel to voting locations more difficult.

Through the home visit program, election officials delivered and collected ballots directly from electors’ homes, gave assistance when needed, and ensured completed ballots were securely returned to the appropriate election office.



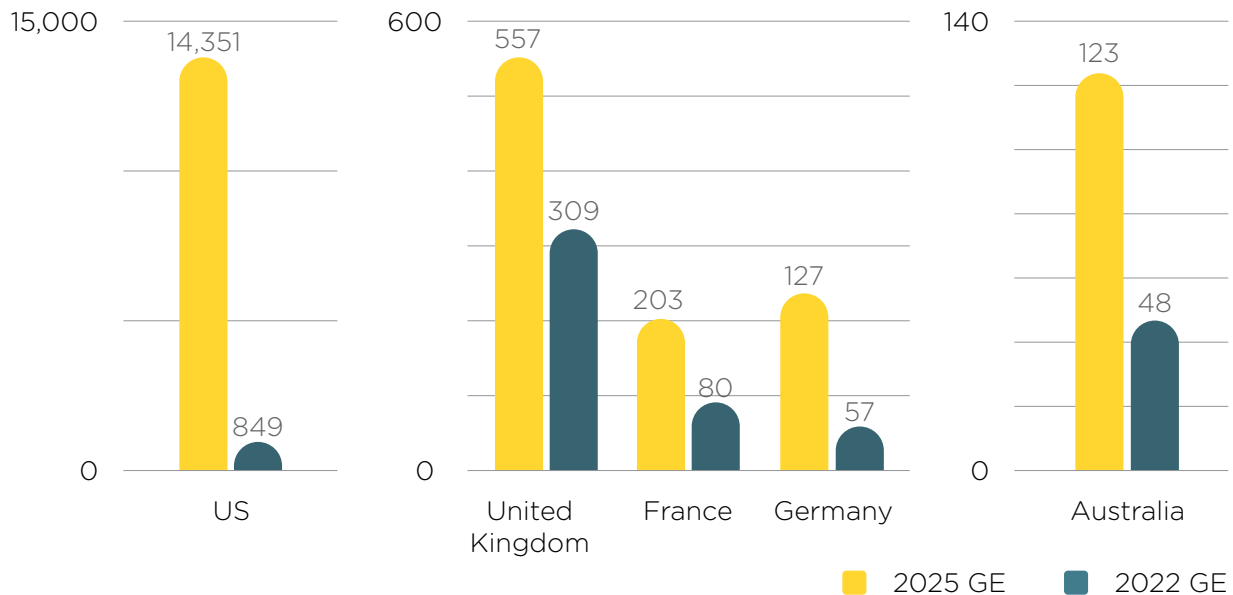
2022	2025
5,516	8,357
ballots cast through home visits	

Total number of special ballots cast by voting channel			
Voting channel	2022	2025	Change from 2022
In person at returning office	324,483	401,043	+23.6%
Home visits	5,516	8,357	+51.5%
Hospital program	3,827	5,741	+50.0%
Vote by mail kits sent out	124,854	116,034	-7.1%
Incarcerated electors	1,542	2,333	+51.3%
Special ballot voting overall	460,222	533,508	+15.9%

Total number special ballots cast by voting channel during the 2022 and 2025 general elections.

Total number of international vote by mail applications per country

Quantity



Total number of international vote by mail applications per country during the 2025 and 2022 general elections.

In addition, 5,741 electors voted between February 17 and February 19 from 220 participating hospitals across the province—up from 3,827 in the previous election. The 2025 general election also saw further expansion of access for those unable to vote in person, with 2,333 incarcerated electors voting by special ballot—up from just 1,542 in 2022.

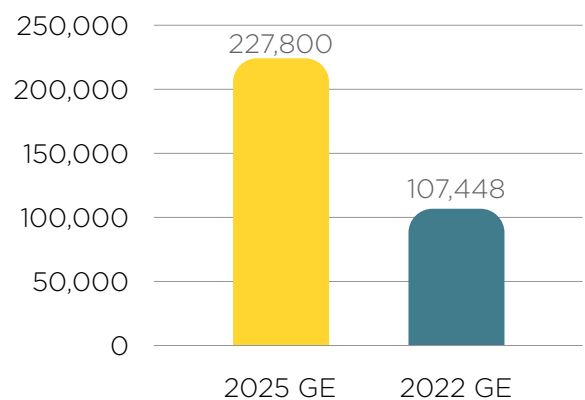
Advance Voting

Under the *Election Act*, fixed-date elections must include 10 days of advance voting, whereas non-fixed date elections are only required to offer three. Since the 2025 election was called outside the fixed-date cycle, advance polls were held over three days, from February 20 to 22.

For the 2025 general election, there were 552 advance voting locations across Ontario. While some locations experienced lineups, overall

Average number of ballots cast per day during advance voting

Quantity



Average number of ballots cast per day during advance voting for the 2025 and 2022 general elections.

satisfaction with advance voting was high, at 95 per cent, consistent with past elections. Notably, 76 per cent of respondents said they were very satisfied with their experience, up from 62 per cent in 2022.

Despite the winter weather and a shortened voting window, turnout for advance voting was strong. Over the three-day period, 683,401 electors showed up to vote. While the total turnout was lower than the 10-day period in 2022, the average number of voters per day in 2025 more than doubled. Advance voting locations were open daily from 10 AM to 8 PM, with Saturday seeing the highest turnout, accounting for 44 per cent of all advance votes.

Setting Up for Election Day

On the evening before election day, field staff set up 6,885 voting locations and confirmed that more than 55,000 poll officials were ready to serve electors. This advanced set-up ensured that equipment was tested and ready, minimizing delays when polls opened at 9 AM on February 27.

While the number of polls with technology and polls without technology was nearly equal, polls with technology served 92 per cent of electors, compared to 8 per cent served by polls without. Reliable internet at polls with technology is critical for transmitting strike-off data. As electors received their ballots, this information was shared in real-time. This allowed us to monitor voting activity throughout the day.

During Election Day

No election day is without its challenges. While most voting locations opened on time, six experienced disruptions that delayed the start of voting, such as staffing shortages and difficulties poll officials faced in accessing the site on time. As per the *Election Act*, voting hours were extended at these locations to ensure all electors had a fair opportunity to cast their ballots. Extensions ranged from 9:30 PM to 10:30 PM.

Inside the Voter Experience

To better understand electors' experiences at the polls, a survey was conducted using posters with QR codes displayed at voting locations across the province. A total of 4,587 responses were collected.

The results pointed to strong levels of satisfaction across all voting channels: 84 per cent of advance voters, 82 per cent of election day voters, and 73 per cent of those who voted at their local election office reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their experience.

Feedback was especially positive among voters who cast their ballots at polls with technology. Among these respondents, 91 per cent reported no wait or only a short wait, and 81 per cent said they completed their vote in under five minutes.

Supporting Electors with Accessibility Needs

To support a positive voting experience, proactive improvements were made at 1,878 election day voting locations, such as adding ramps and designated parking, and providing staff assistance with non-powered doors, elevators, and navigating potential hazards. These efforts helped ensure voting locations met Elections Ontario's accessibility standards, including those outlined in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). As a result, 86 per cent of electors with disabilities reported being satisfied with the assistance they received, up from 82 per cent in 2022.

Detailed accessibility reports for individual electoral districts are currently available on our website (elections.on.ca). These reports outline the accessibility features of each voting location and the measures taken to remove barriers for electors, as required under the AODA.



Mitigating the Threat of Mis- and Disinformation

For the 2025 general election, we hired staff to monitor compliance-related issues, including mis- and disinformation. Throughout the election, 24 instances of mis- and disinformation were reported and authenticated.

When instances of mis- and disinformation were discovered, we submitted takedown requests to social media platforms for demonstrably false content. However, none of these requests were honoured. As mis- and disinformation becomes more widespread and easier to share across digital platforms, we anticipate its scale and complexity will increase in future elections.

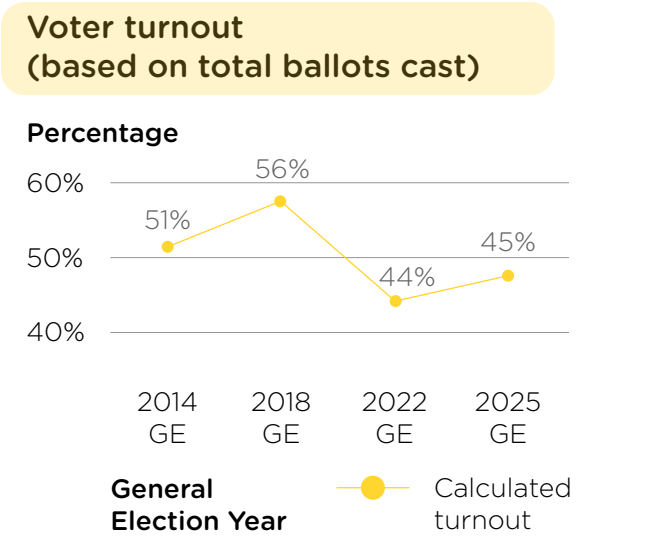
Election Day Results

On election day, vote by mail kits returned to local election offices could be processed starting at 11 AM, while those sent to headquarters were counted centrally beginning at 6:30 PM. For all other special ballots, Returning Officers could start counting them as early as 6 PM.

At 9 PM, when most voting locations across the province closed, officials began running results tapes from vote tabulators at polls with technology and counting ballots at polls without technology, with scrutineers from candidates and parties observing. Poll officials then called results into their local election office where they were entered into the Election Management System and relayed to headquarters. Once results were called in, poll officials completed paperwork and sealed all materials before returning them to their local election offices.

Headquarters tracked incoming results in real time. The reporting moved quickly, with the media consortium calling results within the first six minutes of counting. By comparison, during the 2022 general election, results were called within nine minutes.

In just 12 hours on Thursday, February 27, more than 3.8 million people cast their ballots, accounting for approximately 77 per cent of all valid votes in the 2025 general election. Across the full election period, 5,056,933 total ballots were cast, representing 45 per cent of registered electors. This turnout mirrored the low participation levels seen in the 2022 election.



Voter turnout (based on total ballots cast) in the 2014, 2018, 2022, and 2025 general elections.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform

Most Ontarians cast their ballots during advance voting or on election day. While Elections Ontario’s planning ensured accessible services, elector behaviour and trust also depend on the broader information environment and political messaging.

Experience in 2025 showed that the legislative framework can be refined to limit undue influence and modernize oversight. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends three targeted reforms to support a more transparent and fair election.

1 Enhance Transparency for Digital Political Advertising

Digital advertising is now a primary way political entities reach electors, but it remains the least transparent. The spread of AI-generated and manipulated content increases the risk of electors being misled, while current rules make it difficult to track who is behind advertisements or how they are distributed. Standardized authorization statements, a searchable public registry, and explicit labelling of AI-driven content would give voters clear, reliable information about the origin and authenticity of the messages they encounter online, strengthening both trust and accountability in the electoral process.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Enhance transparency and disclosure standards for digital political advertising.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Finances Act* to strengthen transparency requirements for digital political advertising that would:

- Authorize the Chief Electoral Officer to establish format requirements for authorization statements in digital political advertising, including those created in whole or in part using AI, to better inform electors.
- Mandate a public registry for digital political advertising, expanding disclosure requirements and strengthening public accountability.
- Require clear labelling of automated election advertisements (i.e. bots) so users of social media platforms can easily recognize when they are interacting with content that has been generated in whole or in part by AI.

2 Expand Authority to Order Online Content Removal

During the 2025 general election, Elections Ontario confirmed more than 20 cases of election-related mis- and disinformation, yet none of the takedown requests were honoured. Relying on voluntary compliance from online platforms leaves the electoral process vulnerable to mis- and disinformation during the writ period. Expanding the Chief Electoral Officer's authority to compel the timely removal of non-compliant content would deter misconduct and protect electoral integrity.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Grant authority to the Chief Electoral Officer to require the removal of deceptive electoral content and establish a platform duty of care for such content.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances Act* to grant statutory authority to order the removal of defined categories of harmful election materials through:

- Establishing a duty of care for platforms to monitor and remove harmful or non-compliant content within 12 hours of notice.
- Authorizing the Chief Electoral Officer to require individuals or organizations to remove or cease transmitting false or misleading content about the administration of the electoral process.
- Introducing administrative penalties of up to \$50,000 per day for non-compliance by organizations and up to \$20,000 per infraction for individuals.

3 Expand Enforcement Powers and Penalties for Digital Election Violations

The 2025 general election underscored the rapid spread and impact of digital mis- and disinformation, ranging from false claims about election procedures to deceptive online advertisements. Current enforcement tools are too narrow to address the full scope of online misconduct, and bad-faith actors face few consequences for undermining transparency and misleading electors. Expanding both the scope and severity of penalties would provide Elections Ontario with the authority to deter misconduct, hold violators accountable, and protect electors from false or misleading digital content.



Proposed Legislative Change:

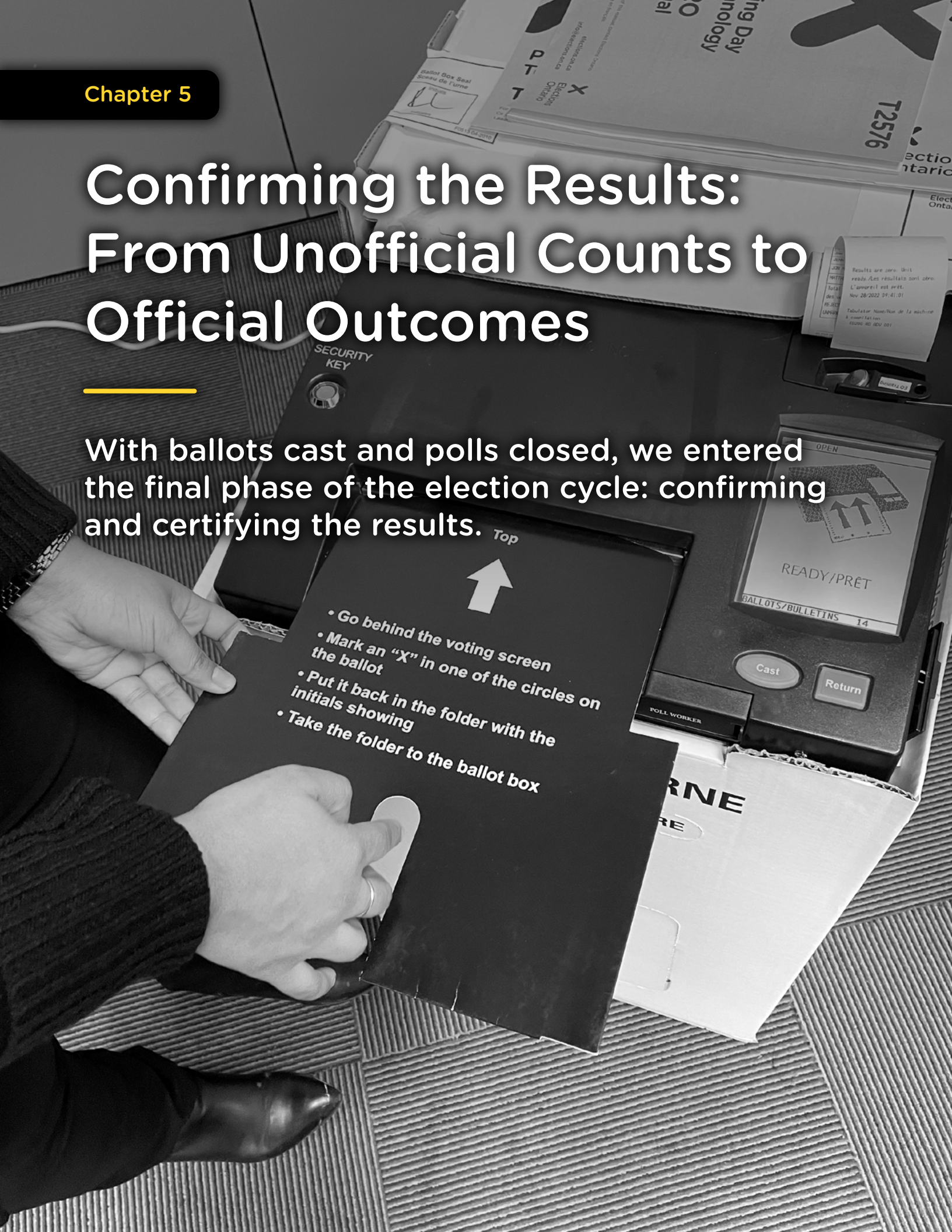
Expand enforcement powers and administrative penalties for digital election violations.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* and the *Election Finances Act* to explicitly cover digital violations and strengthen penalties by:

- Imposing administrative penalties for failure to disclose or for providing false information to the digital registries, with penalties up to \$30,000 depending on the severity of the non-compliance.
- Introducing targeted restrictions on false or misleading content about election administration, from eligibility and dates to locations and results.
- Expanding the authority of the Chief Electoral Officer to make an order requiring a person or entity to pay administrative penalties, up to \$20,000 in the case of an individual and up to \$100,000 in the case of a corporation or other entity, inclusive of digital platforms and social media, for violating mis- or disinformation political advertising regulations.

Confirming the Results: From Unofficial Counts to Official Outcomes

With ballots cast and polls closed, we entered the final phase of the election cycle: confirming and certifying the results.

- 
- Go behind the voting screen
 - Mark an "X" in one of the circles on the ballot
 - Put it back in the folder with the initials showing
 - Take the folder to the ballot box

This stage transformed the work of thousands of election staff into legally binding outcomes, ensuring the integrity of Ontario’s democratic process.

While preliminary results were shared on election night, these figures remained unofficial until Returning Officers completed the official tabulation process in the days that followed. This step-by-step review provided a full and accurate count at each poll and served as the legal foundation for declaring elected Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs).

In two electoral districts, close margins triggered judicial recounts. Headquarters and field teams worked together to ensure these recounts were conducted with transparency, accuracy, and public confidence.

These final steps—running logic and accuracy tests to confirm that vote tabulators had functioned properly, tabulating ballots, resolving recounts, and certifying results—are what turn an election into a lasting democratic outcome.

Official Tabulation

After election day, polls closed on February 27, Returning Officers turned their focus to official tabulation, a critical step in confirming results and declaring elected MPPs. This process takes place in front of candidates or their representatives to ensure transparency and give political entities the opportunity to observe how results are verified.

Official tabulation took place from March 1 to 3. However, a snowstorm in parts of the province delayed the return of some election materials, extending the overall timeline for closing activities to March 4. During this period, Returning Officers reviewed and verified the poll results. Verified totals were submitted to headquarters and published online, replacing the preliminary results shared on election night.

These certified results were later published in the Ontario Gazette as the official “Return of Members” notice.

This work informs the Election Returns with Statistics from the Records—known as the Yellow Book—a detailed, poll-by-poll account of the election. Once it is tabled at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, it serves as the final, official record.

Return of the Writs

The return of the writs marks the formal conclusion of the election in each of Ontario’s 124 electoral districts. On Day 29 of the election calendar, the Chief Electoral Officer issued a Writ of Election to each Returning Officer, initiating the official process. Returning Officers received and filed their writs between Day 28 and Day 23, making them available for public inspection upon request.

Completed writs were returned to the Chief Electoral Officer separately from other election materials, with most arriving by March 10. In districts where recounts occurred, writs were



returned only after those processes were concluded and the appeal period had expired. By March 26, all 124 writs had been received and signed by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Understanding the Election Returns with Statistics from the Records

Once all results are entered into the Election Management System and verified, the final figures are compiled into the Election Returns with Statistics from the Records—commonly referred to as the Yellow Book because of its yellow cover. This document serves as the official poll-by-poll record of the election and is tabled with the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. For each poll, it reports two key numbers: Total Voter Turnout, which combines candidate votes with rejected, unmarked, and declined ballots, and Names on List of Electors, the final elector count after all revisions, additions, and registrations.

The Yellow Book is issued in both physical and digital formats once every Ballot Statement of the Poll has undergone a thorough quality check. As part of this process, Elections Ontario double-checks the voters list by comparing it with records of who voted and reviews last-minute registrations to make sure everything matches. Minor discrepancies between ballot totals and elector counts—often due to delayed mobile poll data, late or incorrect revisions, or electors assigned to a nearby voting location—are usually resolved, although a few may remain.

These minor corrections do not impact the integrity of the results, and the figures published in the Yellow Book represent the final, authoritative totals for the 2025 general election.

Judicial Recounts

Judicial recounts are an important safeguard under Ontario's *Election Act*, ensuring accuracy and transparency in close races or where vote counting is in question. Governed by Sections 69 to 79 of the Act, these recounts are overseen by a judge and follow strict procedural rules.

In the 2025 general election, two electoral districts, Mushkegowuk—James Bay (ED 124) and Mississauga—Erin Mills (ED 062), met the threshold for automatic judicial recounts, which are triggered when the margin of victory is fewer than 25 votes. Margins before the recount were four votes and 20 votes, respectively.

These close results reflected a broader trend across the province. Races were generally tighter in 2025 than in previous elections. In 2018, the closest margin was 74 votes; in 2022, it was 296—well beyond the recount threshold. In 2025, seven districts had margins narrower than the closest race in 2022, signalling a rise in competitive contests and underscoring the importance of safeguards such as judicial recounts in maintaining public confidence.

After official tabulation, Returning Officers for Mississauga—Erin Mills (ED 062) and Mushkegowuk—James Bay (ED 124) applied to the Ontario Court of Justice to initiate recounts. The applications were approved, and recounts were held on March 10 and March 17, respectively.

Detailed planning took place ahead of both recounts. Field teams prepared secure counting sites, implemented chain-of-custody protocols, and delivered sealed Poll Return Envelopes containing ballots, poll records, and other required materials. Judges determined the time and location for each recount, which proceeded under their supervision and was attended only by authorized participants: the Returning Officer, Election Clerk, legal counsel, candidates, scrutineers, and designated Elections Ontario representatives.

At each recount, ballots were reviewed manually. Sealed envelopes were opened at the count site to ensure transparency, and the entire process was completed within a single day. No challenges were raised during the two-day appeal window that followed. The judges then certified the results.

In both recounts, the election night outcomes were upheld, reinforcing confidence in the count and the technology used. In Mississauga—Erin Mills (ED 062), 196 ballots were contested and reviewed by the judge. The final margin increased slightly—from 20 votes on election night to 23. In Mushkegowuk—James Bay (ED 124), 64 ballots were contested and reviewed by the judge. The margin rose from four to nine votes.

These changes reflect how recounts operate under Ontario's *Election Act*. Unlike poll officials, who must follow strict rules when interpreting markings on ballots, judges have broader discretion to assess voter intent. During a judicial recount, the judge may accept ballots that would otherwise be rejected if they believe the elector's intention is clear; this determination is made following legal submissions from the parties in attendance. This discretionary authority is a built-in safeguard of the recount process, helping to ensure that every vote is considered fairly and in accordance with the law.

Recounts remain rare, but they play a vital role in ensuring the integrity of electoral outcomes. The 2025 recounts demonstrated that Ontario's electoral framework is equipped to respond to these high-stakes situations with both precision and transparency.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform

After election day, we shift from servicing voting locations to verifying results and examining how existing rules may have constrained election

administration. Lessons from the 2025 general election highlight one priority: permitting post-election risk-limiting audits to ensure the integrity of voting processes and vote totals. The recommendation that follows would strengthen election management and reinforce public trust.

1 Confirm Results through Risk-Limiting Audits

Recounts in 2025 reaffirmed the need for periodic, transparent tests of polling procedure accuracy. Currently, the *Election Act* limits checks because sealed ballot envelopes may be opened only by court order. Allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to open cast ballot envelopes solely for a prescribed number of post-election risk-limiting audits would provide the authority to verify results. The legislation should also set clear timelines for the audits and steps to follow if discrepancies appear. This recommendation was put forward by the Advisory Committee on Standards for Voting Technologies, which was established in 2021.

Proposed Legislative Change: Permit post-election risk-limiting audits.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Act* to permit the opening of cast ballot envelopes solely to facilitate a prescribed number of post-election risk-limiting audits, with set timelines and procedures for any discrepancies.

Reporting and Compliance: Post-Election Activities and Delivery Costs

After election day, election management transitions from voting operations to post-election financial and administrative procedures.

Once results are confirmed and 124 MPPs are officially elected, Elections Ontario oversees financial reporting and compliance for political entities and the administrative and operational costs to deliver the 2025 general election.

Compliance Activities

Between and ahead of elections, Elections Ontario provides support to political entities—including parties, candidates, nomination contestants, constituency associations, and third-party advertisers—through educational sessions and handbooks to help them comply with the *Election Finances Act*.

Expenditure and Costs

The Chief Electoral Officer oversees the registration of Ontario's political parties, constituency associations, candidates, nomination contestants, leadership contestants, and third-party advertisers. After each election, Elections Ontario reviews financial statements for compliance with the *Election Finances Act*. We also distribute audit and campaign expense reimbursements as well as quarterly allowance payments to qualifying political parties and constituency associations.

Because the filing deadline for campaign expense reports and third-party political advertising reports was August 27, 2025, this post-event report does not include a comprehensive financial summary for all political entities or detailed third-party advertising expenses. Full summaries will appear on the Elections Ontario website (elections.on.ca).

Combating Mis- and Disinformation: A New Team

In 2025, Elections Ontario created a team to coordinate the detection, response, and preparedness efforts related to AI and mis- and disinformation (AMD) in elections. The team's work focuses on:

- Managing AMD incidents during electoral events.
- Assembling internal expertise to support analysis and response.
- Identifying sources and assessing the impacts of AMD.
- Collaborating with internal teams, electoral management bodies, and law enforcement agencies.
- Conducting daily monitoring at the provincial, federal, and international levels.
- Using insights from social media discourse, academic research, and partner collaboration to prepare for future elections.

The team's scope is being finalized based on reviewed best practices and observed impacts on electoral management bodies in Canada and internationally. AMD activity is expected to increase as content-generation tools become more accessible. The team will continue to adapt monitoring and response to protect electoral administration.

Registration and Deregistration

During the planning cycle from 2022 to 2025, we managed the registration and deregistration activities of political parties, constituency associations, nomination and leadership contestants, and third-party advertisers.



As of election day, 20 political parties and 793 constituency associations were registered. Three independent associations were deregistered effective February 27, 2025, after their members were not re-elected. For the 2025 general election:

- 139 nomination contests registered with 160 registered nomination contestants, excluding 103 cancelled contests
- 40 third-party advertisers registered
- One new political party registered:
 - Progress Party Ontario (registered during the 2025 general election)
- Five political parties were mandatorily deregistered and one political party voluntarily deregistered:
 - Consensus Ontario (mandatory deregistration)
 - Family Rights Party (mandatory deregistration)

- Freedom of Choice, Peace & Justice Party (mandatory deregistration)
- People's Progressive Common Front of Ontario (mandatory deregistration)
- Public Benefit Party of Ontario (mandatory deregistration)
- Ontario Provincial Confederation of Regions Party (voluntary deregistration)

Third-Party Political Advertising

Third parties are required to register with Elections Ontario once they have spent \$500 on political advertising, and restrictions are placed on the amounts that third parties may spend.

During this election, 40 third parties were registered with Elections Ontario—a decrease from the 63 registered in the 2022 election.

List of third-party advertisers registered for the 2025 general election and their registration dates

Name	Registration date
Arthritis Society Canada	04-Feb-25
Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens	10-Feb-25
Association of Municipalities of Ontario	29-Jan-25
AvranceCorp Developments	21-Feb-25
Campaign Life Coalition	27-Feb-25
Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario	03-Feb-25
Canadian Union of Public Employees	12-Feb-25
Citizens for Public Education	11-Feb-25
Concerned Knitters	18-Feb-25
Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada	12-Feb-25
Cycle Toronto	25-Feb-25
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario	04-Feb-25
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario - York Region	03-Feb-25
Elementary Teachers of Toronto	03-Feb-25
Environmental Defence Canada	29-Jan-25
ETFO Durham Teachers' Local	03-Feb-25
Fair Vote Canada	29-Jan-25
Greenpeace Canada	13-Feb-25
International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793	19-Feb-25
LIUNA, OPDC	29-Jan-25
Metamorphosis Network	03-Feb-25
Music Votes Ontario	20-Feb-25
Ontario Chamber of Commerce	21-Feb-25
Ontario Families Deserve Better	03-Feb-25
Ontario Federation of Labour	29-Jan-25
Ontario Health Coalition	21-Feb-25
Ontario Medical Association	29-Jan-25
Ontario Nurses' Association	30-Jan-25
Ontario Public Service Employees Union/Syndicat des employés de la fonction publique de l'Ontario	21-Feb-25
Ontario Real Estate Association	04-Feb-25
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation	03-Feb-25
Ontario Small Brewers Association Inc	31-Jan-25
Ontario's Big City Mayors	13-Feb-25
Peel Elementary Teachers' Local	19-Feb-25
Reform Gravel Mining Coalition	04-Feb-25
Seniors for Climate Action Now!	03-Feb-25
The Retired Teachers of Ontario	04-Feb-25
Unifor	21-Feb-25
United Steelworkers	05-Feb-25
Wilmot Civic Action Network	13-Feb-25

Quarterly Allowances

On November 19, 2024, the *Election Finances Amendment Act (Quarterly Allowances)* was passed in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Included in this legislation was an extension of quarterly allowances for political parties and constituency associations until December 31, 2026. Elections Ontario provides quarterly allowance payments to eligible political parties and constituency associations.

Contributions to Political Entities

Political parties, constituency associations, candidates, and leadership contestants are eligible to receive monetary and goods and services contributions. In the 2025 calendar year, a person can contribute:

- up to a limit of \$3,400 to each registered political party
- up to a combined limit of \$3,400 to all constituency associations and nomination contestants for each registered political party
- up to a limit of \$3,400 to each constituency association endorsed by an independent member
- up to a limit of \$3,400 across all registered candidates of any one registered party and to all registered independent candidates (not endorsed by a registered political party)
- up to a limit of \$3,400 to each registered leadership contestant

2025 Political party quarterly allowances (based on official valid ballots cast)		
Political party	2025 Valid ballots cast (Official CEO-certified final numbers)	2025 Quarterly allowance effective April 1, 2025
		\$
Green Party of Ontario	242,320	154,115.52
New Blue Party of Ontario	80,033	50,900.99
New Democratic Party of Ontario	931,016	592,126.18
Ontario Liberal Party	1,505,093	957,239.15
Ontario Party	26,007	16,540.45
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario	2,159,060	1,373,162.16
Total	4,943,529	3,144,084.45

Contribution data relating to the 2025 general election was due August 27, 2025. Contribution data relating to 2025 outside of the 2025 campaign period is due May 31, 2026.

Criteria for Political Parties

Quarterly allowance payments are provided to political parties that meet at least one of the following conditions:

- 1. In the last general election, it received two per cent of valid votes cast across the province.
- 2. In the last general election, it received five per cent of valid votes cast in an electoral district where the party ran a candidate.

Criteria for Constituency Associations

Quarterly allowance payments are provided to constituency associations that meet both of the following criteria:

- 1. The constituency association’s candidates must receive at least two per cent of the popular vote.
- 2. The constituency association is in full compliance.

2025 Constituency associations quarterly allowances		
Party	# of qualifying constituency associations	Total amount to be paid (Associations that qualify based on 2025 official CEO-certified final numbers)
		\$
Green Party of Ontario	105	25,765.31
Independant	1	3,178.55
New Blue Party of Ontario	28	4,101.31
New Democratic Party of Ontario	123	118,050.72
Northern Ontario Party	1	117.51
Ontario Liberal Party	123	183,809.69
Ontario Party	6	938.78
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario	124	268,945.75
Stop the New Sex-Ed Agenda	1	109.46
Total	512	605,017.08

Election Delivery Costs

As a steward of public funds, Elections Ontario manages election delivery costs responsibly. The 2025 general election was called on short notice, yet costs were controlled and services delivered without compromising access. We remain committed to spending wisely while fulfilling our mandate and maintaining public confidence by providing services that make voting easy and accessible.

We established a key performance indicator to help us remain fiscally responsible and ensure we stay within five per cent of the initial election budget projection. This enables us to maintain accurate projections and ensure that every taxpayer dollar is used wisely. The 2025 general election costs are projected to be \$172.97 million, well within our initial projected budget of \$189.5 million. This reflects both necessary wage increases for election workers and the broader impact of inflation on voting materials, technology equipment, vendor services, and the acquisition of voting locations. A full report detailing the final costs of the 2025 general election will be published in our 2025–26 annual report.



Cost of delivering the 2025 and 2022 general elections

	2025 election budget	2025 election forecast	2022 election cost
	\$	\$	\$
Headquarters			
Salaries & benefits	19,416,062	16,069,096	14,958,493
Transportation & communication	27,000,018	26,593,175	16,738,971
Employee travel	2,668,170	1,396,109	745,076
Mail, courier, telecom	24,331,849	25,197,066	15,993,895
Services	23,955,052	23,570,061	22,380,835
Consulting	22,525,442	21,417,210	21,940,243
Facilities	1,429,610	2,152,851	440,592
Supplies & equipment	34,833,041	30,242,592	20,402,747
Advertising & communication	8,200,094	6,784,709	6,244,981
Furniture & equipment	3,611,732	4,060,399	33,416
Rentals	14,535,657	11,591,461	5,391,170
Supplies & sundry	8,485,559	7,806,025	8,733,181
Other services	2,514,630	946,335	88,559
Headquarters total	107,718,804	97,421,260	74,569,605
Electoral districts			
Administration of Returning Offices	35,810,260	33,083,079	26,657,650
Advance polls	9,494,968	5,494,968	11,193,778
Polling day	24,225,709	24,072,053	20,936,783
Printing	739,921	1,422,799	606,151
Revision personnel	-	-	150,751
Special ballot	3,240,419	3,232,026	2,735,401
Preliminary duties	459,923	434,876	696,286
Electoral districts total	73,971,200	67,739,801	62,976,800
Election finance			
Campaign expense subsidies	7,810,000	7,810,000	7,716,890
Election finance total	7,810,000	7,810,000	7,716,890
Grand total	189,500,005	172,971,061	145,263,340

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Legislative Reform

Experience following the 2025 general election highlighted opportunities to modernize and streamline the current legislative framework to better serve all election stakeholders. The Chief Electoral Officer recommends legislative reforms aimed at strengthening compliance mechanisms and providing equitable financial support to political entities.

1 Reduce the Financial Threshold for Mandatory Audits

The current \$10,000 threshold for mandatory audits under the *Election Finances Act* excludes smaller campaigns from review, resulting in limited compliance oversight. In 2022, 69 per cent of entities—including candidates, constituency associations, and political parties—did not meet the threshold for an audit. Lowering the threshold would make audits more cost-effective, extend compliance coverage to a greater share of political entities, and better equip Chief Financial Officers to ensure obligations are met.

Proposed Legislative Change: Lower the minimum threshold for audits.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Finances Act* to reduce the audit threshold from \$10,000 to \$2,500 in contributions accepted or expenses incurred before an audit is required.

2 Implement Subsidies for Chief Financial Officers

Political entities—including candidates, constituency associations, and political parties—face persistent challenges recruiting qualified Chief Financial Officers, whose role is essential to ensuring compliance with the *Election Finances Act*. Without adequate incentives, parties often rely on inexperienced volunteers, increasing the risk of errors and compliance issues. Strengthening financial compliance capacity across all entities would improve transparency, consistency, and confidence in Ontario's political finance system.

Proposed Legislative Change: Implement subsidies for Chief Financial Officers of registered political parties, constituency associations, candidates, and leadership contestants.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Finances Act* to provide subsidies to onboard qualified Chief Financial Officers who have the knowledge and experience required to perform the role for registered political parties, constituency associations, candidates, and leadership contestants, and to adhere to the requirements outlined in the *Election Finances Act*.



3 Grant Authority to Penalize Late Financial Filings

Compliance with election finance rules requires effective enforcement tools. As of the 2025 filing deadline, only 62 per cent of the required returns were filed, leaving 38 per cent outstanding. The Chief Electoral Officer should have expanded administrative powers to impose fines, reduce subsidies, or enter compliance agreements for outstanding or incomplete filings. This approach, successfully used at the federal level, would encourage timely compliance, reduce reliance on prosecution for minor infractions, and strengthen public confidence in the integrity of electoral finance.

Proposed Legislative Change:

Grant the Chief Electoral Officer the ability to penalize political entities for failing to meet filing deadlines.

The Chief Electoral Officer recommends amending the *Election Finances Act* to grant the Chief Electoral Officer the authority to impose administrative penalties on political entities that do not meet financial filing deadlines.

Rethinking Readiness in a Changing Landscape: What It Means to Always Be Ready

The 2025 general election made one thing clear: confidence now depends not only on how well we protect the vote but also on how quickly we can adapt.

Meeting that expectation required swift, behind-the-scenes adjustments that the fixed-date planning model was never designed to accommodate.

To stay ahead, readiness must be redefined. Legislative flexibility, including a longer writ period, a modernized appointment framework to recruit and hire Returning Officers, and optimized voting access during the writ period, would better allow critical work to be completed when an election is called. Without these changes, the pressures we have seen in fully staffing all 124 electoral districts, securing voting locations, and printing ballots will intensify and likely increase the costs of delivering an election.

At the same time, democratic processes are being tested and challenged in new ways globally. While Ontario's democratic institutions remain strong, they are not immune to these challenges. In this context, transparency is no longer just a best practice—it is a safeguard.

To reinforce public confidence and protect the integrity of the electoral process, we are committed to opening the curtain on how Ontario's elections are delivered. This report is part of that effort; it documents what worked, where pressure points emerged, and what must change in order to be ready for whatever comes next.

Looking ahead, Elections Ontario's focus is on building a more agile foundation. Planning for the next election will prioritize early access to essential assets—securing leases for local election offices, installing core technology, and procuring key supplies—while sequencing other activities to allow for adjustments as conditions evolve. This balance of certainty and flexibility will reduce reliance on costly workarounds and keep resources aligned.

Improvement is already underway. Teams at Elections Ontario are analyzing more than 300 tasks and milestones to identify opportunities

for refinement. Over the coming year, this review will expand. We will consult with political parties, brief MPPs, visit Returning Officers, reconvene advisory committees, review election finances, and finalize the updated election footprint by February 2026. Each activity draws on operational data and lived experience, translating insights into actionable improvements that strengthen future preparedness.

Through this shift, Elections Ontario is moving from planning for a single day to planning for any day—all while remaining grounded in the principles of fairness, transparency, and accessibility that have defined the agency since 1920.

Post-Election Insights

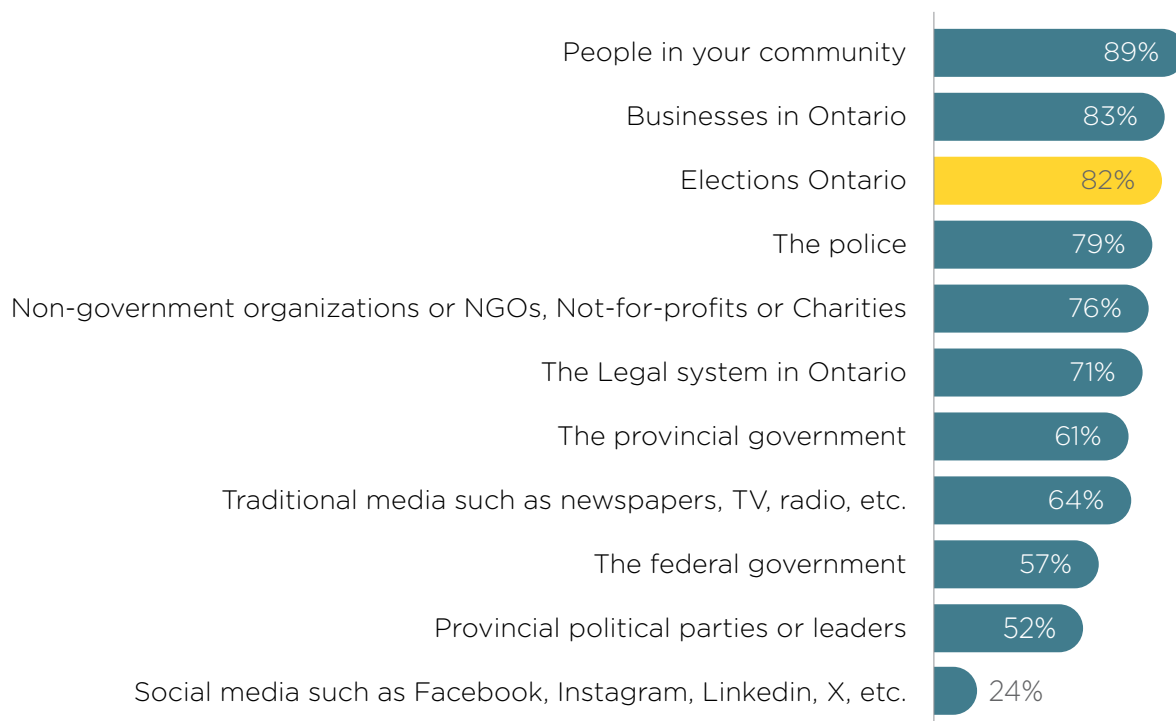
To better understand how to meet evolving expectations, Elections Ontario conducted extensive post-election research with electors and political entities. These insights help shape our planning priorities and are reflected in the results shared below.

Integrity in Elections Ontario

Trust in Elections Ontario remains a foundational strength of Ontario's democratic system. Following the 2025 general election, 82 per cent of Ontarians said they trust Elections Ontario, a number significantly higher than most public institutions. Among political stakeholders, trust was even higher at 88 per cent.

After the election, electors expressed the greatest confidence in core strengths the fairness of elections (82 per cent), the accessibility of voting (87 per cent), and the integrity of election officials (77 per cent). Trust was more measured,

Proportion of electors who trust Elections Ontario and other institutions



Levels of trust reported by electors in Elections Ontario across compared to other institutions following the 2025 general election.

however, when it came to Elections Ontario's ability to respond to challenges ahead such as misinformation (67 per cent), foreign interference (67 per cent), and impartiality (72 per cent).

These gaps signal a shift in how trust is built. It is no longer sufficient to deliver elections that are procedurally sound. Public trust increasingly rests on whether an institution can anticipate, respond to, and withstand threats that unfold outside the traditional election infrastructure.

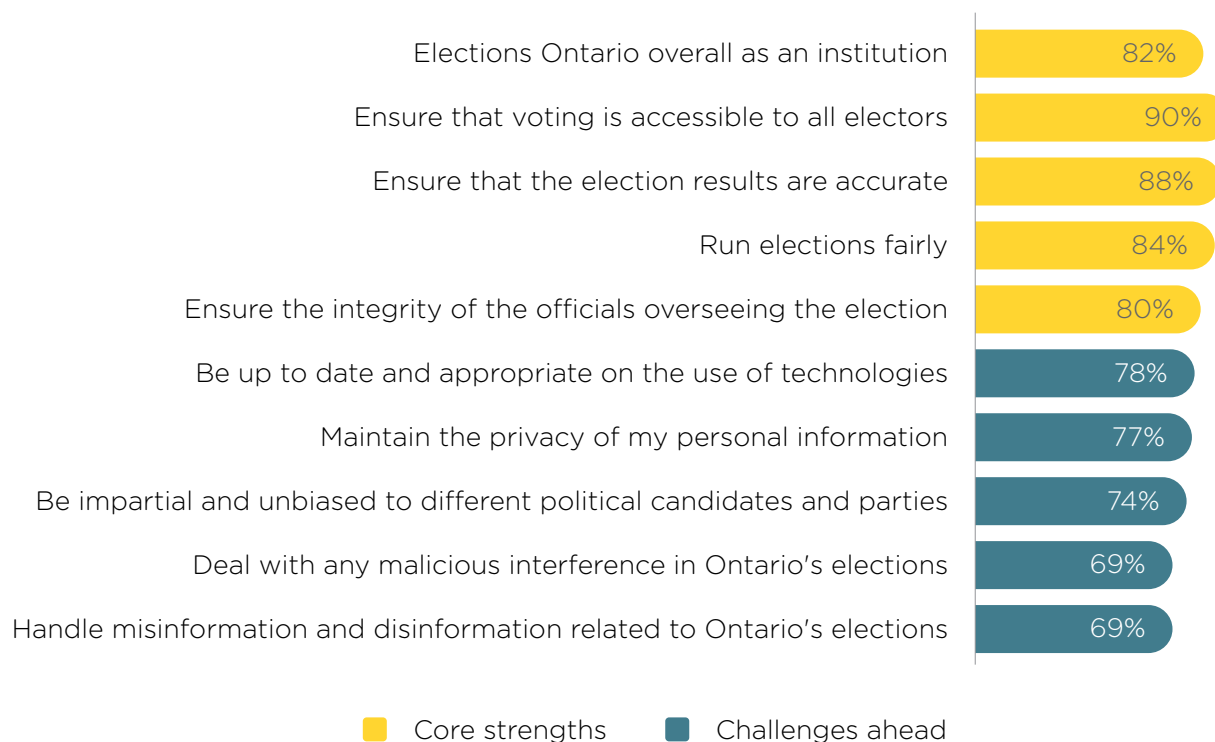
Mis- and disinformation is becoming more pervasive. In particular, AI has lowered the barrier to producing misleading or manipulative content. Deepfakes, bots, and targeted mis- and disinformation can now circulate faster and more convincingly than ever before. In an environment where a single viral post can shape perception before facts can intervene, institutions need

tools to respond. Without real-time capabilities to monitor, report, and correct mis- and disinformation, even minor instances can erode public confidence.

Although there were no major incidents of mis- or disinformation during the 2025 general election, public perception is that Elections Ontario is not yet fully equipped to manage these risks. Even in the isolated cases that did arise, we lacked the tools, authority, and real-time mechanisms to respond quickly and effectively.

Future readiness must include not only logistical planning and operational capacity but also the legislative authority and institutional tools required to act in real time across the full spectrum of democratic risk. Trust is difficult to earn, easy to lose, and increasingly shaped by factors beyond the act of voting. To protect it, Ontario's electoral framework must evolve accordingly.

Proportion of electors who trust Elections Ontario in key areas



Levels of trust reported by electors in Elections Ontario across key areas of election delivery following the 2025 general election.

Political Entities

Political entities reported high satisfaction with the 2025 general election, with 85 per cent rating Elections Ontario's administration as excellent or very good, and 92 per cent satisfied with how the election was run in their riding, up from 87 per cent in 2022.

Significantly, satisfaction was consistent across roles, regions, and political affiliations, underscoring Elections Ontario's reputation as an impartial and professional institution. Overall, 91 per cent of political entities agreed that the agency demonstrated professionalism under time pressure. This cross-partisan confidence reinforces one of the most critical drivers of

institutional trust: the belief that elections are administered fairly, regardless of political outcome.

At the same time, there was a broad consensus that the early election call created challenges that Elections Ontario was not fully empowered to address. More than 80 per cent of political entities said that compressed timelines disrupted key campaign activities, including volunteer recruitment and voter outreach.

These limitations had downstream effects. Among non-voters, nine per cent cited a lack of information about party platforms or campaign issues as a reason for not participating, up from three per cent in 2022. This suggests that when political entities face barriers to engaging with electors, the information environment suffers more broadly.

For political entities, the 2025 general election highlighted Elections Ontario's core strengths—neutrality, professionalism, and operational integrity—but also revealed the limits of a legislative framework designed for predictability. As one stakeholder noted, “You need to be empowered to be ready when the writ drops—not just once it drops.” To meet future expectations, we must be equipped with the authority and tools to support political participants proactively—not just within the writ period but also in the critical weeks and months that precede it.

Elector Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the voting experience remained high in 2025, with 95 per cent of voters reporting they were satisfied, and 76 per cent saying they were very satisfied, a 12-point increase from 2022. Election day voters cited excellent service from poll officials (99 per cent), no lineups or that the line moved quickly (91 per cent), and the ease of finding voting locations (98 per cent) as top drivers of satisfaction. Trust that the vote was recorded correctly reached 98 per cent, and 96 per cent of voters found that the process of confirming their names on the voters list was fast.

The most reported barriers to voting were electors not receiving their voter information card (three per cent), difficulty finding information on where to vote (two per cent), and inaccessible voting locations (two per cent).

Additionally, only 49–54 per cent of Indigenous electors, youth, electors with disabilities, and unhoused electors said it was easy to find information about how to vote, compared to 87 per cent overall.

Registration gaps were also more pronounced: 67 per cent of non-voters who are unhoused and 57 per cent of youth were not on the voters list, versus 27 per cent overall. These figures reflect a broader concern—that participation is declining, particularly among communities facing structural barriers. While Elections Ontario plays a central role in enabling access, supporting democratic engagement is a shared responsibility across institutions, political entities, and civil society. Improving registration and turnout will require earlier outreach, more inclusive systems, and coordinated efforts to engage electors long before election day.

These findings suggest that satisfaction is no longer defined solely by what happens at the polls. Electors now judge the system by how well it supports their entire voting journey, from early registration and personalized communication to convenient and accessible voting options. To meet evolving expectations, readiness must include the capacity to serve electors before the election begins and to prevent barriers before they materialize.





What's Next

The recommendations outlined in this report form a roadmap for a more flexible and resilient electoral system—one that can meet growing expectations while remaining anchored in the democratic covenants that guide our work: secrecy of the ballot, transparency, one vote per voter, a fair and level playing field, and integrity.

In many ways, the 2025 general election tested the limits of what it means to be ready. From processing nominations to delivering over 10 million voter information cards in the middle of a winter storm, every milestone required real-time coordination to keep the process on track.

Behind each of those efforts was a team operating at full tilt, adapting old systems to meet new realities. The lessons from this election are not only operational but foundational: in a province as vast and diverse as Ontario, democratic integrity depends on more than delivering an election—it depends on delivering it well and on any timeline. This report is a look back at how the election was delivered and a look forward at how our electoral framework must evolve to protect the integrity of the democratic process and sustain public trust in an increasingly complex environment.

1. Summary of External Stakeholder Surveys

Summary of Public Opinion Polling

We engaged **Advanis** and **Leger Research** to survey stakeholders on their experiences with Ontario's election process, initiatives, and services. The research focused on three groups: general electors, electors facing barriers, and political entities.

- **Elector Satisfaction Survey (Advanis):** 6,500 electors across Ontario, including 100 in-person interviews with unhoused electors. The survey measured satisfaction, accessibility, communication, and barriers to voting, while tracking changes since 2022. Conducted February 28–March 16, 2025.
- **Political Entities Survey (Leger Research):** 330 respondents, including candidates, Chief Financial Officers, and others. The survey measured the respondents' experiences with Elections Ontario during the 2025 general election. Conducted March 3–April 1, 2025.
- **Trust and Integrity Survey (Leger Research):** Multi-wave survey of 1,000 electors on perceptions of trust, integrity, and fairness in Ontario's election process. Conducted February 10–March 12, 2025.

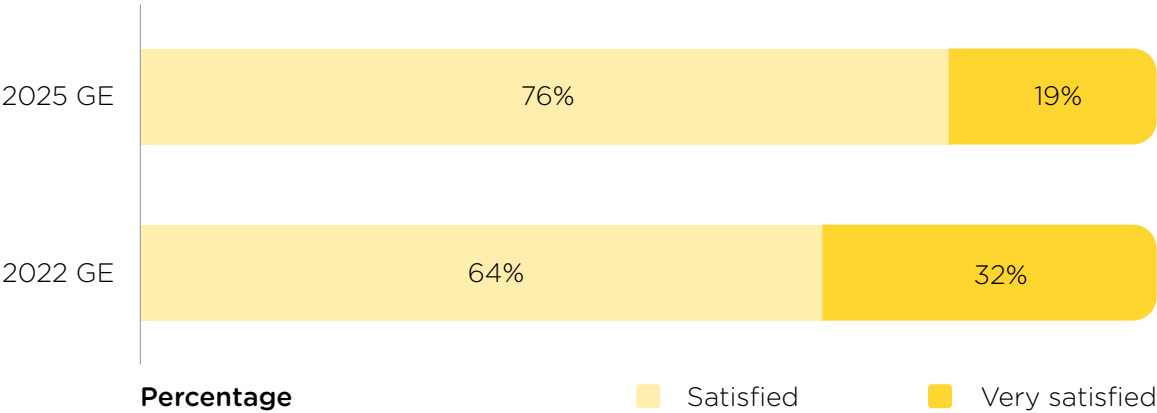
- **Advertising Effectiveness Survey (Leger Research):** Multi-wave survey of 3,000 electors on the effectiveness of Elections Ontario's advertising. Conducted January 30–March 7, 2025.

Results from Elector Satisfaction Survey

Ease of Voting

Voting satisfaction remained high in 2025. Across all days of voting, 95 per cent of voters reported being satisfied with their experience, with the share who were very satisfied increasing by 12 points compared to 2022. More than nine in 10 electors agreed that voting locations were easy to find and that signage clearly identified them as voting locations. Among those who voted in person, nearly all were satisfied with their interactions with staff (99 per cent), particularly with the competency of poll officials, and 96 per cent found confirming their name on the voters list to be fast and straightforward. Confidence in the process also grew, with 98 per cent of voters saying they were confident their vote was recorded correctly, up three points from 2022.

Proportion of voters satisfied with their overall voting experience



Proportion of voters satisfied with their overall voting experience during the 2025 and 2022 general elections.

Voter satisfaction (proportion of voters who agree)

The overall organization of the voting process was good.	98%
This voting location was easy to find.	97%
The signage outside the location identified it as a voting location.	93%
I was satisfied with the overall service provided by the staff at this voting location.	99%
The workers at Elections Ontario were competent.	99%
The process for locating and confirming my name on the voters list was fast.	96%
I am confident that my vote was recorded correctly when I cast my ballot using a vote tabulator.	98%

Proportion of voters who agree with statements about key aspects of how Elections Ontario delivered the 2025 general election.

Vote by mail remained a popular option, though for different reasons than in 2022. While avoiding lineups and COVID-19 safety were the top motivations in the last election, in 2025 most voters cited convenience (46 per cent) and

schedule (31 per cent). Older voters continued to be the most frequent users of this method, with two-thirds of vote by mail participants aged 55 and over.

Knowledge of the Voting Process

Knowledge of the voting process remained high: 96 per cent of voters knew the date of the election, 92 per cent knew where to vote on election day, and 96 per cent knew what ID they needed to bring to vote. Fewer voters, however, knew the date of advance voting (74 per cent) or where to vote during advance voting (70 per cent).

Communication with Electors

Awareness of the election rose sharply during Elections Ontario’s advertising campaign, increasing from 38 per cent in the first week after the writs were issued to 81 per cent in the week before election day.

The voter information card and Ontario Voting Guide remained the top information sources across all age groups. Recall of the Ontario Voting Guide was 46 per cent, with nearly nine in 10 of those surveyed finding it relevant; 78 per cent said it encouraged them to vote. More than half of those who recalled receiving it (58 per cent) kept or shared it, and 44 per cent

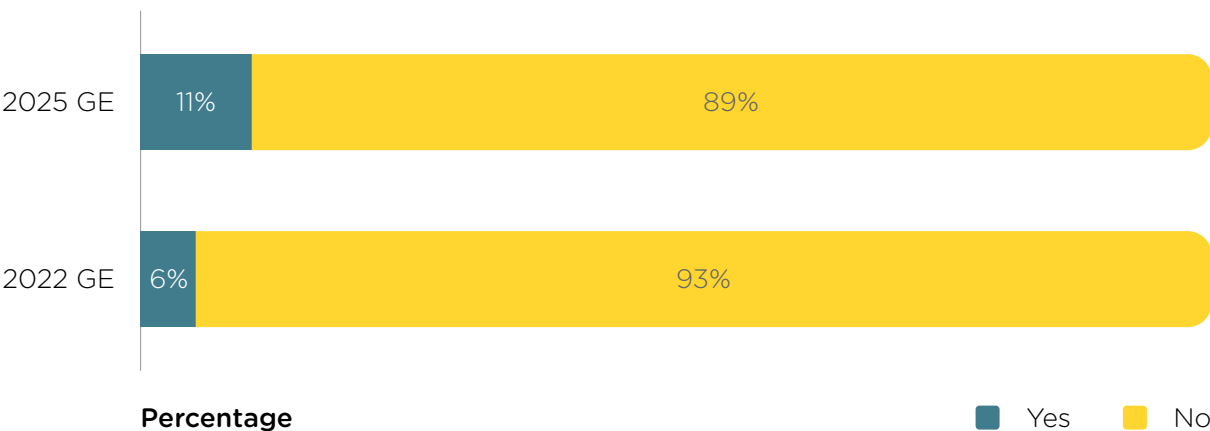
registered, confirmed, or updated their voter information as a result. Recall of the voter information card was higher, at 67 per cent. Among those who received a card, 63 per cent kept it for future reference, and 83 per cent brought it with them to vote. Overall, 92 per cent of electors considered receiving their voter information card during an election to be very important.

Despite these strong results, some groups faced greater difficulty accessing information, including youth, Indigenous electors, electors with disabilities, and unhoused electors.

Barriers to Participation in the Voting Process

Overall, 11 per cent of voters reported experiencing a barrier to voting in 2025, up from six per cent in 2022. The most common barriers were not receiving a voter information card (three per cent), difficulty finding information on where to vote (two per cent), and inaccessible voting locations (two per cent).

Proportion of voters who experienced problems or barriers while voting in the 2025 general election



Proportion of voters who experienced problems or barriers while voting in the 2025 and 2022 general elections.

Access to information remained uneven across groups. While 87 per cent of voters overall found it easy to get information on how to vote, this dropped to between 49 and 54 per cent among Indigenous electors, youth, electors with disabilities, and unhoused electors.

Barriers were also more pronounced among non-voters. Issues with the voter information card increased from three per cent in 2022 to seven per cent in 2025. More non-voters also reported being too busy (20 to 26 per cent), being out of town (six to 14 per cent), lacking information on voting logistics (four to 12 per cent), or disengagement due to campaign issues and party platforms (three to nine per cent). Unhoused non-voters (67 per cent) and youth non-voters (57 per cent) were especially likely to be missing from the voters list, compared to 27 per cent overall.

Trust in Elections Ontario

Electors continue to place high levels of trust in Elections Ontario, with 82 per cent expressing confidence overall. Trust was strongest in areas that matter most to electors: ensuring voting is accessible (90 per cent), results are accurate (88 per cent), elections are run fairly (84 per cent), and officials act with integrity (80 per cent).

At the same time, survey results show there are challenges ahead. Fewer electors expressed confidence in Elections Ontario's ability to address mis- and disinformation related to elections (69 per cent) or to manage potential malicious interference (69 per cent).

Beyond the electoral process itself, 63 per cent of Ontarians reported being satisfied with the way democracy works in the province.

Results from the Political Entities Survey

Election Process

Overall, 83 per cent of political entities were satisfied with how the voting process went, up slightly from 81 per cent in 2022. Overall, 85 per cent rated Elections Ontario's administration in their electoral district as excellent or very good, and 92 per cent were satisfied with how their Returning Officer ran the election, an increase from 87 per cent in 2022.

Communication with Political Entities

Among political entities who contacted Elections Ontario, a strong majority said that the representative with whom they dealt was professional (91 per cent), responsive to their needs (89 per cent), and provided quality support (88 per cent). The main channels used were the website (64 per cent), local election offices (62 per cent), and the Party Support Network (21 per cent). Common inquiries focused on voting locations (58 per cent), required forms and documentation (50 per cent), and voting procedures, such as how, when, and where to vote (47 per cent). As in 2022, most political entities (69 per cent) preferred in-person interactions when seeking help.

Candidate Nominations

Overall, 90 per cent of respondents felt informed about the nomination process, and 96 per cent were satisfied with its timeliness. Most candidates found key steps straightforward, including working with their Returning Officer (95 per cent) and appointing a Chief Financial Officer (82 per cent). However, fewer said meeting the nomination deadline (72 per cent) or obtaining

the required number of signatures (75 per cent) was easy. In total, 91 per cent of candidates felt the process for becoming a registered candidate was clear. Some respondents suggested improvements to the signature and paperwork requirements (14 per cent) or to the nomination timeframe (eight per cent).

Trust in Elections Ontario

Political entities reported high trust in Elections Ontario overall (88 per cent), with particularly strong confidence in accurate results (95 per cent), fair elections (91 per cent), and accessible voting (82 per cent). Similar to electors, however, trust was lower in Elections Ontario's ability to address emerging challenges such as mis- and disinformation (70 per cent) and potential malicious interference (70 per cent).

Impacts of the Early Election Call for Political Entities

Over half of survey respondents (55 per cent) were familiar with the different requirements on the number of advance voting in days in fixed-date vs non-fixed date elections, but fewer were aware of the revised nomination deadline (48 per cent) and that proposed voting locations were not posted six months in advance (42 per cent). The early election call also created challenges for candidate compliance, with 58 per cent reporting difficulty collecting signatures, and 56 per cent struggling to complete other nomination requirements.

More than 80 per cent of political entities said the early election call significantly or moderately affected campaign activities. The greatest impacts were on engaging with electors (87 per cent), recruiting and training volunteers (85 per cent), organizing advertising (85 per cent), developing campaign strategies (82 per cent), and fundraising (80 per cent). First-time candidates were more likely to report difficulties across these areas.



2. Accessibility

Elections Ontario is committed to ensuring that every elector can exercise their right to vote independently and privately. In accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and the *Election Act*, accessibility considerations were integrated into all aspects of election delivery.

Section 55.1 of the *Election Act* requires each Returning Officer to prepare a report on the measures taken to provide accessibility for electors with disabilities in their electoral district. This section consolidates those reports into a province-wide summary.

For the 2025 general election, Elections Ontario ensured all eligible electors could exercise their right to vote in an inclusive and barrier-free environment. This included ensuring every voting location met site accessibility standards, training election officials to deliver accessible customer service, providing assistive technology at local election offices, offering home and hospital voting services, producing accessible information and ballots, and accommodating election staff with disabilities.

Communications, Information, and Digital Tools

- **Alternative formats:** Elections Ontario provided general information about the election and voting process in a range of accessible formats to ensure that all Ontarians could understand when, where, and how to vote.
- **Teletypewriter (TTY):** An audio service was available at Elections Ontario's headquarters before and during the election to enable people with hearing loss to access information by telephone.
- **Additional languages:** The Ontario Voting Guide and information on identification requirements were available online in 15 languages and voting instructions at all voting locations were provided in these languages as well.
- **Plain language communications:** All advertising and public education materials were written in plain language to ensure they were accessible to all Ontarians.
- **Voter information card:** A voter information card was sent to each elector on the voters list, providing personalized information about when, where, and how to vote.
- **Radio advertising:** Election information was broadcast on the radio to reach electors across the province.
- **Accessible Voting in Ontario handout:** We created a fully accessible handout on accessible voting that was distributed to stakeholders and posted on the Elections Ontario website (elections.on.ca).
- **Websites:** Elections Ontario's websites are compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA, and we make continuous enhancements to improve their usability.

- **PVC app:** The mobile application, available on Apple and Android devices, provided information about when, where, and how to vote and gave electors electronic access to their voter information cards. Accessibility features, such as audio recordings of candidate names, were available within the app.
- **vRegistration:** The online vRegistration tool simplified voter registration by allowing electors to check, update, add, or remove their information on the voters list.

Services, Tools, and Technology at the Polls

Training and Accessible Materials

All election officials received in-person training on accessibility. Training emphasized respectful customer service, barrier awareness, and the use of supports for electors with disabilities. Officials were also provided with guides and manuals that included instructions on supporting electors with various disabilities, using interpreters or intervenors, and applying assistive devices.

All election offices were provided with accessibility materials, including braille versions of general information brochures that were mailed to homes across Ontario, documents in alternative formats, magnifier sheets, braille ballot templates, high-contrast directional arrows, and Notice of Service Disruption templates.

Voting Locations

In 2025, there were 552 advance voting locations and 6,885 election day voting locations across Ontario. Of the advance voting locations, 391 met the accessibility standards without remediation, 148 met the accessibility standards with remediation, and 13 required exemptions. Of election day voting locations, 4,826 met the accessibility standards without remediation, 1,878

met the accessibility standards with remediation, and 181 required exemptions. Voting locations requiring exemptions were listed on the Elections Ontario website, and accommodations were provided where site accessibility standards could not be met through remediation.

Service Disruptions

Some voting locations experienced disruptions due to winter weather conditions, construction, or other unforeseen events. Returning Officers reported 35 voting locations affected across 32 electoral districts. Hazardous road conditions, icy walkways, and snow-covered or obstructed accessible parking spaces were among the most common weather-related challenges. Notices of Service Disruption were posted in 26 of these districts, and Elections Ontario issued 58 website alerts during the election period to inform electors of location changes and service interruptions.

Specialized Voting Services

Home and Hospital Voting

Electors unable to visit a voting location could vote by special ballot from home, in hospitals, or in long-term care facilities. In 2025, Returning Officers reported 8,357 home visits and 5,741 hospital visits. While these services were broadly available, a small number of electoral districts reported no such visits, despite being equipped for them. Special Ballot Officers assisted electors with filling out forms and ballots, verifying identification, reading instructions or candidate names aloud, providing magnifiers or braille ballot templates, and setting up stable writing areas. Returning Officers also promoted the program at the local level.

Use of Assistive Voting Technology

Assistive voting technology (AVT) was available in every local election office during the 2025 general election. The equipment allows electors with disabilities to listen to their ballot through audio output and mark it independently using integrated ballot-marking controls. This ensures electors can vote privately and in secrecy without assistance.

In 2025, only 42 electors requested to use AVT, in 26 electoral districts, representing fewer than 0.001 per cent of all voters. While usage has remained very low over successive elections, Elections Ontario continues to make the technology available to ensure equitable access for those who require it. Election staff were trained to demonstrate the equipment to electors and to provide support where needed.

Although demand for AVT remains limited, maintaining the technology is an important part of Elections Ontario's commitment to providing a range of accessible voting options.

Transfers to More Accessible Voting Locations

In some cases, electors requested to transfer to different voting locations within their electoral districts to accommodate restricted mobility or because of familiarity with a particular facility. The total number of requests made cannot be reported, however, as not all Returning Officers recorded cases where requests were denied or where electors used alternative voting methods instead.

Ballot Font Size

To improve readability, ballots were designed with clear, large fonts: candidates' given names appeared in 20-point font, surnames in 24-point font, and political party names or independent status in 18-point font.

Feedback Process

Electors could provide feedback on accessibility or general voting experiences by email, through the Elections Ontario website (elections.on.ca), at their voting locations via QR code, or by using any of the contact methods listed under the *Contact Us* section on our website (elections.on.ca).

Interpreters and Intervenorors

Elections Ontario partnered with community agencies to arrange American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), and intervenor services when required. The cost of these services was covered by Elections Ontario when provided at a local election office, satellite office, or voting location.

Curbside Voting

If an elector was unable to enter a voting location, poll officials could bring a ballot to the elector or move the ballot box closer to facilitate casting their vote.

Notices of Service Disruption

When temporary disruptions such as weather, maintenance, repairs, or construction affected accessibility at a voting location, Elections Ontario posted Notices of Service Disruption both on-site and on our website (elections.on.ca) to inform electors and provide alternatives.

Service Animals

Electors with disabilities were permitted to be accompanied by service animals at all Elections Ontario premises, including voting locations.

Support Persons

Electors requiring assistance were permitted to be accompanied by a companion or support person to the voting screen. Support persons could mark the ballot on behalf of the elector after taking an oath or affirmation, as required under the *Election Act*, to ensure the secrecy of the vote.

Employment of Persons with Disabilities

Elections Ontario continued to promote inclusive hiring. In 2025, Returning Officers reported 466 election staff who self-identified as having a disability and 201 accommodation requests that were fulfilled. Overall, 88 of 124 electoral districts employed staff with disabilities (or 71 per cent of all electoral districts).

Accommodations were also provided to employees with disabilities during recruitment and throughout employment, in compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation employment standard. Election staff expressed satisfaction with the accommodations that were provided to them.

Elector Feedback

Following each general election, Elections Ontario commissions public opinion research to measure the opinions and experiences of electors.

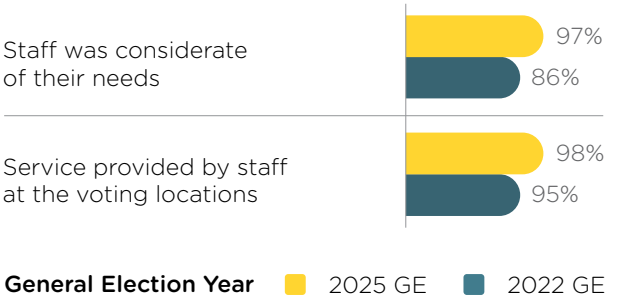
Elector feedback was positive overall. In 2025, 98 per cent of voters with disabilities reported being satisfied with the overall service provided by staff at their respective voting locations, up from 95 per cent in 2022. Feedback most often referenced parking and entrances, ramps, signage, and staff assistance.

Returning Officers reported positive feedback from electors about home and hospital visits and the support provided by poll officials to electors requiring accommodations.

Overall Satisfaction

- Overall, 97 per cent of voters with disabilities reported that election staff were considerate of their needs, up from 86 per cent in 2022.
- In total, 98 per cent of voters with disabilities said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service provided by poll officials at their respective voting locations, up from 95 per cent in 2022.

Overall satisfaction of voters with disabilities with election staff during the 2025 and 2022 general elections



Overall satisfaction of voters with disabilities with election staff during the 2025 and 2022 general elections.

Awareness

Voters with disabilities were asked how knowledgeable they felt about the following before voting:

- That electors can vote using a mail-in ballot (70 per cent were knowledgeable or very knowledgeable)
- That electors can request a home visit to cast their ballot (28 per cent were knowledgeable or very knowledgeable)
- That electors in the hospital can vote through a hospital visit (26 per cent were knowledgeable or very knowledgeable)

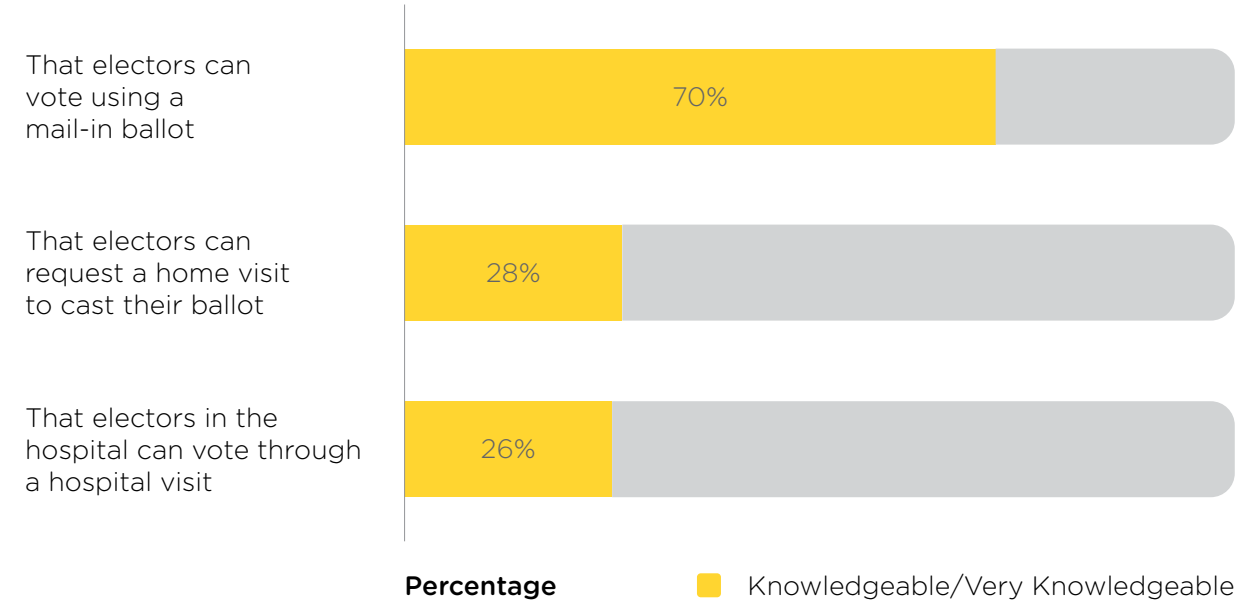
Barriers Faced by Voters with Disabilities When Voting

Overall, 18 per cent of voters with disabilities reported experiencing a barrier when voting. The top barriers reported by voters with disabilities were:

- Not being able to access a physically accessible voting location (36 per cent)
- Not being able to find information on where to vote (19 per cent)
- Not receiving a voter information card (15 per cent)
- Other issues with a voter information card (14 per cent)
- Accessible parking issues (eight per cent)

Altogether, 29 per cent of voters with disabilities suggested improvements to make voting more accessible, a slight improvement from 32 per cent during the 2022 general election.

Knowledge of alternative voting methods among voters with disabilities



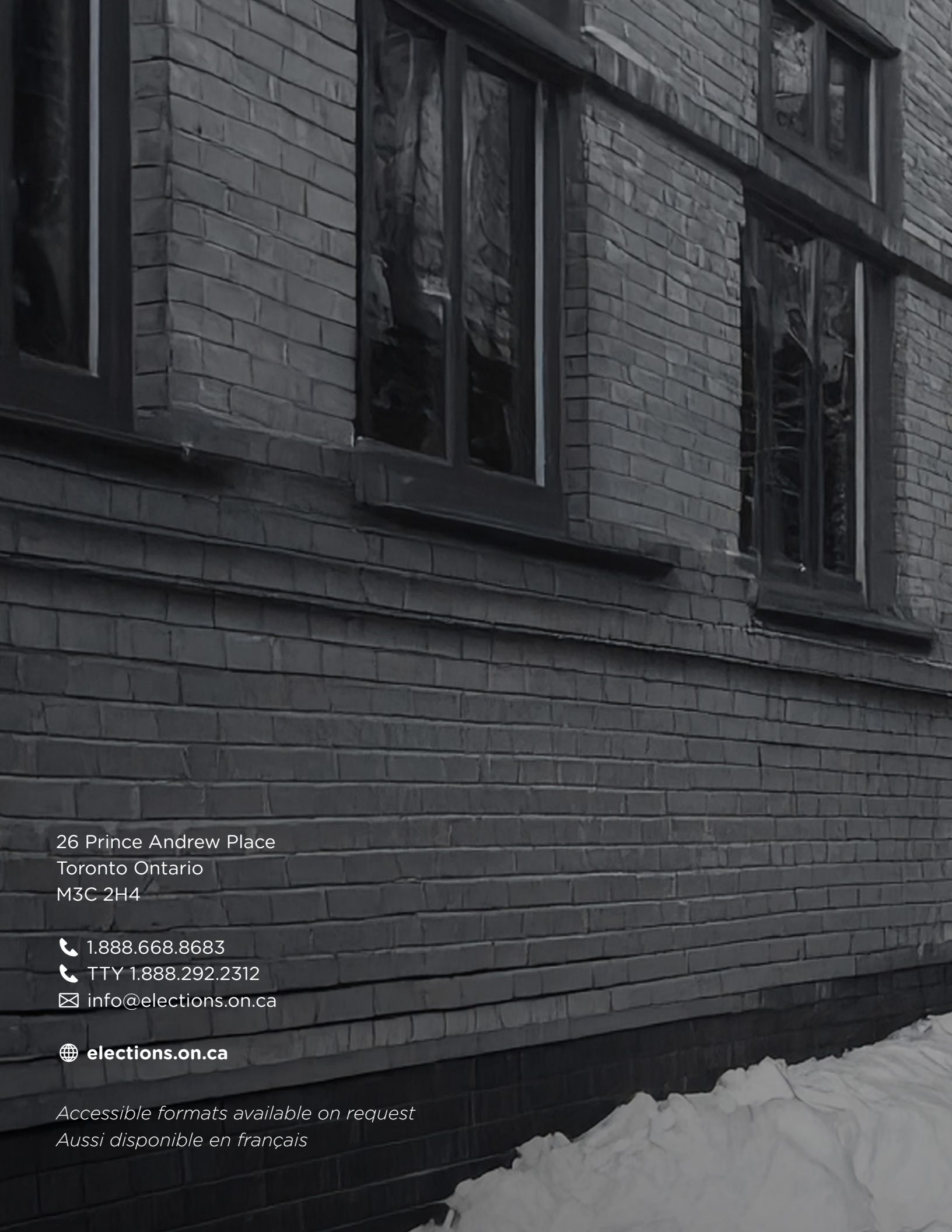
Proportion of voters with disabilities who have knowledge of alternative voting methods in the 2025 general election.

Overall Findings

The 2025 general election demonstrated continued progress in identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers for people with disabilities, and in offering accessible tools and services that meet the needs of electors. Training and materials were delivered consistently, thousands of voting locations were improved through remediations, and more polling officials with disabilities were recruited and supported. Satisfaction among electors with disabilities also rose compared to the general election in 2022.

As noted above, extreme winter weather was the primary cause of accessibility challenges reported by Returning Officers. These included hazardous road conditions, disruptions to some home visits, and barriers at voting locations, such as snow-covered parking spaces, narrowed walkways, and icy surfaces.

Most issues were resolved by offering curbside voting and home visits, deploying information assistants, contacting landlords to salt the outdoor premises, and increasing signage.



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