Zencity

Communications Best Practices:
General Elections

August 2024

This report explores communication strategies in election discourse through an analysis of social media engagement and online discussions over the past year, with additional insights drawn from the lead-up to the November 2020 general election.

Introduction

Communications from local governments play a pivotal role in providing accurate information to the public. By promoting timely and reliable details, cities and counties can potentially enhance public trust, encourage voter turnout, and foster community engagement. Consistent and transparent messaging may help dispel misinformation and boost confidence in the electoral process, contributing to a more informed and proactive community.

This report examines communication strategies for election discourse by analyzing social media engagement and online discussions over the past year, as well as insights from the period leading up to the November 2020 general election. Through this analysis, Zencity has identify current practices and emerging trends. Our objective is to equip local government agencies with actionable insights aimed at enhancing their messaging, fostering community engagement, and encouraging informed participation in the electoral process.

Methodology

→ The report provides an analysis of data gathered from social media and local news outlets, reflecting the interests and sentiments expressed by residents on these platforms

→ The analysis does not include sentiment and opinions expressed on private social media discussion boards and groups— only those expressed in fully public forums.

→ The Zencity interaction count consists of all social media engagements (posts, tweets, likes, comments, shares, retweets, etc.). Therefore, the number of interactions reflects the volume of discourse and the level of interest among residents expressing their views online.

→ Our machine-learning algorithm classifies large amounts of interactions according to topic and sentiment — positive, negative, or neutral — which indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels about local issues, including those not initiated by the City. This model enables us to measure the interest that specific issues attract and understand how community members perceived these issues.

Executive Summary

1. Communicate election operation and information effectively:

Use Organic's publishing tools to post eye-catching infographics, communicate reminders for various deadlines, highlight multiple voting options, and inform about available language assistance and accessibility services to ensure inclusivity.

2. Demonstrate election integrity to build trust:

Showcase transparent election processes and vote counting by sharing the steps taken and behind-the-scenes content to ensure fair elections. Provide regular updates and maintain open communication channels to address concerns and combat misinformation.

3. Monitor social-media elections discourse in one place:

Set up projects with Organic using predefined keywords to track relevant discourse and monitor sentiment. Utilize the Social Inbox feature to ensure a timely response to comments and mentions.

4. Use the Zencity AI Assistant to set up a knowledge resource hub and gather resident feedback to specific questions in Engage:

Run the automated setup to quickly create a comprehensive project with an information page, surveys, discussion boards, and Q&A boards to collect feedback from the community.
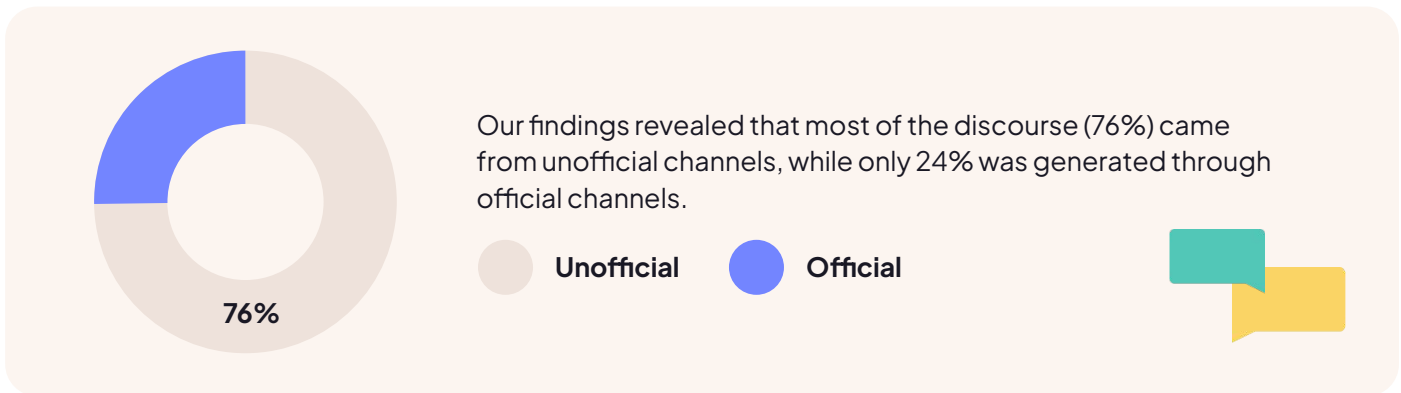
Election Conversation Overview

The recommendations in this report are based on the analysis of over discourse across 178 distinct municipalities since 2020. The local governments included in the analysis are diverse in population size, providing a comprehensive overview of election-related discourse across Zencity partners.

Online Mentions of Election Fraud

To better understand the discourse surrounding fraud and mistrust in the election process, we created a subset of data specifically focused on discussions from the 2020 elections. This subset isolated conversations related to election fraud and mistrust to provide a clearer picture of where these discussions originated and their main platforms.

Our findings revealed that most of the discourse (76%) came from unofficial channels, while only 24% was generated through official channels.

Unofficial   Official

On unofficial channels, X (FKA Twitter) was the primary source of conversation (79%). **In contrast, on official channels, Facebook was the main platform, accounting for 80% of the discussions.**

Understanding where the conversation is coming from is crucial for effectively addressing concerns and misinformation. By identifying the primary sources of discourse, local governments can tailor their communication strategies specifically for those platforms, ensuring accurate information reaches the community and trust is built in the electoral process.

Facebook   X (FKA Twitter)

Other

Official Channels   Unofficial Channels
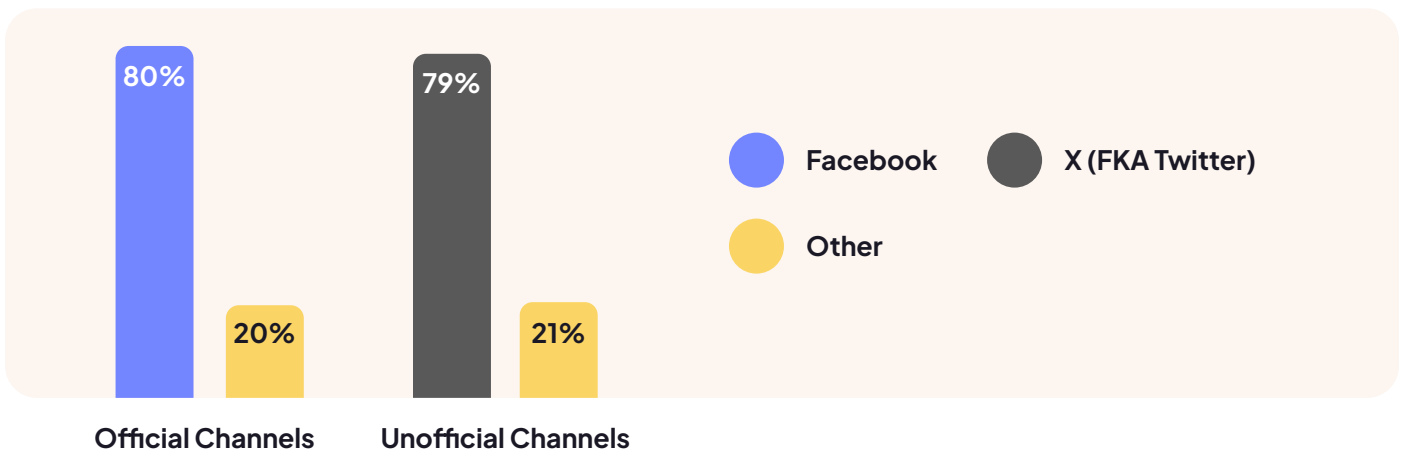
1 Communicating Election Operations and Information

Clear and effective communication about election operations is crucial for preparing voters and encouraging participation. Providing accessible information on ballot locations, registration processes, and the need for poll workers can significantly boost voter turnout and ensure smoother election day operations.

Use Infographics for Clarity and Engagement

Create visually appealing infographics highlighting key dates, registration deadlines, and voting instructions. Keep them simple, direct, and easily shareable to maximize reach on social media.

Regularly remind the community of important deadlines and steps to take for election preparedness.

Highlight Multiple Voting Options

Communicate all available voting methods clearly to accommodate diverse voter preferences. Use a consistent voice and reliable sources to maintain trust.

Provide detailed instructions and links to resources for each voting option to ensure voters understand their choices.

Promote Accessibility and Language Services

→ Inform voters about available language assistance and accessibility services to ensure inclusivity.
→ Use multiple languages in posts to effectively reach non-English speaking voters.

New York City Civic Engagement Commission
June 21 ·

#NYC, you have the right to bring an interpreter with you to the voting booth this June Primary.

CEC is offering free interpretation services in select languages and poll sites starting today! Visit our Election Center to learn about our interpretation services: on.nyc.gov/PollLangAssist

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لديك الحق في التصويت بلغتك! احضر مترجماً شفوياً معك إلى جناح التصويت. قُم بزيارة مركز الانتخابات @NYCCEC لمعرفة المزيد عن خدمات الترجمة الشفوية بلجنة المشاركة المدنية (CEC): on.nyc.gov/PollLangAssist

আপনার নিজের ভাষায় ভোট দেওয়ার অধিকার আছে! ভোটিং বুথে আপনার সঙ্গে একজন দোভাষীকে নিয়ে আসুন। সিভিক এনগেজমেন্ট কমিশন (CEC) দোভাষী পরিষেবা সম্পর্কে জানতে নির্বাচন কেন্দ্র যান: on.nyc.gov/PollLangAssist

Ou gen dwa pou w vote nan lang pa w! Fè yon entèprèt vini avèk ou nan kabin vòt la. Vizite on.nyc.gov/PollLangAssist a pou jwenn plis enfòmasyon sou sèvis entèpretasyon Komisyon pou Angajman Sivik.

Вы имеете право голосовать на своем языке! Зайдите в кабинку для голосования вместе с переводчиком. Посетите Центр выборов и узнайте больше об услугах устного перевода, предлагаемых Комиссией по гражданской активности: on.nyc.gov/PollLangAssist

آپ کو اپنی زبان میں ووٹ ڈالنے کا حق ہے! ووٹنگ بوتھ پر اپنے ساتھ ایک مترجم لائیں۔ سوک انگیجمنٹ کمیشن (CEC) کی ترجمانی کی خدمات کے بارے میں جاننے کے لیے @NYCCEC الیکشن سنٹر ملاحظہ کریں: on.nyc.gov/PollLangAssist

VOTE IN YOUR LANGUAGE

ON JUNE 24TH, 25TH AND 27TH

The Civic Engagement Commission will offer interpretation services in:

Arabic
Bengali
Cantonese
Mandarin
French
Haitian Creole

Italian
Korean
Polish
Russian
Urdu
Yiddish

at select poll sites!

JUNE 27: ELECTION DAY
JUNE 17-25: EARLY VOTING

More info at participate.nyc.gov

ВЫ ИМЕЕТЕ ПРАВО ГОЛОСОВАТЬ НА СВОЕМ ЯЗЫКЕ

25 ИЮНЯ: ДЕНЬ ВЫБОРОВ
15-23 ИЮНЯ: ДОСРОЧНОЕ ГОЛОСОВАНИЕ

ВЫ МОЖЕТЕ ПРИГЛАСИТЬ В КАБИНКУ ДЛЯ ГОЛОСОВАНИЯ ПЕРЕВОДЧИКА

✓ Это может быть ваш друг, родственник или сотрудник избирательной комиссии
✗ Это не может быть ваш работодатель либо представитель профсоюза

Узнайте больше по ссылке participate.nyc.gov

OU GEN DWA POU W VOTE NAN LANG PA W

25 JEN: JOU ELEKSYON AN
SÒTI 15 RIVE 23 JEN JOU OU KA VOTE BONÈ

OU GEN DWA MENNEN YON ENTÈPRÈT NAN BIWO VÒT LA AVÈ W

✓ Li gen dwa yon zanmi w, yon manm fanmi w oswa yon mandatè nan biwo vòt la
✗ Li pa gen dwa anplwayè ou ni reprezantan w nan sendika w

Ou ka jwenn plis enfòmasyon nan participate.nyc.gov

ভোট দিন আপনার নিজের ভাষায়

জুন 22, 23 এবং 25

সিভিক এনগেজমেন্ট কমিশনের পক্ষ থেকে নিম্নোক্ত ভাষার দোভাষীরা উপস্থিত থাকবেন:

আরবি
বাংলা
ক্যান্টনিজ
ম্যান্ডারিন
ফরাসি
হেইশিয়ান ক্রিওল

ইতালীয়
কোরিয়ান
পোলিশ
রুশ
উর্দু
ইয়িডিশ

নির্দিষ্ট ভোটকেন্দ্রে!

জুন 25: নির্বাচনের দিন
জুন 15-23: আগাম ভোটগ্রহণ

আরও তথ্যর জন্য, ভিজিট করুন participate.nyc.gov

New York City Civic Engagement Commission
August 23, 2022 ·

It's #ElectionDay in NYC! Need an interpreter to help you vote today? 🗣️🌐

You have the right to bring an interpreter to the voting booth. Look for the 🟠CEC tables at select poll sites for interpretation services in select languages! Our sites: https://on.nyc.gov/3u7nKqZ

New York City Civic Engagement Commission
New York City Civic Engagement Commission
New York City Civic Engagement Commission
October 22, 2020 ·

Did you know you have the right to bring an interpreter to the polling booth with you? They may be friends or family, anyone but your employer or union rep. The interpreters may help communicate with poll workers and also help translate their ballot.

Zencity

3 Build Trust by Demonstrating Election Integrity

Trust in the electoral process is paramount, especially in an age of widespread misinformation. Local governments can play a critical role in fostering transparency and confidence by openly sharing processes, engaging with the community, and addressing concerns head-on.

Showcase Transparent Election Processes and Vote Counting

➔ Share specific details about the steps taken to ensure accurate and fair elections, including insights into vote counting and mail-in ballot processes.

➔ Use behind-the-scenes content, such as pictures or videos of election officials at work, to demonstrate meticulous care and add credibility and transparency.

Placer County Government ✔
September 16, 2020 · 🌐

Cool! Here's an inside look at our democracy in action. Yesterday our Registrar of Voters Ryan Ronco (pictured) and Elections Manager Philip Chantri went on site to watch our ballots being printed - inspecting vote-by-mail ballots being inserted into their packets for mailing and verifying voter registration information is printed exactly. Ballots to all active voters will be mailed on Oct. 5. Visit https://www.placerelections.com for more information. Sign up to track your ballot at wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov.

Maricopa County Elections ✔
October 11, 2023 · 🌐

✅The logic and accuracy tests conducted on Oct. 10, 2023, for the November 2023 Jurisdictional Election found that the tabulators & accessible voting devices are accurate & ready for the upcoming election.

✅Las pruebas de lógica y precisión realizadas el 10 de octubre, 2023 para las Elecciones Jurisdiccionales de noviembre mostraron que los tabuladores y dispositivos de votación accesibles son precisos y están listos para las próximas elecciones.

Maricopa County Elections ✔
July 6, 2022 · 🌐

Today we completed the Logic and Accuracy test on the ballot counting equipment, which verified that the ballot counting equipment was programmed correctly and will count ballots accurately. We've passed and the equipment is certified and ready to count your August Primary Election ballots. Early ballots mail tomorrow! Make sure you're ballot ready at BeBallotReady.Vote.

3 Build Trust by Demonstrating Election Integrity

Maintain Regular Updates and Open Communication Channels

Provide routine updates on election preparations and progress while maintaining open channels for community inquiries through Q&A sessions and virtual town hall meetings. Offer prompt, factual responses to address concerns and combat misinformation.

Placer County Government ✓
February 28, 2020 · 🌐

Check out this helpful Q & A with Philip Chantri, Placer County elections manager, and Darik of Mix96Sac. Don't forget to exercise your civic duty and vote in the upcoming election!

Sarasota County Government ✓ was live.
September 22, 2020 · 🌐

We're LIVE from the Voices and Votes Smithsonian travelling exhibit at the Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Public Library with #SRQCounty Supervisor of Elections Ron Turner on National Voter Registration Day! Visit RegistertoVoteFlorida.gov to register to vote ONLINE for the November 3 General Election. The deadline to register is October 5. Questions about the elections process? Visit SarasotaVotes.com or call 941-861-8619. #SarasotaVotes

Mix96Sac ✓ was live.
February 28, 2020 · 🌐

Did you know you can register and vote in the same day in California? Placer County elections manager Philip Chantri joins us to talk voting and answering any ... **See more**

Placer County Government ✓ · Follow
November 7, 2020 · 🌐

Updated election results in Placer County are available on our Elections Office website. Election results are updated every Tuesday and Friday afternoon. View results: https://www.placerelections.com/election-night-results/

4 Monitor Social-Media Elections Discourse In One Place

Set up a project to capture and analyze elections-related discourse using specific, predefined keywords. This allows local governments to effectively monitor and respond to community conversations and sentiments related to elections.

Monitor Negative Discourse

By creating a keyword-based project to track negative discourse on elections, local governments can identify the sources of misinformation and distrust, enabling targeted corrective actions.
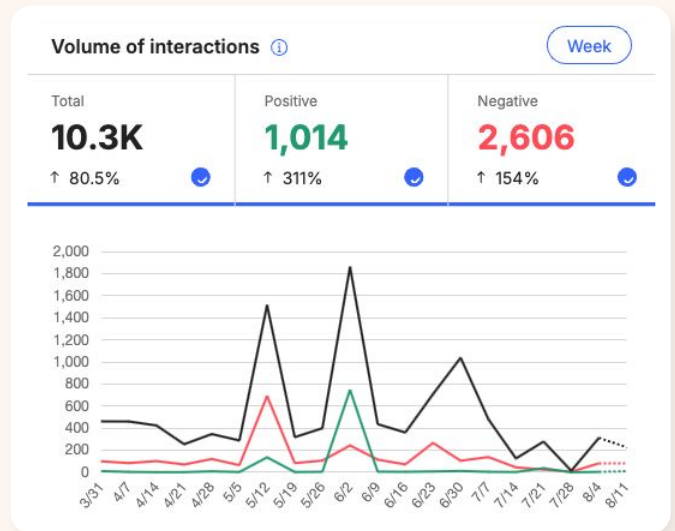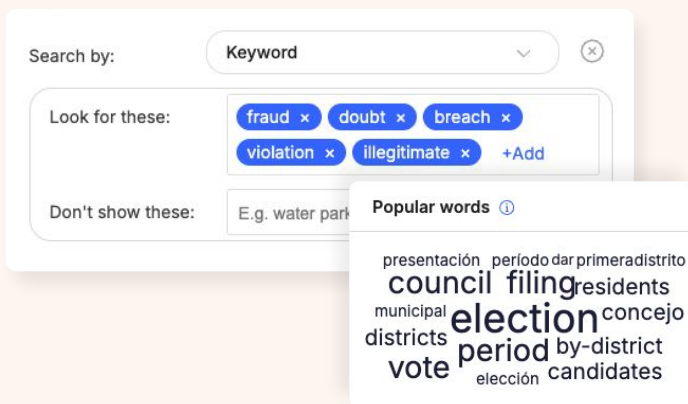
Utilize Zencity's Social Inbox for Timely Responses

Zencity's Social Inbox centralizes all comments made on your Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, and Twitter posts, making it effortless to track, reply, and manage these interactions.

Additionally, the Inbox not only captures comments on your posts but **also displays any mentions of your accounts across these platforms.** This powerful feature ensures you can easily monitor and participate in conversations, even those happening outside of your official channels.
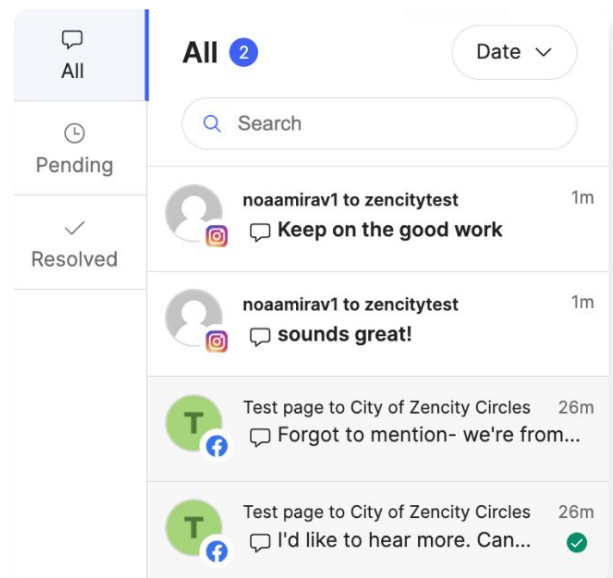
Use the Zencity AI Assistant for easy setup on Engage

Streamline your digital engagement with the Zencity AI-assistant. Easily create a comprehensive platform that includes a Q&A board and surveys with the Automated Setup feature. This tool allows you to gather valuable feedback, address residents' questions, and ensure a well-informed and confident voter base—all in one place.

With the AI-Assistant all we need to do is give the project a name and share some background information with the AI.

Next we choose what we would like to include in our project, like a landing page, a survey, a Q&A board, and more.

NEW

Automated Setup

Answer a few quick questions, and we'll auto-generate your project page, content and engagement questions to meet your initiative's specific needs. We'll use a combination of your responses, best practice defaults, and ChatGPT integration. Once complete, you can preview and make any required changes.

▣ Use Automated Setup

Customize My Own

Let's start by learning a bit about your Customize My Own

Let's give your project a title *

General Election 2024

21 / 100

Do you have some project background you want to share?

If so, enter (or copy and paste) an overview or introductory paragraph; we'll use the content to help us better generate a project page or engagement for you.

We want to hear from you about the upcoming General Election! This project will use surveys to collect your thoughts and a discussion board for your questions and suggestions. It's an easy way for you to share your opinions and get the information you need. Let's make this election awesome together!

Let's choose what to include in your project
Customize My Own

☑ Project Page	Construct an informational web page that educates and updates residents on the project topic with media, messaging, phases, dates and documents.
☑ Survey-Style Engagement	Deploy a survey to gather resident feedback, priorities, and opinions. Choose from a variety of question types, including close-ended, open-ended, numeric, ranking, matrix, image, and geographic.
☐ Budgeting Exercise (within survey)	Request input from residents to either choose whether to include or how much to allocate toward each line item in your budget or spending scenario.
☑ Q & A Board	Host a public board where residents can ask project related questions that government officials can answer.
☐ Ideation Board	Create a collaborative space for residents to suggest their own ideas, or upvote, downvote, and comment on others' submissions.
☐ Discussion Topic	Host a threaded conversation space for residents and government officials to engage in open dialogue.

Next we set up a timeline for when will the project be taking place and what are the key milestones. We can also include other characters, project sponsors and contacts.

We can simply explain to the AI what we hope to learn from running the survey.

Lastly, we will prompt some information to the Q&A board, and we're done setting up the project.

Project Content Page
Customize My Own

Does your project have any defined phases that could be used to create a timeline?

If so, enter (or copy and paste) your project phases below (phase name, start date - end date), and we'll use the content to generate a project timeline for you:

Voter Registration Drive: August 1, 2024 - October 15, 2024
Early Voting Period: October 16, 2024 - November 2, 2024
Election Day Preparation: November 3, 2024 - November 4, 2024
Post-Election Feedback: November 5, 2024 - November 18, 2024

239 / 1000

Survey-Style Engagement Options
Customize My Own

What do you hope to learn from running a survey? We'll use this text to help generate questions that gather feedback to meet your engagement goals.*

We hope to understand residents' main concerns about the upcoming election process, learn how residents are planning to vote, and identify the information community members need to feel confident when casting their vote.

220 / 400

Question & Answer Board
Customize My Own

What type of questions would you like residents to ask, or what desired outcomes do you hope to achieve by answering the public's questions? *

We want residents to ask about voting and the election. By answering, we aim to provide clear information and help everyone feel confident when voting

150 / 150

All ready!

The following components have been generated and are now ready for you to edit and preview.

Project Page →

Survey Style Engagement →

Question and Answer Board →