

# SAVVY TIKTOK CAMPAIGNS GIVE NDP AN EDGE WITH GEN Z VOTERS

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Canada's 44th general election campaign is underway and parties will engage with voters in a variety of ways, from door knocking to press conferences and — importantly — on social media. Social media will play a key role in each party's "get-out-the-vote" strategy in this COVID election.

While online engagement has been an effective tool in politics, the new platform TikTok will be an important venue for engaging with Gen Z voters.

Federal NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh is the only party leader of with a TikTok account, which provides the NDP a clear advantage to translate Gen Z followers into young voters by engaging on their preferred platform.

TikTok is the new social media platform that exploded in popularity during the pandemic. A recent analysis estimated that 40 per cent of Canadian 18 to 24-year-olds use the app. TikTok Canada developed an in-app election guide with Elections Canada that will direct users to verified information on voter registration.

The use of technology to get-out-the-vote is nothing new in campaigns. However, engaging young adults can be more nuanced as their platforms shift every election based on trends. Columbia University professor Ioana Literat explained about the need for campaigns to communicate with younger voters on their preferred platforms — which happens to be TikTok in 2021.

Digital engagement is increasingly important for this election as traditional voter registration spaces like post-secondary campuses will be less available due to the pandemic. A study found that social media partially filled the voter registration and outreach gap in the 2020 U.S. presidential election and that 29 per cent of 18 to 21-year-olds heard about the election on TikTok. Nearly half of Americans ages 18-29 voted in 2020, one of the highest youth voting rates in recent history and an 11-point increase from 2016.

Singh has an active TikTok account and has amassed over 700,000 followers and 20 viral videos. His profile has political and social justice content, however, it is balanced by incorporating trending content — like his viral "Oh Nanana" dance video, which he used to promote social distancing.

The charismatic NDP leader thrives on the personality-based platform and recent polling shows that he has a higher positive impression rate amongst young voters. Contrastively, other party leader's carefully crafted personas could come off as scripted on TikTok.

Even with some users being under the voting age, TikTok remains the most effective social media tool to engage young voters. The NDP is tasked with leveraging Singh's TikTok to share platform commitments for popular Gen Z policy priorities, such as climate change and Indigenous reconciliation to earn the youth

vote. They kicked things off by sharing a video featuring a phone number for followers to text Singh, similar to a populist manoeuvre we've seen in Ontario politics in recent years.