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Student Voter Turnout Way Up in East Lansing ^[1]

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By:

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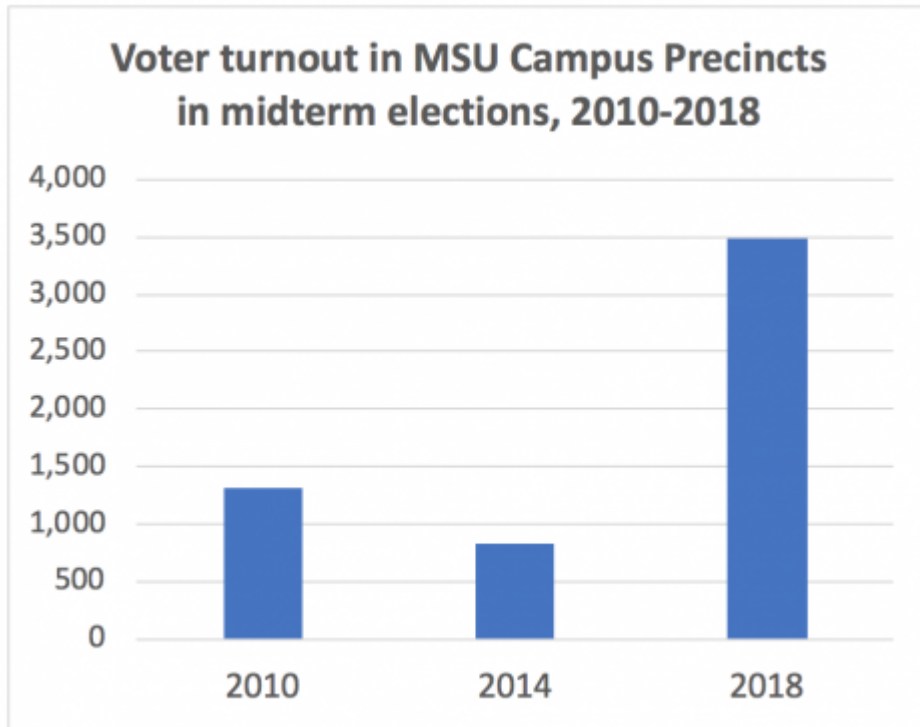
The November 6 election brought out a much larger number of young voters than other recent midterm elections, both in East Lansing and across the country. ELi analyzed the voter turnout and also how millennials voted on high-profile races and ballot proposals on legalizing marijuana and ending gerrymandering.

The Unofficial Precinct Results dated November 8 that we analyzed are available on the Ingham County Clerk's website ^[2]. It is not possible to distinguish how people voted according to age, short of intensive exit-polling. The best we can do with the available data is to compile votes at precincts 1, 12, 13, 14, and 15 that are on the Michigan State University campus.

Many other MSU students live off-campus, but it is not possible to distinguish their votes from others in East Lansing's residential precincts.

Student turnout increased markedly in 2018

In the five campus precincts, voter turnout went up more than 300% from the 2014 midterm to the 2018 midterm. Here is a chart showing the number of votes in precincts 1 and 12-15 in the three most recent midterm elections:



East Lansing City Clerk Jennifer Shuster was quoted in the City's Dialog e-Newsletter last Friday saying, "The voter turnout surpassed the November 2014 gubernatorial election (36.74 percent voter turnout) by approximately 20 percent and much of that increase came from the campus precincts."

She added, "Many of the voter turnout percentages on campus struggled to hit the teens in 2014, while all campus precincts were in the 40-50 percent range for this [past] week's election."

One contributing factor was on-the-ground work done by several organizations to register MSU students and to get out the vote.

"MSUvote" was a non-partisan campaign to increase student turnout that was part of a "Big Ten Voting Challenge" at the fourteen Big Ten campuses. Partners in the MSUvote effort included the City of East Lansing, the League of Women Voters, the Michigan Secretary of State, Design for America-Michigan State University Chapter, Meridian Township, the City of Lansing, and The State News.

We heard from several people about League of Women Voters members registering freshman students at orientation sessions at the beginning of the fall semester.

Sunrise Movement, a movement of young people focused on climate change that is active in greater Lansing and at MSU, also did a lot of door-knocking on campus, saying they registered

1,300 voters and knocked on 7,137 student doors for the November 6 election. NextGen America, another organization focused on young people, also had people getting out the vote at MSU.

An increase in student voter participation also happened across the country. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) estimated [3] the day after the election that roughly 31% of youth (ages 18-29) turned out to vote in the 2018 midterms, an extraordinary increase over our estimate in 2014, when our day-after exit poll calculation suggested that 21% of eligible young voters went to the polls. We estimate that this is by far the highest level of participation among youth in the past quarter century.

TeenVogue [4] reported the day after the election on data collected by NextGen from 41 precincts on 14 campuses that confirmed that MSU was part of a significant national increase in millennial voter turnout. Their counts showed that, as at MSU, more than three times as many students at University of Michigan voted in 2018 compared to 2014. The student voter turnout rate at Wayne State University in Detroit more than doubled.

Student votes on the issues

The biggest difference between votes cast at the precincts on campus compared to those in the rest of East Lansing was on Ballot Proposal 1 [5] to legalize marijuana possession, use and cultivation under certain conditions, which was adopted with a statewide vote of 56% in favor, 44% against.

The votes on this proposal at the five MSU precincts was overwhelmingly in favor, with 86% in favor, 14% against. Voters at the non-campus East Lansing precincts supported the proposal at a rate above the state average but below the percentage of support on campus. Non-campus precincts voted for Proposal 1 at 71% to 29%.

Ballot Proposal 2 [6] proposed creating a citizens commission every ten years to redraw the maps of the state legislative and Congressional district boundaries instead of by the Michigan legislature. Support for it was strong on both the MSU campus and in the off-campus areas of East Lansing. In both groups of precincts, the vote was 83% for Proposal 2, with 17% against. Statewide, the ballot proposal passed by 61% for to 39% against.

Student votes on key State and Congressional races

The race for both Michigan governor and the 8th Congressional district (that includes East Lansing) flipped from Republican to Democratic, and, in both races, a significant majority of the voters in each of East Lansing's 17 precincts voted for the Democratic candidate.

In the governor's race, East Lansing residential precincts voted 81% for Democrat Gretchen Whitmer and 19% for Republican Bill Schuette. (Whitmer lives in East Lansing and represented this area in the Michigan legislature from 2001 to 2015.) In the campus precincts, 78% voted for Whitmer, and 22% voted for Schuette.

In the Congressional race, off-campus precincts voted 81% for Democrat Ellisa Slotkin and 19% for Republican two-term incumbent Mike Bishop. In the campus precincts, people voted 76% for

Slotkin to 24% for Bishop.

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[4] <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/18-colleges-that-seriously-increased-voter-participation-midterm-elections?verso=true&fbclid=IwAR3KCUtxlrUJuAqYq7O-CPdJiBms0t4QtBJ80oGCyqcUWobLy4PiyAEsms8>

[5] <https://www.canr.msu.edu/michigan-ballot-proposal-forum/uploads/files/ge-49%20prop%2018-1.pdf>

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