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Council polls: Pandemic doesn't deter voters

Average turnout of all four constituencies spread across 18 districts in the State stood at 72.3%

KARNATAKA BUREAU
BENGALURU/HUBBALLI/KALABURAGI

The first elections in the State amid COVID-19 pandemic, to four Legislative Council seats on Wednesday, recorded a turnout that was better than the previous elections, belying expectations. The average turnout of all four constituencies put together was 72.3%.

While average turnout in two graduates' constituencies was 72.9%, teachers' constituencies reported average polling of 70.26%. The four constituencies are spread across 18 districts in the State.

Elections were held to Karnataka West Graduates' (KWG), Karnataka South East Graduates' (KSEG), Karnataka North East Teachers' (KNET), and Bangalore Teachers' in which 40 contestants, including four members who had retired earlier, were in fray. The elections were necessitated after S.V. Sankar, R. Chow-



Voters wait to exercise their franchise at Sri Rajeshwari school in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

■ K. MURALI KUMAR

da Reddy Thoppalli, Sharanappa Mattur, and Puttanna had retired on June 30 after finishing their term.

Highest and lowest
KSEG constituency recorded the highest turnout with 74.84% of the total 1.09 lakh voters turning up amidst several precautionary measures owing to the pandemic. In 2014, of the total 98,337 vo-

ters, 52.25% had voted.

The Bangalore Teachers' constituency, which has the lowest number of voters in the polling list at 21,963, also reported the lowest among the four constituencies with 66.2% turnout. This in comparison to 2014 when 44.91% of the total 36,916 voters had participated in polling.

The KNET constituency reported 73.32%, of the total

29,236 voters exercising their franchise. In 2014, 60.3% of the 31,809 registered voters had polled in KNET. KWG, which had a total of 74,278 eligible voters, recorded polling of 70.11% as against 49.48% of 94,352 eligible persons voting in 2014.

Muted response
Earlier in the day, as the polling commenced at 8 a.m.,

the first two hours saw a muted response from the voters, but picked up after 10 a.m. By 2 p.m., the voting percentage had crossed 50% in both teachers' constituency, while the graduates' constituencies were inching closer to 50%.

Patients vote
Owing to the pandemic, elaborate arrangements had been made at the polling stations, including setting up isolation facilities for COVID-19 positive patients. In Dharwad district, two COVID-19 positive patients cast their votes wearing PPE kits at booth no. 50 in Annige. The administration had arranged transportation for them and the polling station was sanitised after they cast their votes. Besides Industries Minister Jagadish Shettar, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi and former Minister Basaraj Horatti were among prominent voters.