

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE OF HENNEPIN COUNTY ELECTIONS

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

About the Partner

Hennepin County is located within the Twin Cities metropolitan area and is the most populous county in Minnesota. The county is a mix of urban areas, (Minneapolis), suburbs (Bloomington, Plymouth, Brooklyn Park), and rural communities (Rogers and Maple Plain).

Hennepin County Elections is responsible for supporting city and school district clerks in their administration of elections. The County office trains and advises clerks, programs voting equipment and ballots, manages some candidate filing and campaign finance, administers absentee voting by mail for the entire county except Minneapolis, provides voter education, communications, and community engagement, and manages voter registration data to make elections happen with fairness and accuracy.



Project Description

2020 marked a turning point for elections administration in Minnesota.

Absentee voting has grown in popularity since 2014, when Minnesota began implementing no-excuse absentee voting for all voters. With the 24-hour news cycle and the rise of social media, voters were inundated with information about the election and voting. Some of this information led to increased voter engagement but some information was incorrect, whether purposefully or out of confusion due to the many differences in state election legislation. The increase in absentee voting and the level of misinformation changed how voters engaged with the election and likely will have lasting impacts.

Using data gathered from the 2020 election (and possibly 2012 and 2016), Hennepin County Elections would like to learn more about what happened in 2020 and the potential impact the 2020 election will have on future voting trends.

Hennepin County Elections will use the results of this project for long-term planning affecting hiring, budget, space planning, services available, and communications.

Key Issues, Questions, and Ideas to Explore

1. Create visualizations: How can 2020 general election voting data be visualized to understand and analyze absentee voting timing? When did people vote? When did people vote, broken down by voting mode? Visualize the entire absentee by mail process: when were ballots requested, mailed out, and returned?
2. Predict future trends: How many people voted at their polling place on Election Day and what can we expect in the future? Does this trend indicate that we can reduce the number of polling places or election judges? How many people voted by direct balloting and how does that compare to other early voting states? What are the absentee voting trends we're seeing (voting mode breakdown by demographics and area)?
3. Analyze changes in voting mode: Due to many claims of fraud in the voting process and issues with USPS, many voters applied for an absentee ballot by mail and then decided to vote in-person instead. How many instances of this occurred? What are the costs of voters changing their voting method? Why did voters change their mind about their mode of voting?
4. Understand the impact of mailings/communications: Did the County or Center for Voter Information/Voter Participation Center's mailings impact the number of applications (both absentee balloting and voter registration) that we received from voters? What impact did the timing of these mailings have on response? How does this compare with another similar county (possibly Ramsey County)?

How Student Work Will Be Used to Build Community Resilience

- To reduce voting barriers for all Hennepin County voters by improving processes, planning, and decision-making within Hennepin County

Potential Community Partners or Stakeholders

- Ramsey County Elections

Existing Plans & Reports

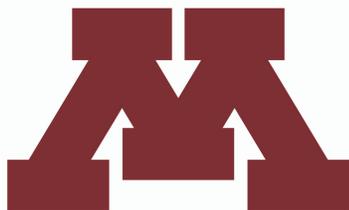
- Comprehensive voting data, including absentee voting by mail, absentee voting in-person, direct balloting, and voting in-person on Election Day
- Election instructional materials (websites, pamphlets, handouts)

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