

The relevance of civic education

GLOBAL SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY 2022 - EUROPEAN REGIONAL FORUM
PANEL I ON CIVIC EDUCATION
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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.

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/>

U.S. College students about games and civic education

In my high school everybody was really engaged into a game, called Investopedia. Everybody was really into it, very competitive about it. I think there is one thing that people are really engaged with is competition, if it is a game or something like, students can really get into it. (Justin)

In our high school we did mock elections. In the first two weeks we divided the class to Democrats and Republicans and all part could choose a vice-president and a president candidate. It was interesting that people got really into it but once the exercise was over nobody cared anymore.

(Marissa)

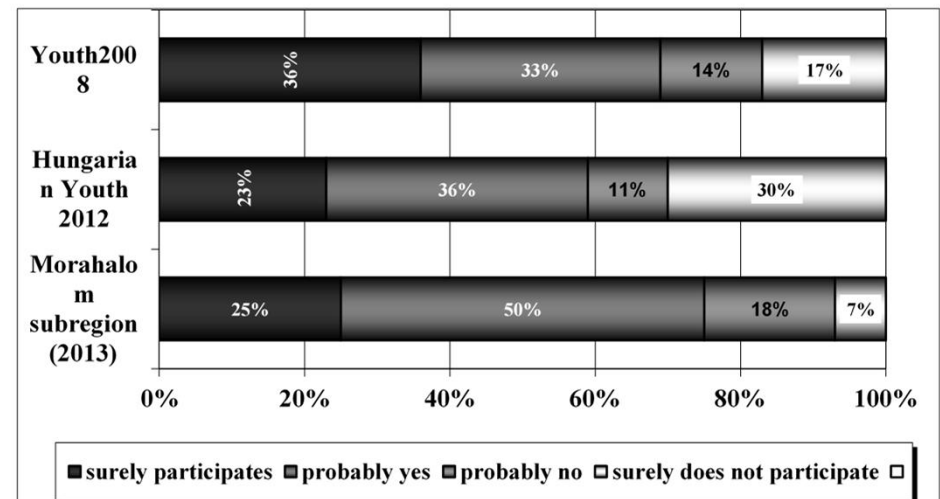
I think that simulation games are really good ways to engage students in the classroom. Giving them a goal, to set tools and series of tasks, work together with another students or work against other students to try and solve the goal, because it is very much of our system and how we have it. (Cody)

Support Local Youth Policy

Young people reported higher levels of interest both in politics and local politics where there were active youth NGOs compared to settlements where such structures were absent.

Local youth policy has positive effect on reducing the proportion of young people rejecting electoral participation.

Would you vote if there were parliamentary elections next Sunday (and if you were entitled to vote)?
(Youth N=8000, Hungarian Youth 2012 N=8000, Mórahalom subregion, 2013, N=130)
Distribution in percentages



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.

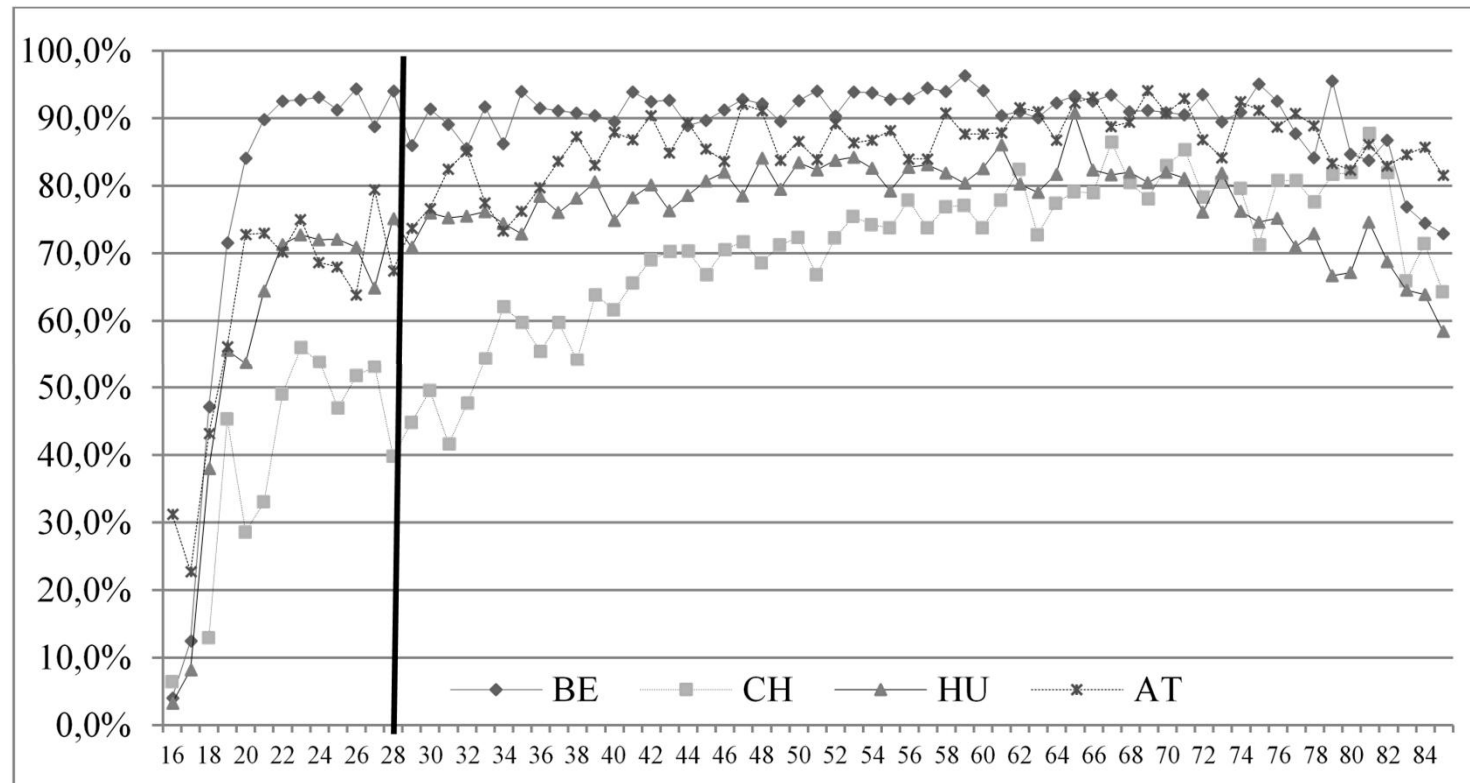
<http://vote16usa.org/5-reasons-for-lowing-voting-age-16/>

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.



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>

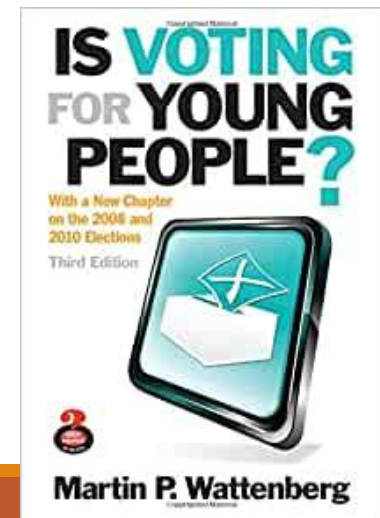
Civic Education Survey (CIVED) <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/cived/>

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>