

Promoting Youth Participation

THEY VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME, BUT NOT THE LAST
TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND BEST PRACTICES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION
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Theoretical considerations

How do we define ,young people'?

Why should young people care about politics?


What are the main problems concerning young peoples' participation?

What are long term consequences on non participation?

What are the possible solutions?

Young people and democracy

While there has been significant policy and research interest in young people's political apathy, **it is also important to note that political structures, processes and debates often marginalize young people.** Therefore it is important to test how contextual factors influence the willingness to participate since the participation of young people in democratic institutions is not merely a question of young people's interest in politics, but also the result of mobilization channels that are available for them.



Main problems

1. Lack of political interest among young people
2. Low level of electoral participation
3. Young people do not perform better in non conventional forms of participation either
4. Different preferences of young and old voters and its impact on politics

1. Lack of Interest

Percent Reading Newspapers About the Campaign By Age

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+	Difference between 65+ and <30
1960	84	80	81	74	+ 10
1968	68	81	76	72	- 4
1976	68	78	77	70	- 2
1984	62	77	77	70	- 8
1992	35	50	57	60	- 25
2000	27	35	48	56	- 29
2004	34	39	51	61	-27

Source: American National Election Studies, Wattenberg (2012:16)

1. Lack of Interest

Changing Political Knowledge

	< 30	30-44	45-64	65+	Correlation between age and knowledge controlling for education
1960	55	63	61	53	.06
1968	61	60	61	52	.03
1976	53	64	64	57	.20
1984	38	45	50	43	.21
1992	28	36	40	38	.26
2000	34	44	52	50	.28
2004	36	47	52	55	.27

Source: American National Election Studies, Wattenberg (2012:70)

1. Lack of Interest

Percent Agreeing with Statements Regarding the Duty to Vote

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
„I feel it’s my duty to as a citizen to always vote.”	44	61	71	75
„ I feel guilty when I don’t get a chance to vote”	24	34	44	44

Source: June 2000 and August 2003 Pew Research Center surveys, Wattenberg (2012:120)

1. Interest in Established Democracies

Percent Who Say They Follow Politics in News Every Day

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+	DIFFERENCE	CORRELATION WITH AGE
JAPAN	17	25	44	68	+ 51	.40
USA	17	29	45	63	+ 46	.36
CANADA	13	27	46	55	+ 42	.30
SWEDEN	52	67	82	92	+ 40	.32
AUSTRIA	34	53	68	73	+ 39	.27
GERMANY	42	60	68	70	+ 28	.18
ITALY	37	48	57	59	+ 22	.13

Source: 1999-2001 World Values Survey, Wattenberg (2012:75)

2. Low level of Electoral Participation Turnout by Age in Presidential Elections

	18-20	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	65 + / 21-24 ratio
1972	48	51	60	66	71	71	64	1.3:1
1980	36	43	55	64	68	71	65	1.5:1
1988	33	38	48	61	67	69	69	1.8:1
1992	39	46	53	64	69	72	70	1.5:1
1996	31	33	43	55	62	68	67	2:1
2000	28	35	44	55	62	67	68	1.9:1
2004	41	42	47	57	64	70	69	1.7:1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau surveys, Wattenberg (2012:91)

3. Non conventional forms of participation

Percent of High School Seniors Who Have Ever Done Forms of Unconventional Political Action

	Take Part in Lawful Demonstration	Take Part in a Boycott
1976-79	21	29
1980-1989	19	20
1990-1999	24	28
2000-2004	19	23
CHANGE	- 2	- 6

Source: Monitoring the Future national surveys, 1976-2004, Wattenberg (2012:163)

4. Different preferences of young and old voters

Percent Voting for Independent/ Third-Party Candidates for President

	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
George Wallace 1968	15	11	12	8
John Anderson 1980	16	11	8	3
Ross Perot 1992	28	19	17	12
Ross Perot 1996	14	11	7	5
Ralph Nader 2000	5	2	2	2

Source: American National Election Studies, Wattenberg (2012:139)

What can be done?



Increase Civic Education

Level of education is the most important factor of political participation. A school civics curriculum enhances what students know about government and politics. Students could benefit greatly from an educational program that teaches them why politics matters.

Online games: Civic education has nearly disappeared from the school curriculum. This is why Justice Sandra Day O'Connor founded iCivics in 2009: to restore civic education in our nation's schools. Free resources include print-and-go lesson plans, interactive digital tools, and award-winning games. <https://www.icivics.org/>

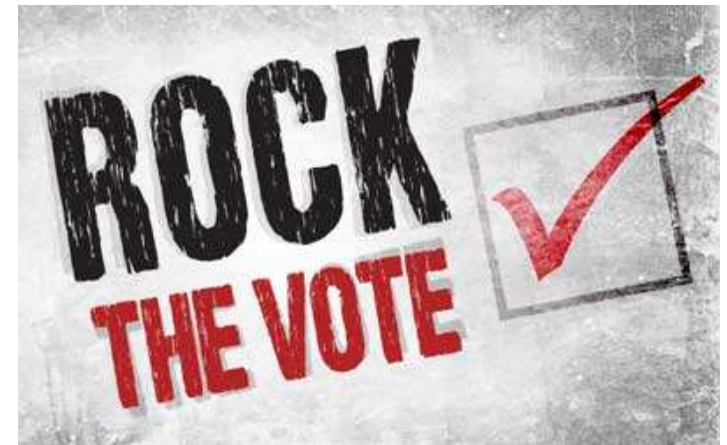
The Civics Education Initiative is simple in concept. It requires high school students, as a condition for graduation, to pass a test on 100 basic facts of U.S. history and civics, from the United States Citizenship Civics Test – *the test all new US citizens must pass.* <http://civicseducationinitiative.org/>

Civic campaign to mobilize young people

Rock the vote

The organization was founded in 1990 by Virgin Records America Co-Chairman Jeff Ayeroff, to encourage young people to vote. It is geared toward increasing voter turnout among voters ages 18 to 24. Rock the Vote is known for its celebrity spokespeople and its partnership with MTV.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AeRFhwSYVQ>



Reforms within the Parties

The decrease in the membership of the parties increases the under-representation of young people within the parties, thus reducing the age-group's interest-seeking ability.

Parties should provide more support for youth sections.

By introducing a youth quota parties could help young candidates to get elected into positions.

Registration Reform

State laws that continue to require citizens to register 30 days prior to an election now seem like a product of 20th century record keeping technology. With computer technology making it possible to update registration files more expeditiously than in the past, everyone should be given the maximum opportunity to register to vote.

Due to their high level of mobility, young people are faced with reregistering.

Reform of the Electoral System: Proportional Representation

In a single member district large number of votes may be wasted. Electoral systems that use some form of proportional representation ensure that votes end up counting: new parties tend to draw support primarily from young people.

If young people feel that their vote matters they might feel better represented.

Lowering voting age to 16



Lowering the voting age can drive demand for effective civics education in schools. Students learn best when the material presented is relevant to their lives. Letting 16- and 17-year-olds vote will bring much-needed relevance to civics classes.

Voting is the most reliable way for ordinary citizens to influence the government. Lowering the voting age would force local politicians to listen to sixteen- and 17-year-olds and address their concerns.

Research and empirical evidence from Austria shows that 16- and 17-year-olds are intellectually ready to vote.

Lowering the voting age can lead to a long-term increase in voter turnout. Research shows that voting is habitual. Age 16 is a better time to establish a new habit than age 18. Data shows that 16-year-olds do indeed vote at higher rates than older first-time voters.

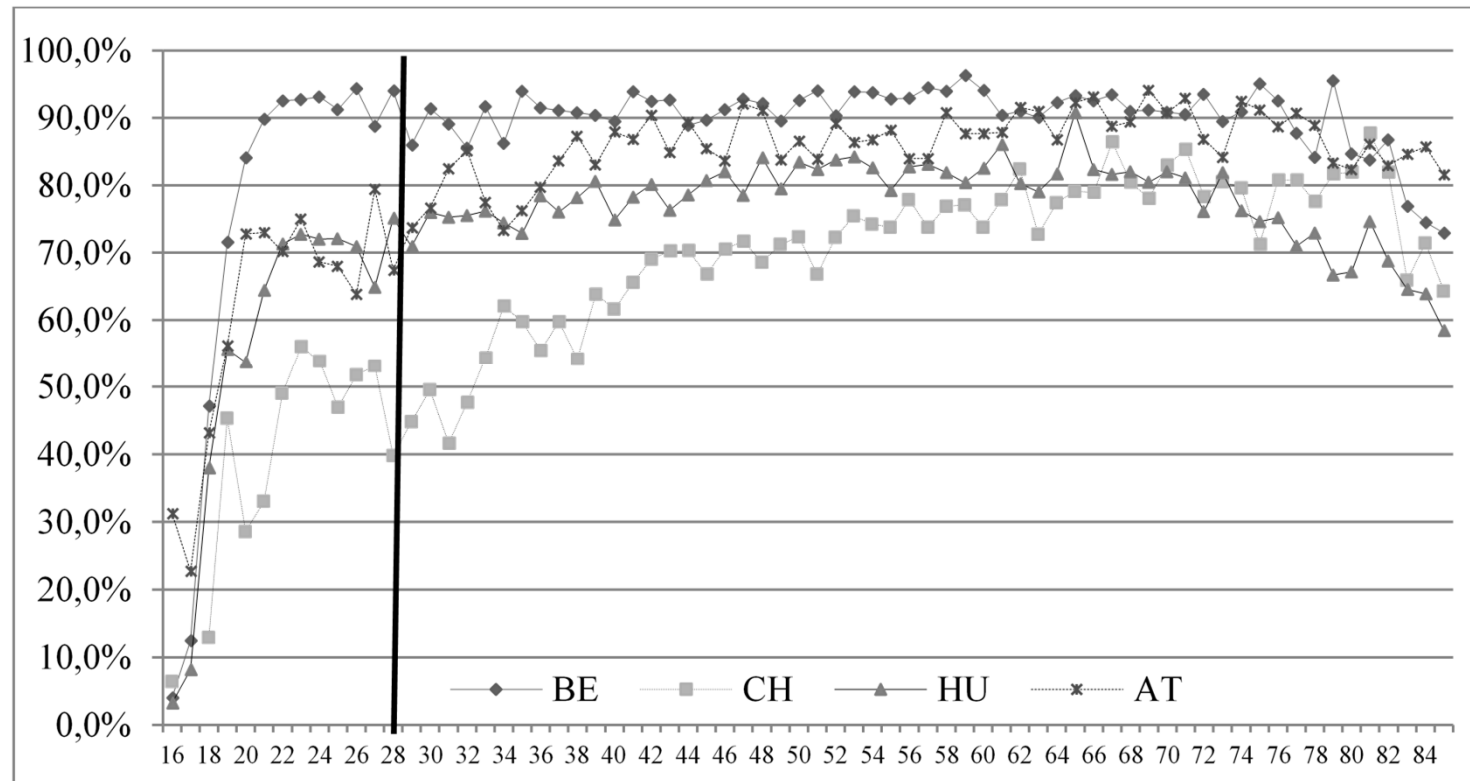
<http://vote16usa.org/5-reasons-for-lowing-voting-age-16/>

Compulsory vote – online?

Voted last national election (%)*

Compulsory vote works extremely well to achieve high turnout.

Estonia became the first nation to hold legally binding general elections over the Internet. The electronic voting system withstood the test of reality and was declared a success by Estonian election officials.



What solution would you choose?



Solution	✓	Reasons	Your choice
Increase Civic Education		Level of education is the most important factor of political participation.	
Registration reform: Make registration more user friendly		Due to their high level of mobility, young people are faced with reregistering.	
Reform of the Electoral System: Proportional Representation		It ensures that votes end up counting: new parties tend to draw support primarily from young people.	
Reforms within the Parties: more support for youth sections of parties; youth quota		Young people are underrepresented within political parties, a youth quota can help.	
Support targeted campaigns to mobilize young people		Young people need targeted messages to participate at elections.	
Lowering voting age to 16		Lowering the voting age can lead to a long-term increase in voter turnout	
Compulsory vote – online?		It works extremely well to achieve high turnout.	

Questions?



Thank you for your attention!



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Databases

ANES (American National Election Studies) <http://www.electionstudies.org/>

Pew Research <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/teens-and-youth/>

GSS <http://gss.norc.org/>

World Values Survey <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

European Datasets:

European Social Survey <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

Eurobarometer Youth <https://data.europa.eu/euodp/data/dataset/eurobarometer-2014-european-youth>

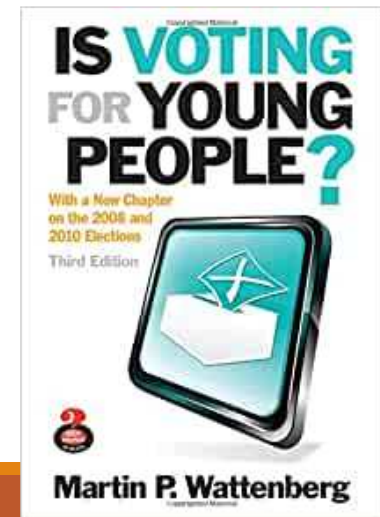
Civic Education Survey (CIVED) <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/cived/>

National Youth researches (Germany: <https://www.dji.de/en/the-dji/research-database.html>)

Further reading

GAGNON, JEAN-PAUL (2017): Democracy in Crisis. Are Young People to Blame? In: Young People, Citizenship and Political Participation (Marc Chou, Jean-Paul Gagnon, Catherine Hartung, Lesley J. Pruitt eds.) Rowman&Littlefield, London-New York.

Wattenberg, M. P. (2012). *Is voting for young people?: With a New Chapter on the 2008 and 2010 Elections*. New York: Pearson Longman.



Useful links:

TEDX Youth lecture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdDFLzyk94k>