

2021 WUSA Election Exit Survey

Winter 2021, Prepared by Jordan Daniels

Important Note

Prior to 2018, voters were asked to voluntarily give their demographic information. However, from 2018 onward voter demographics were instead taken directly from the voting system. As a result, voter demographics before 2017 are only a portion of the total voters for that year, whereas 2018 and later voter demographics are completely representative of voters.

The following table shows overall turnout for the past few years' elections:

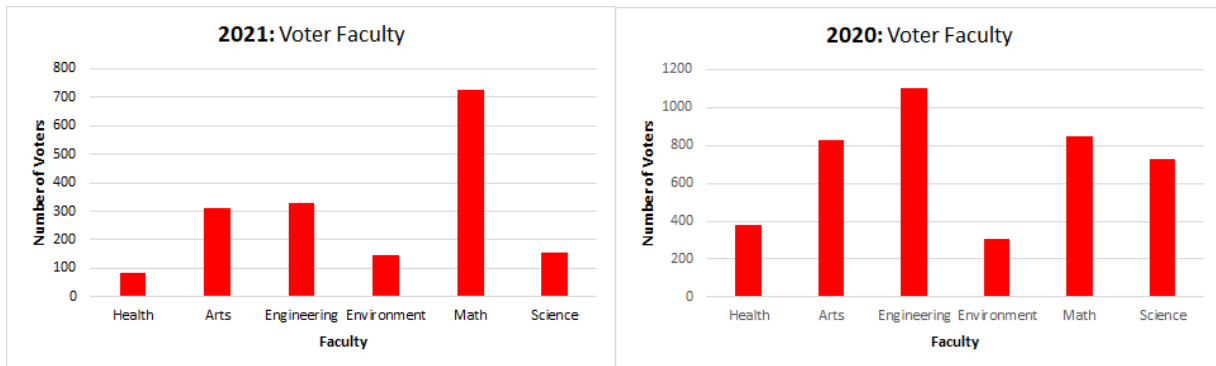
Year	Unique Voters	Eligible Voters	Percentage	Notes
2014	8846	29766	29.72%	First ballot done on vote.feds.ca GRT Referendum also happened consecutively with this Election
2015	2342	31907	7.34%	Vote.feds.ca broke this year
2016	5055	31680	15.96%	SLC/PAC Expansion Referendum also happened consecutively with this Election
2017	4837	32497	14.88%	We promoted that voter turnout was 15.28% this year, due to a flaw in the numbers we later discovered
2018				All Feds Executive positions were acclaimed. There was only one Senate-at-Large race that all undergrads were eligible to vote in. The other two races were only open to Science students. Science Society also hosted their election at the same time.
	1335	32443	4.1%	Senate-at-Large
	313	5867	5.3%	Science Senator
	324	5867	5.5%	Science Councillors
2019	5203	33240	15.65%	
2020	4120	33764	12.2%	
2021		34084	5.09%	All Executive positions were acclaimed

This year's election had all four Executive positions acclaimed. The overall voter turnout was 5.09%, a decrease from 12.2% the previous year.

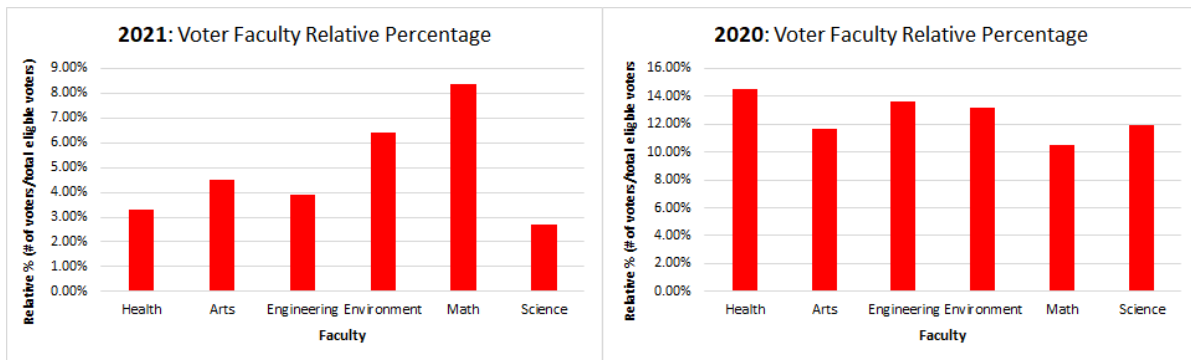
Voter Demographics¹

In 2020, there were 4120 total voters, while in this year's election there were only 1738 total voters.

The following graphs show the **number of voters in each faculty** at the University of Waterloo for both 2020 and 2021. In 2021, Math had the highest number of voters at 728, followed by Engineering (329), Arts (313), Science (157), Environment (145) and Health (85). This distribution of voters across faculties is quite different from the 2020 data.

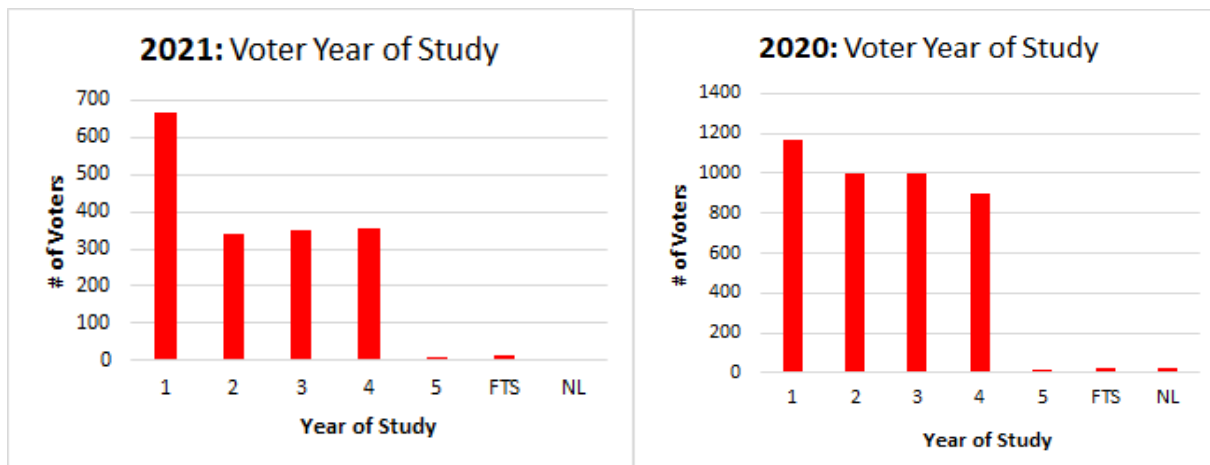


However, only looking at the number of voters does not reveal the relative percentage (# of voters/total eligible voters) for each faculty. The following two bar graphs depict this measure. In 2021, math remains the highest in relative percentage of voters at 8.37%, followed by Environment (6.43%), Arts (4.51%), Engineering (3.89%), Health (3.30% and Science (2.71%). Again, the distribution of voters across faculties is quite different from the 2020 data.



¹ This demographic information was received from James via Teams on March 8, 2021

The following graphs show the **number of voters per year of study** at the University of Waterloo for both 2020 and 2021.



In both 2020 and 2021, voters in their fifth year of study, full-time staff and NL² make up a very small number of voters. Moreover, in both 2020 and 2021 second year, third year and fourth year voters were nearly equal, with first year voters slightly higher. However, in 2021 first year students make up a higher percentage of the voters at 38.30% compared to 28.40% in 2020.

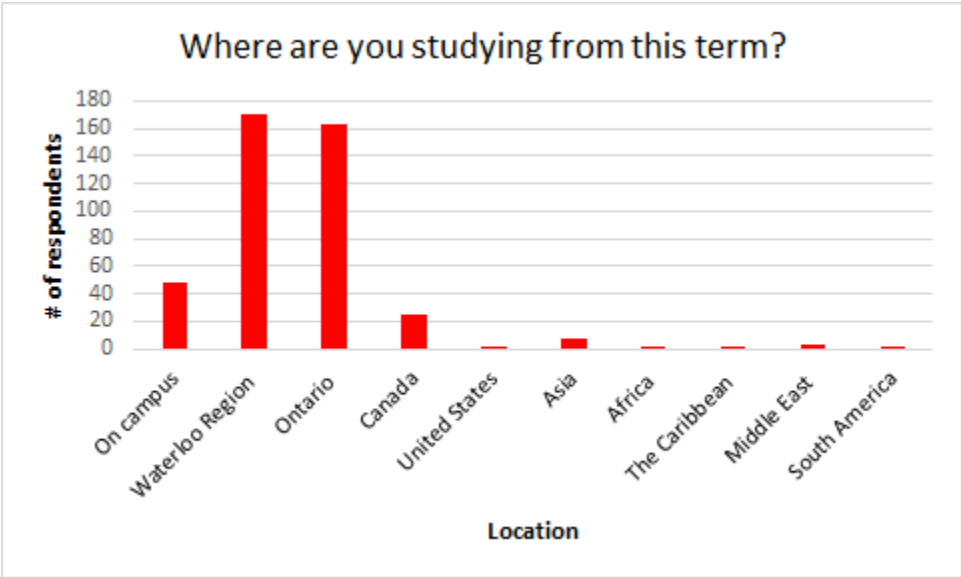
Exit Survey

After voting, all voters were asked to complete the 2021 WUSA Elections Survey on survey.wusa.ca. This year's exit survey had a 26.6% (460 responses) participation rate, compared to a 39.56% (1630 responses) in 2020. It should be noted that 422 of those 460 responses for this year were complete, while 38 were partial. The following analysis includes the use of both complete and total responses, depending on the nature of the question.

Location

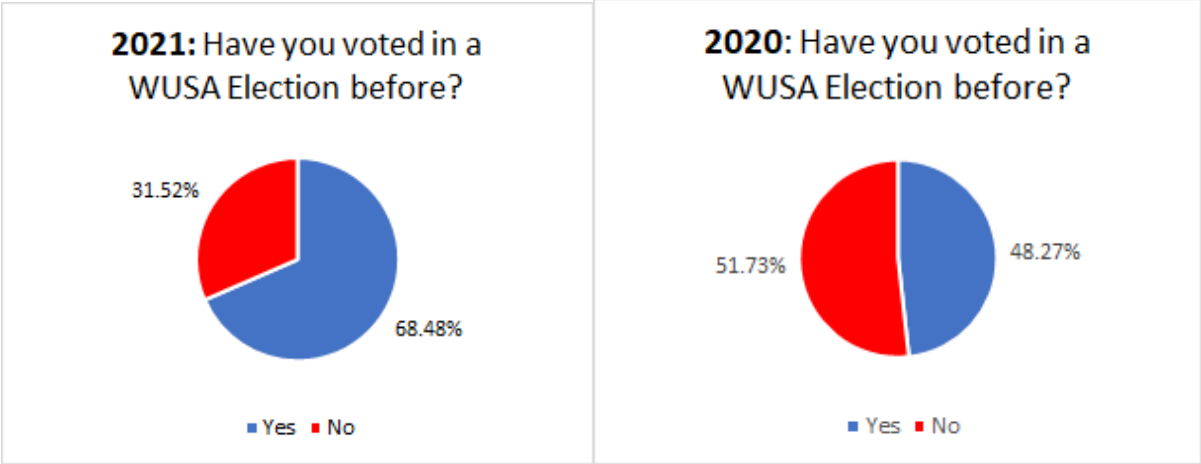
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all voting occurred online this year. However, respondents were still asked where they were studying from this term. It is clear from the graph below that the majority of students are studying from Waterloo Region (171 or 37.17%) and Ontario (163 or 35.43%), with some actually studying on campus (48 or 10.43%) and a few (25 or 5.43%) located throughout Canada. The remaining 15 respondents (3.26%) are located throughout the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East and South America. 8.28% of voters did not answer this question.

² Refers to "No Level" for post-degree or non-degree students



Returning Voters

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had participated in a WUSA Election before. The graphs below show that in 2021, 31.52% of respondents had not voted in a WUSA Election before, while the remaining 68.48% had. The majority of voters in 2021 were returning voters. This is the opposite of the previous year where the majority of voters (51.73%) in 2020 had not voted in a WUSA Election before, while the remaining 48.47% had.



Voting Promotions

Voters were asked to indicate where they had heard about this year’s WUSA Elections. The results are listed in order of prevalence:

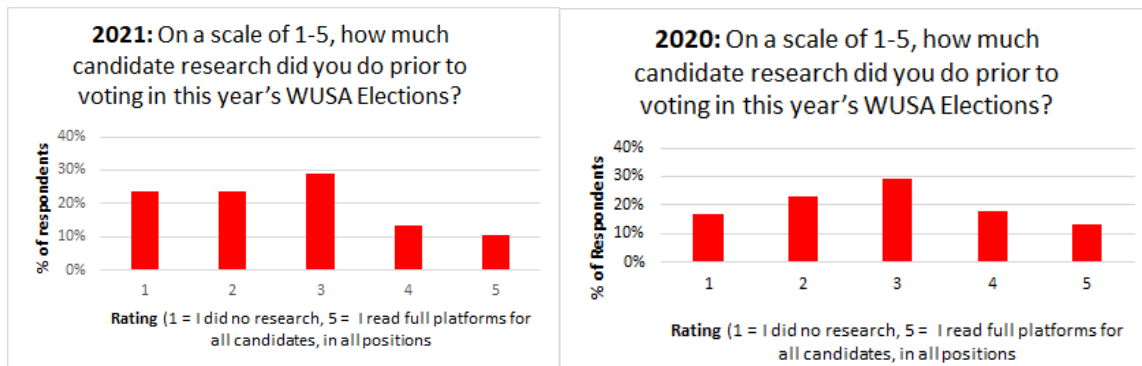
- Email (200 responses)
- WUSA/Waterloo Instagram (73)
- Reddit (38 responses)

- Directly from a Candidate (34 responses)
- From a friend (27 responses)
- Social media in general (17 responses)
- Facebook (9)
- Discord (8)
- From being involved with WUSA (4)
- MathNEWS (2 responses)
- From lecture (2 responses)
- LinkedIn (1 response)
- Slack (1 response)

It is also important to note that many students indicated that they heard about the election from multiple sources.

Candidate Research and Familiarity

Respondents were asked to indicate how much candidate research they did prior to voting in the 2021 WUSA Elections by rating from 1 (I did no research) to 5 (I read full platforms for all candidates, all positions). The majority of voters (28.91%) chose a 3 rating, meaning that their candidate research fell within the middle of the two extremes. This was followed by a rating of 1 (23.70%), 2 (23.46%), 4 (13.51%) and 5 (10.43%); this means that only a small percentage of voters thoroughly researched candidates prior to voting. These results are similar to the 2020 Exit Survey, where the majority (28.95%) of voters also chose a 3 rating and the rating indicated by the least amount (13.22%) of voters was 5. However, in 2021 there is an increase in the amount of voters who did no research from 17.1% in 2020 to 23.70% in 2021.



Voter Motivations

Voters were also asked what motivated them to vote in this year’s WUSA Elections. The top two reasons for voting were because of specific candidates (50 responses) and because of the overall importance of voting and democratic rights (48 responses). These two top answers were followed by:

- A miscellaneous category of reasons such as boredom, “why not?”, it’s easy to do, saw it in the email and saw it on reddit (41 responses)
- Wanting to feel a sense of community, school spirit or to get more involved (23 responses)
- Wanting to ensure that students at Waterloo have good representation (20 responses)

- Wanting to have a say/voice heard (17 responses)
- Feeling of responsibility or obligation to vote (16 responses)
- They always vote (14 responses)
- They care about student government and/or WUSA specifically (11 responses)
- They think it's particularly important to vote this year because of COVID (11 responses)
- Their friends encourage them (8 responses)
- The incentive (8 responses)
- They feel it's their civic duty (7 responses)
- They were impressed by the candidates/wanted to support them (7 responses)
- Wanting to ensure good leadership (6 responses)
- Dislike of the current system/want to see change (6 responses)
- Issues with RAISE (6 responses)
- Wanting to see support for specific issues/causes (5 responses)
- Curiosity (4 responses)
- Want to see the good work continue (3 responses)
- Interest in politics (2 responses)

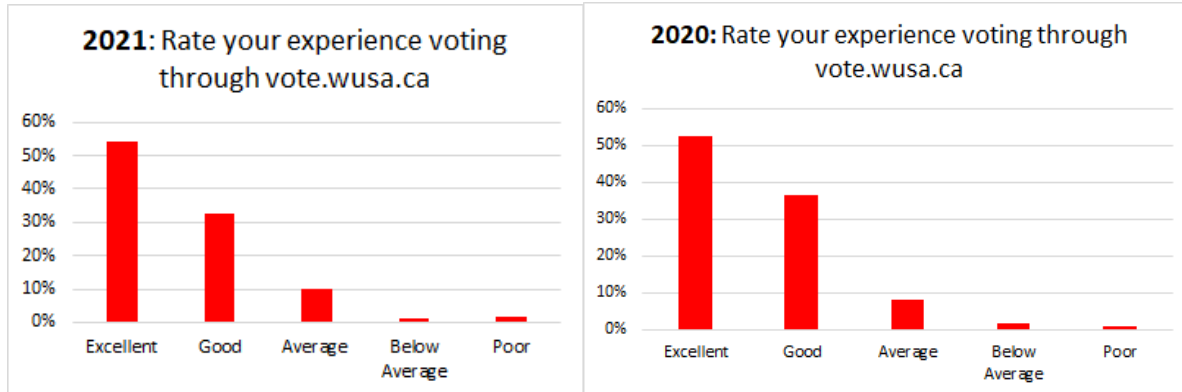
Top Issues for Students

Voters were asked what the top issues are they felt WUSA should be addressing. The top answers include:

- Fees, tuition, affordability and financial strain (82 responses)
- Mental health (68 responses)
- Concerns with online learning (49 responses)
- Quality of education and general issues related to grading, exams and fairness especially in light of COVID (39 responses)
- Anti-racism, equity and inclusivity (33 responses)
- Sustainability, climate change and environmental concerns (33 responses)
- Impacts and uncertainty related to COVID (19 responses)
- Return to campus and COVID protocols (18 responses)
- International student fees/supports (12 responses)

Satisfaction with vote.wusa.ca

Participants were asked to rate their experience voting through vote.wusa.ca. As can be seen in the graph below, the majority of responses (54.27%) indicated that their experience was excellent, followed by good (32.70%), average (9.95%), poor (1.66%) and finally, below average (1.42%). Compared to the results from 2020, the voter experience is similar for both.



Participants were then asked to elaborate on any additional feedback they may have about vote.wusa.ca. The most common suggestion was to include candidate information/platform and photos on the voting page (62 responses). Other suggestions include:

- A confirmation page/pop-up to confirm choice
- Having candidates on one page to reduce the amount of “clicking”
- Having the voting options as “Vote No” and “Decline to Vote” (rather than just “Decline” so that it’s more clear
- Allow for a “drag and drop” or “slide” function to move around candidates while ranking
- Having the email sent out on the day voting starts so that people can follow the link to vote right away
- Provide an explanation of governance (I.e., links to explain nomination process, what the different positions are, which positions are acclaimed) on the voting page
- Organize the roles by executive vs. Council
- Spreading the word so there are more nominations
- Longer voting period
- More promotion
- Better design/page aesthetics (I.e., make it look nicer)