Youth Voter Participation

INTERNATIONAL IDEA
INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

Youth Voter Participation

Involving Today's Young in Tomorrow's Democracy

INTERNATIONAL IDEA
INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

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Foreword[1]

For all of us who believe that democracy is the most effective political system for the common good and for achieving a balance between the authority necessary in all human societies and the freedom of the people – or the "least evil", according to Churchill's famous definition – the phenomenon of low or limited citizens' participation in elections, especially among youth, observed in many democratic countries today cannot but be a matter of concern.

As has been pointed out, democracy is the only organizational form of human society "which proposes the dignity of the human being as the basis of political order", since in a democracy authority is founded on the support of those governed, that is, "on the will of those constrained by it". In a democracy, rulers derive their power through election by their fellow citizens. Citizens are periodically called upon to renew confidence in their rulers, or to deny it and vest their confidence in others to replace those in power.

This being the case, it is clear that the authority of a democratic government - both political and moral - depends on the degree of confidence or support it has among its fellow citizens. Although a majority vote is sufficient to gain power, the authority and consequent power of the government to fulfil its duties properly is not the same if a government is elected by a majority of voters representing a limited percentage of the total number of citizens, or if it is elected with the support and confidence of the greater majority of its fellow citizens.

It is obvious that the strength of a government and its subsequent capacity or power to carry out its functions and do whatever is necessary to realize the common good largely rests on the degree of support it has among the population throughout the country. It is precisely this support that is expressed by democratic electoral processes.

For this reason the phenomenon of electoral abstention, which appears to be increasing in many democratic societies today, awakens justified concern and deserves to be examined in order to discover the causes and find ways to rectify it. It is even more important when this non-participation in elections occurs mainly among the young, as is the case in various countries.

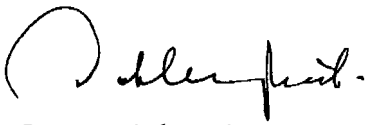
The report you have in your hands "Youth Voter Participation: Involving Today's Young in Tomorrow's Democracy", prepared by International IDEA analyses the problem of low voter participation among young people, its implications and ways to overcome it, with the objective of promoting electoral participation among young people throughout the democratic world.

To succeed in making the new generations assume their participation as citizens is a vital challenge for all democracies, and requires a commitment from governments and political parties, candidates, non-governmental organizations and all people and groups with a democratic spirit, alike. There is no universal

recipe for this; the social, cultural and political contexts vary from one country to the next, as illustrated by the four case studies presented in the report.

Personally, I am inclined to believe that the root of the problem lies in the individualism prevailing in this day and age, inducing young people to lose interest in the common good, and therefore, in political activity. The extent of each person's commitment to the society, of which they form a part, disappears or diminishes given the extent to which the person believes that their personal destiny depends solely on themselves. Only by opening the eyes of the youth to the communal sense of human existence will it be possible to awaken and strengthen their civil commitment.

The initiative of International IDEA to produce this report on a matter of such significance to the future of democracies – namely, youth voter participation – is worthy of the heartiest congratulations. I hope that the consideration it will receive at International IDEA's 1999 Democracy Forum will contribute not only to opening the eyes of young people to the seriousness of electoral non-participation, but will also open up efficient avenues or policies to overcome the problem.



Patricio Aylwin Azocar
President of Chile 1990-94

Santiago, 19 April 1999

[1] The foreword was originally written in Spanish and translated into English.

Overview

In many countries, particularly in Latin America and newly-established democracies, people have expressed deep concern not only about the overall low level of participation, but especially among specific groups like youth, women, and the indigenous population. In 1997, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) published a report that analysed statistics from more than 1,400 parliamentary and presidential elections held between 1945 and 1997 in over 170 countries. Among the findings of the report is that turnout across the globe rose steadily between 1945 and 1990, increasing from 61% in the 1940s to 68% in the 1980s. But since 1990 the average has decreased to 64%.[1]

Increasing reluctance among youth to participate in politics and exercise the right to vote is particularly alarming and amounts to a weakening of democracy. Therefore, it is imperative to reverse this trend and re-engage youth in the political and democratic process. This project takes the first step in that direction by documenting the scope and pervasiveness of the problem internationally, exploring its causes, and identifying possible solutions in the form of innovative ideas and concrete programmes to raise youth interest and participation.

International IDEA is ideally suited to undertake such a project. The Institute has in-house knowledge and a worldwide network of experts on these issues. It also has compiled the most comprehensive database of voter turnout statistics in the world. Through close co-operation with member countries and non-governmental organizations in all parts of the world, International IDEA is well-positioned to address this issue on a global scale. The theme chosen for its 1999 Democracy Forum is ***"Youth and Democracy"****. It is inspired by the same concerns that provide the rationale for this study: the challenge of ensuring a vibrant democracy by reaching out to young people and involving them in the decisions that will shape their future.*

Structure of the Report

The report is divided into four parts. Part I focuses on the unique role of elections — and the dangers of abstention — in a democratic society, with particular emphasis on the importance of the youth vote. Part II describes various techniques for measuring turnout, documents the scope of the problem with comparative data in national parliamentary elections in 15 European democracies, and analyses the reasons for low youth turnout. It also expresses the opinions and views of young people themselves through specially commissioned interviews that were conducted in several countries worldwide. Part III proposes a variety of activities on different levels available to governmental and non-governmental actors involved in drawing young citizens into the electoral arena. Finally, Part IV shows some of these strategies in action by outlining specific programmes for increasing youth participation in Chile, Russia, South Africa and the United States.

Definition of "Youth"

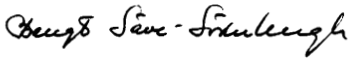
For purposes of this project, "youth" generally refers to young people under 30, with the voting age, 18 in the vast majority of countries, serving as the lower limit. The presentation and discussion of some programmes, however, concern children and teenagers below the voting age. Strategies aimed at more specific age groups are included in Part III.

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of the efforts and contributions of a great number of people.

A special thanks to all the writers – Dr Wolfgang Hirczy de Mino, Eva Anduiza Perea, Mónica Jiménez de Barros, Pedro Mujica Barrientos, Leanne McDonald, Catherine Barnes, Julie Ballington, Glenda Fick, Munroe Eagles and Thomas Jacobson – for their co-operation and valuable input. Thanks also to Anne Pandolfi for her work in co-ordinating the reporters responsible for conducting the interviews with young people.

Much gratitude is owed to the various organizations for permitting the use of the visuals throughout the book. Thanks also to the editorial advisory consultants, Professor Stephen E. Bennett and Dr Wolfgang Hirczy de Mino.



Bengt Säve-Södebergh
Secretary-General
International IDEA

Stockholm, March 1999

[1] *Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1997: a Global Report on Political Participation*, Stockholm: International IDEA, 1997.

Part I

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD VOTE

"Just too many candidates, just too little political substance. Maybe tomorrow will give us another choice of possibilities."

Anton Artemiev, 20
student at the University of Moscow, Russia

This was the view shared by many Russian youngsters during the 1996 presidential election. Anton Artemiev was eligible to vote for the first time that year, but perplexed by the political situation, he decided to abstain. Is this experience shared by youth in other parts of the world? What are the implications of low youth turnout for democracy and for young people themselves? Part I outlines the dangers for democracy of abstention, and stresses the particular importance of the youth vote.

why

Daniela Capaccio and Wolfgang Hirczy de Mino

A. Electoral Abstention as a Problem of Democracy

Elections play a vital role in a system of representative democracy. They are the primary mechanism with which to implement the principle of popular sovereignty. Ultimate authority rests with the people, and the people delegate this authority to government representatives through the electoral process. Periodic elections provide citizens a means to replace incumbents and change the government. Thus, they help the public to keep office-holders and political parties accountable.

Because of the unique role of elections in a democratic system, voting also has a special place among the many different forms of political participation that citizens can engage in to influence government. Furthermore, voting is the only form of participation in which each citizen has an equal say (one person, one vote). The right to vote is a great equalizer in political influence; in practice, however, this is only true for those who exercise it.

Unique role of elections

If those who vote differ significantly in key political attributes from those who do not vote, a distortion in representation is likely to ensue. After all, the outcome of an election only reflects the judgement of the *voting* public. Groups known to have a lower turnout rate may be neglected in policy-making and thus in policy outcomes.

Universal participation in elections ensures the faithful representation of the popular will and thus prevents such distortions. It also enhances the legitimacy of the system. By performing their role as voters, citizens affirm their support for the political order. This promotes political stability, but it is also inherently desirable on normative grounds. According to democratic theory, the right to vote in elections should not only be universally guaranteed, it should also be exercised. The reality of contemporary elections, however, reveals that there has been a decline in voter turnout throughout the world.

Enhancing legitimacy

B. Why Participation of Young People is Important

Young people's involvement in politics can take a variety of forms, just like that of any other age group. Voting constitutes only one element of a much more extensive repertoire of political participation, but it is the most basic democratic act that all citizens should perform on a regular basis.

Why should we be concerned with youth turnout? A number of reasons can be offered. Some apply equally to all groups of voters, others are unique to young people.

- **Effect on turnout:** Young people should vote to sure high overall turnout. The larger the group (as a percentage of all eligible voters) and the lower its group-specific turnout, the more it will depress the aggregate turnout rate.

Ensuring high overall turnout

- **Substantive representation of youth:** Young people may have political interests that differ from those of older voters and which should be represented. The assumption is that voting will affect the nature of representation and ultimately the content of public policy. If young people don't vote, they and their distinct interests are more likely to be ignored or neglected by policy-makers.

Making your voice heard

Youth Voter Participation

- **Political socialization of the next generation:** Young people should vote to develop a habit of voting from the start, and thus ensure high turnout in the future. Getting them to vote is part of their political socialization. It encompasses two aspects: behavioural and attitudinal. Behavioural means acting politically on the basis of attitudes, preferences and opinions, such as by discussing politics with others, participating in political events, and through voting. Attitudinal involvement means acquiring knowledge about how government works and of public affairs, as well as developing an interest in and opinions on political issues of the day. The socialization argument is specific to young people. It considers the future adverse effects of inadequate political education. If young people fail to acquire habits of good citizenship and democratic responsibility in their formative years, the future of democracy may be in question.

Early political socialization

- **Ability to exercise political influence:** Like economically underprivileged segments of a society, young people may be assumed to have few resources to influence policy-making and may further be handicapped by a perception that they are not mature enough to speak for themselves, or even to know what is good for them. However, the ballot is a great equalizer. Everyone's vote counts equally, even if there are vast disparities of resources. By voting, young people have the same ability as others to exercise political influence or pressure.

Exercising political influence

- **Political integration strengthens democracy:** Young people who are involved in the electoral process affirm their support for democracy as well as acquire a stake in the system and an appreciation that they, too, can affect politics and policy. Indeed, political integration of youth may promote public order and democratic stability as long as young people are given a real voice, their vote is seen as meaningful and influential, and the system is responsive to their input.

Strengthening democracy

ASSESSING AND ANALYSING YOUTH TURNOUT

Part II

Before we can devise effective ways to turn young citizens into active participants, we must analyse the scope, nature, and roots of the problem. Part II presents various means by which both the aggregate and youth vote can be measured, explaining the advantages and difficulties of each technique.The second chapter analyses the relationship between age and turnout in national parliamentary elections in 15 European democracies. While this chapter focuses on youth turnout in Western European democracies, due to the difficulty in obtaining comparative data and official age-based participation statistics from other regions of the world, it nevertheless offers interesting insights into the problem and sheds some light on possible solutions. A final chapter outlines factors that are linked to low turnout and non-voting. Based on interviews with young people from around the world, their views and concerns suggest ideas about what would encourage them to vote in greater numbers.

Draft

Wolfgang Hirczy de Mino

A. Measuring Turnout

This chapter presents the two basic sources for measuring turnout: official registers and surveys. It outlines how the two methods are used to generate age-specific participation rates, the difficulties involved in obtaining this data, and an explanation of how surveys may increase turnout.

To calculate the *overall turnout rate* for a country, geographical subdivision, or electoral district only two aggregate-level statistics are required: the size of the electorate and the number of ballots cast. One of the following two measures is conventionally used to report turnout: (1) the percentage obtained by dividing the number of ballots by the number of people on the electoral roll, or (2) the percentage obtained by dividing the number of ballots by the estimated number of people of voting age. A further distinction may be made in terms of valid ballots versus all ballots.

The *youth-specific turnout rate* is more difficult to measure because age-homogenous voting precincts are very rare. Even where such voting units do exist, for example on college campuses, the eligible pool of young voters in them would still not constitute a representative sample of youth nationwide. Information on whether or not young people voted must be determined at the individual or micro level. There are two basic sources of such data: (1) official registers and (2) surveys.

1. Official Registers

In localities where the electoral register contains citizens' dates of birth as part of the identifying information, it is possible to obtain group-specific turnout rates based on the official records. Voting cards, containing age or date-of-birth information, may be mailed out before the election, then exchanged for ballots at the polling station.

Voting cards

The ballots themselves may also be marked with demographic information, or those cast by young voters distinguished by colour. Another technique, that of providing special ballot boxes for young people, is a feature of the Kids Voting USA programme (see Case Study). Although this example concerns a mock ballot, the procedure could also be implemented in real elections to measure the youth vote.

Special ballot boxes; Ballots in different colours

It is technically feasible to generate good data on voter participation by age in the process of administrating the elections. This is rarely done, however, either because of the effort and expense incurred, or because administrators simply do not consider compiling and reporting such data worthwhile.

Furthermore, official election returns may underestimate true turnout because of an inflated number of eligible voters. The key factor here is the currency of the electoral register. The more time elapsed since the last update, the more voters will have died or moved away with the result that "deadwood" remaining on the rolls will obviously depress the turnout rate.

"Deadwood" on the rolls

Use of the *age-eligible population* to compute the turnout rate also has its problems. In some locations, for example, the gap between the resident voting-age population and their legal status for purposes of the franchise may be substantial due to the presence of a large number of non-citizens, who are rarely allowed to vote. Other problems arise where a sizeable percentage of eligible voters remain unregistered, a situation common in those jurisdictions where it is the responsibility of voters – rather than public authorities – to take the initiative to register.

2. Surveys

Consequently, the most common source of information on voter participation is the pre- or post-election survey or poll, which not only provides data on respondents' age, but also demographic, sociological, and attitudinal attributes. Another major form of survey – the exit poll – is of little use here.[1] While it is a vital source of timely information on vote choice, it automatically excludes non-voters.

What makes a good survey

A good survey requires that the sample be *representative*. This is usually achieved by random selection of respondents or quota sampling. The key factor in avoiding a biased sample which over-estimates active voters is to make sure non-voters are included. Indeed, the turnout rate derived from self-reported voting behaviour in sample surveys is typically higher than the official turnout rate computed on the basis of registered voters or the estimated size of the population eligible to vote. It is also important to recognize that non-voters may refuse to participate in a survey for the same reason (or reasons) they do not vote.

Furthermore, studies conducted in the United States reveal that some respondents actually claim to have voted, whereas, according to official voting records, they did not. Apparently some non-voters are reluctant to admit their failure to vote when put on the spot. Others may have their memories distorted by social desirability and their underlying agreement with the notion that they ought to have voted.

Some respondents lie

Sample size may also affect the quality of a poll. Depending on the age-structure of the community, the voting age, and the definition of "young voters" in terms of the age range, their share of the electorate – and thus their share of a representative sample – may be small. The numbers within a sample may be too small for any difference in age-specific turnout to be statistically significant.

Disaggregation by groups through an analysis of good survey data can shed light on the question of who the voters and non-voters are, what they look like and how they differ along a spectrum ranging from no or minimal participation to high-level involvement. Obviously teenagers and young adults do not constitute a monolithic bloc of apathetic non-voters. Why is it that many do vote and some even become involved as volunteers, while others have bade farewell to the democratic process or never experienced a political awakening in the first place?

Youth is not a monolithic bloc

Political socialization of today's youth, how it works or fails to work, continues to puzzle social scientists – be it in mature, fledgling, or newly-established democracies. Indeed these questions pose a challenge for social scientists. On the other hand, as will be seen in the next chapter, the basic pattern – that young people flock to the polls much less eagerly – can be documented with solid empirical evidence relying on already existing data.

As already noted, the reluctance of some respondents to admit they abstained can also distort the turnout rate. Similar concerns arise when respondents are asked why they did not vote. Questionnaires may allow for an open-ended answer or a list of reasons from which the respondent chooses the most fitting. Theoretically, such surveys should enable respondents to speak their mind and offer more nuanced explanations of their views of the electoral process. But beware! They can just as often yield more shallow clichés and ready-made excuses than thoughtful answers.

Surveys may increase turnout

Surveys themselves may actually increase turnout, according to experience gained in using this method to unravel the mystery of the disappearing voters. The phenomenon of respondents giving socially desirable responses rather than owning up to the truth suggests that in regard to political participation, people are sensitive to community expectations and pressure. When they are asked why they did not vote, the question obviously carries the implication that there are good reasons why people ought to vote. Even if it is subtle, non-voters are put on the spot for failing to act in accordance with the norm. Could such community pressure be marshalled to induce behaviour modification toward greater participation, just as it shapes individual conduct in other areas of social life?

There is indeed some encouraging evidence that citizens might be induced to assume responsibility by being held accountable. It has been found that pre-election survey participation induces a higher voter participation among survey participants. The implication is this: if in fact people vote in greater numbers when asked about their voting intentions and behaviour, and are thus confronted with the underlying expectation that they ought to vote, then perhaps we can capitalize on this dynamic to stimulate turnout.

Encouraging evidence

Eva Anduiza Perea

B. Youth Turnout in National Parliamentary Elections

This chapter analyses the relationship between age and turnout in national parliamentary elections in 15 Western European democracies, with a special focus on youth turnout. It seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- *What is the relationship between age and participation?*
- *Is the level of turnout lower for the youngest age groups of the electorate?*
- *Is there any significant variation in youth turnout across countries?*
- *Which factors may increase the participation rate of young citizens?*

1. Data Sources

The analysis of the participation rate of different age groups must be understood by looking at survey data, for only this includes information on the socio-political characteristics of electors as well as on their electoral behaviour. Aggregate data such as official turnout results or even data taken from an electoral census does not provide specific information on the age of electors, and although it may be very useful to analyse other aspects of electoral participation, it is not adequate to answer the questions addressed above.

Post-electoral surveys: advantages and disadvantages

Individual-level data about electoral behaviour in national parliamentary elections and age can be obtained from post-electoral surveys and Eurobarometers.[2] Eurobarometers have the enormous advantage of being almost entirely comparable and ready-to-use, in the sense that cross-country homogenization has been realized at the moment of designing the questionnaire. However, they also present several problems. First, the time elapsed between the election and the interview is not the same for all countries – in the Western European case it varies from almost four years in Germany to a few days in Italy. This means that while age is measured at the time of the interview, the question of whether the respondent turned out to vote refers to an election that occurred some time before. Thus, the age of the respondent at the moment of the interview is not the same as the age at the moment of the election, and this discrepancy should be corrected when analysing the data. Furthermore, there may also be some recall error, since some people may not remember with certainty whether or not they voted in an election that took place months or even years before the date of the interview.

Country-specific post-election surveys, on the other hand, present a different set of strengths and weaknesses. They are carried out immediately after the election and are designed specifically to deal with election-related questions. The country sample size in post-election surveys is usually larger than in Eurobarometers, but they are hard to merge in a comparable frame.

Table 1 sets out the data used for the analysis presented here. It includes one survey related to an election in the late 1980s or early 1990s for each of the 15 countries included in the analysis. Where an appropriate post-election survey could not be found, Eurobarometer 41.1 was used. This Eurobarometer was conducted just after the European Parliament elections of 1994 and includes a direct question on whether the respondent voted in the last general election of his/her country. The German database is not based on a single post-election survey but resulted from the merger of monthly barometers that included electoral behaviour in the past election as one of many variables. Due to the particular characteristics of the 1990 German election (the first after the reunification), only West Germany is considered.

Table 1

Survey Data Sources and Characteristics

Country and Election Date	Survey and Source[3]	Sample Size	Electorate
Belgium 24.11.91	1991 General Election Study (ISPO, K.U. Leuven)	4,511	7,144,884
Denmark 12.12.90	Danish Election Study 1990 (Danish Data Archives)	974	3,941,499
Finland 17.03.91	Finnish Parliamentary Election Study 1991 (Research Institute for Social Sciences, University of Tampere)	1,472	4,060,778
France 21.03.93	Eurobarometer 41.1 postelectoral EP elections 1994 (International Consortium for Political and Social Research)	966	37,871,350
(West) Germany 02.12.90	Politbarometer West (January-December 1991), German Election Study (International Consortium for Political and Social Research)	11,269	48,099,251
Great Britain 09.04.92	British General Election Study 1992 (Economic and Social Research Council)	2,855	43,275,316
Greece 10.10.93	Eurobarometer 41.1 postelectoral EP elections 1994 (International Consortium for Political and Social Research)	920	8,972,258
Ireland 25.11.92	Eurobarometer 41.1 postelectoral EP elections 1994 (International Consortium for Political and Social Research)	875	2,557,036
Italy 28.03.94	Eurobarometer 41.1 postelectoral EP elections 1994 (International Consortium for Political and Social Research)	984	47,435,689
The Netherlands 06.09.89	Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 1989 (International Consortium for Political and Social Research)	1,754	11,112,189

Country and Election Date	Survey and Source[3]	Sample Size	Electorate
Norway 13.09.93	Norwegian Election Study 1993 (Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services)	2,194	3,259,967
Portugal 06.10.91	Eurobarometer 41.1 postelectoral EP elections 1994 (International Consortium for Political and Social Research)	874	8,322,481
Spain 06.06.93	Postelectoral 1993 (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas)	5,001	31,030,511
Sweden 15.09.91	Swedish Election Study 1991 (Swedish Social Data Archives)	3,700	6,413,172
Switzerland 20.10.91	Analyse des Elections Fédérales 1991 (Universities of Geneva, Bern and Zurich)	1,002	4,510,784

The use of survey data presents a problem for the study of electoral participation. The percentage of people that claim to have voted in surveys is higher than the official percentage of turnout in the election. Samples may easily over-represent voters over non-voters; for the very same reasons that non-voters did not vote, they may be less willing to answer a questionnaire on political attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, people are usually reluctant to admit that they have not complied with their civic duty to vote. Finally, another reason that accounts for this difference is that the number of registered voters may be inflated and thus the real turnout rate may be higher than the official one. Table 2 shows that the size of the discrepancy between the official turnout rate and the percentage of voters calculated from survey data varies cross-nationally.

Table 2

Official and Survey Turnout Rates

Country	Turnout in survey	Turnout in election	Difference
Belgium	97.1	92.7	4.4
Denmark	91.3	82.8	8.5
Finland	86.3	68.4	17.9
France	79.9	69.3	10.6
(West) Germany	90.4	78.6	11.8
Great Britain	87.5	77.8	9.7
Greece	96.4	78.2	18.2
Ireland	86.5	68.5	18.0
Italy	96.3	87.3	9.0
The Netherlands	92.6	80.3	12.3
Norway	86.0	75.8	10.2
Portugal	85.4	68.2	17.2
Spain	86.0	76.4	9.6
Sweden	93.6	86.8	6.8
Switzerland	63.7	46.0	17.7

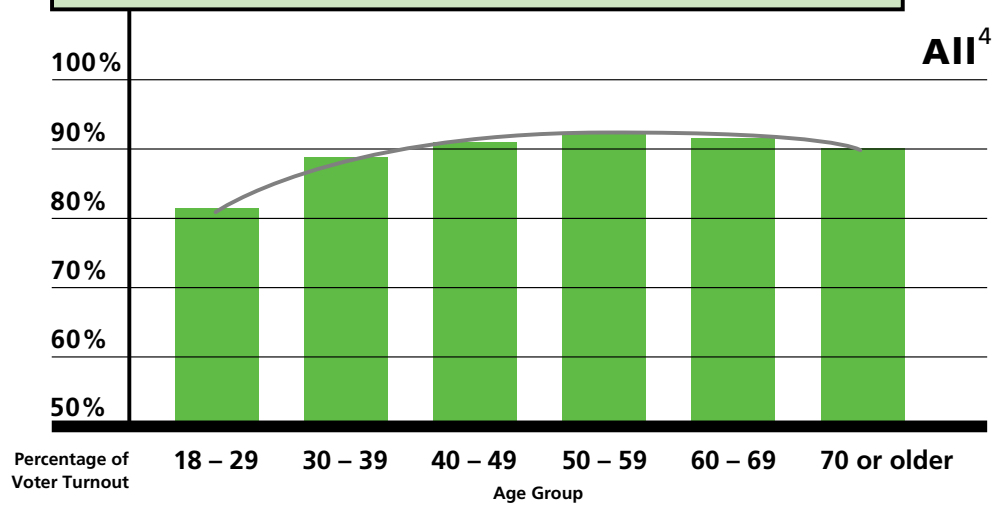
These problems in the measurement of electoral participation through surveys are important, but they do not prevent us from analysing the data and from deriving important conclusions if the data caveats are properly taken into account. In any case, if anything, the differences in turnout levels of different age groups will be larger in the real world compared to what is revealed in the survey data, i.e. the survey data understates the magnitude of the problem.

2. The Relationship Between Age and Turnout

Turnout usually lowest among the youngest

The general pattern in the relationship between age and turnout found in the data is the same in almost all countries and agrees with previous research on electoral participation. Turnout is usually low among the youngest age category (80%), then increases more or less pronouncedly as electors approach middle age, reaches the highest levels of participation among people between 60 and 69 years of age (around 93%), and finally decreases slightly to around 90% for the oldest age group.

GRAPH 1: Turnout by Age in Western Europe

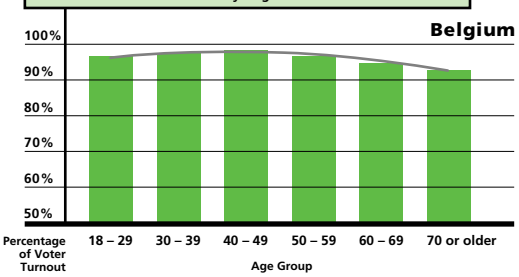


As people grow older they acquire resources that facilitate participation: familiarity with parties, candidates, political and electoral processes, integration in the community, political knowledge and skills, and so on. They also tend to become more attached to parties and to internalize ideologies more deeply. Finally, as age increases, so does the intensity of social contacts and the integration in society, and therefore the likelihood of being exposed to political stimuli and mobilization.

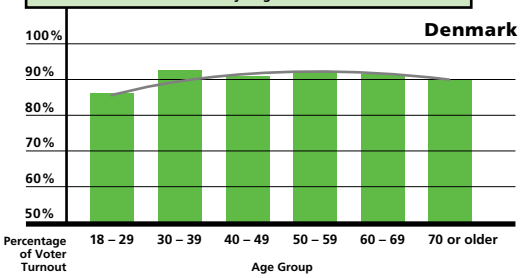
The data generally supports this theory. With the exception of Belgium and Italy, all countries show their lowest levels of turnout in the group of electors aged between 18 and 29 years. The rate of turnout increases as people get older in all 15 nations. In some cases, such as France, this increase is remarkable and continues throughout the whole life cycle. In some other cases, the change in participation rates is less pronounced: Belgium and Italy show only small differences in the level of turnout across age categories, but these two countries also have the highest turnout rates overall. (See graphs 2–16 and Table 3 showing turnout by age in each country.)

Turnout increases with age

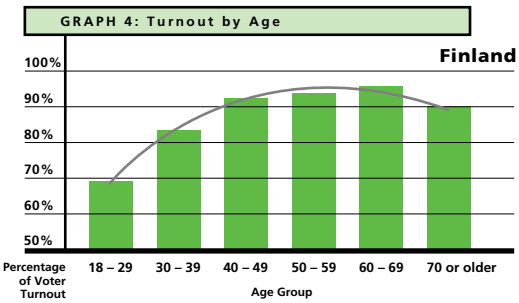
GRAPH 2: Turnout by Age



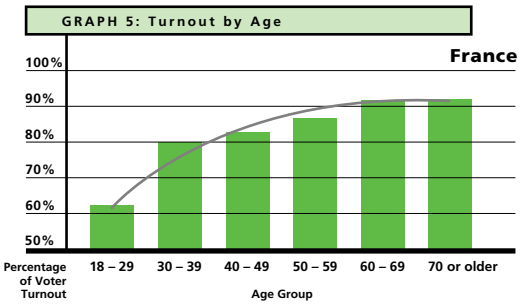
GRAPH 3: Turnout by Age



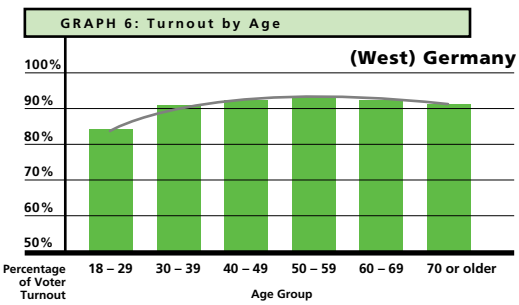
GRAPH 4: Turnout by Age



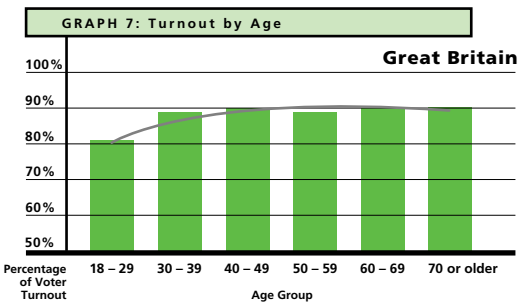
GRAPH 5: Turnout by Age



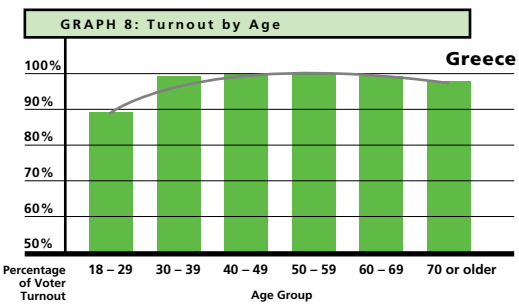
GRAPH 6: Turnout by Age



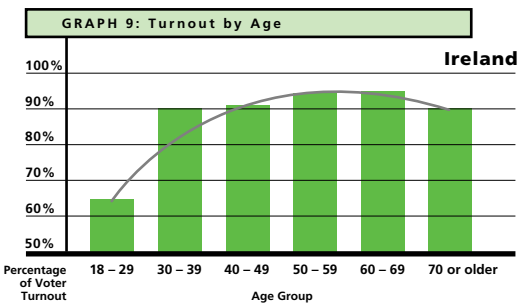
GRAPH 7: Turnout by Age



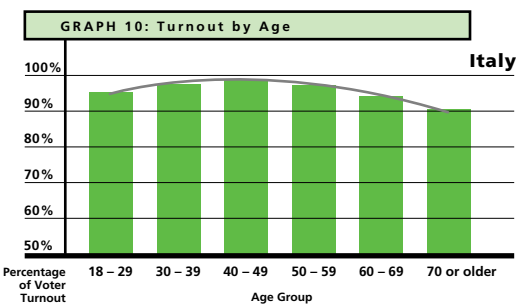
GRAPH 8: Turnout by Age



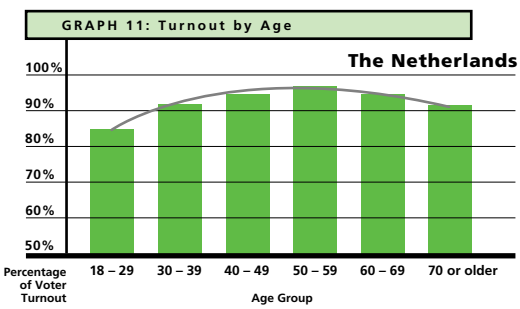
GRAPH 9: Turnout by Age



GRAPH 10: Turnout by Age

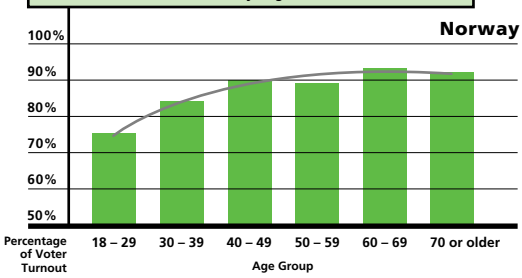


GRAPH 11: Turnout by Age

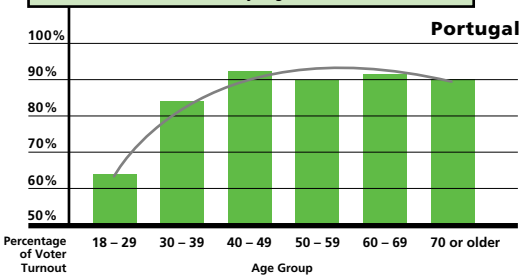


Youth Voter Participation

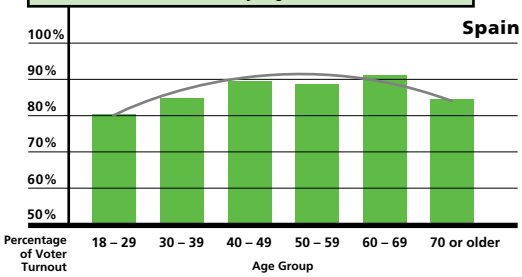
GRAPH 12: Turnout by Age



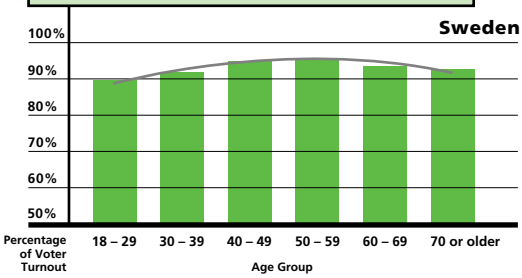
GRAPH 13: Turnout by Age



GRAPH 14: Turnout by Age



GRAPH 15: Turnout by Age



GRAPH 16: Turnout by Age

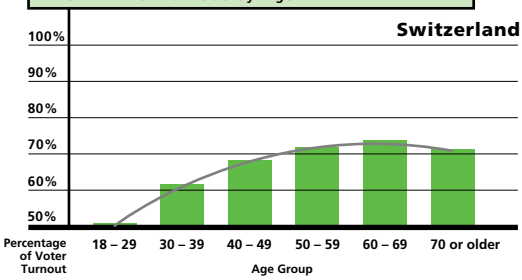


Table 3

Turnout by Age Categories

Country	18 to 29 years	30 to 39 years	40 to 49 years	50 to 59 years	60 to 69 years	70 or older
Belgium	96.7	97.9	97.6	97.9	95.6	93.5
Denmark	86.0	93.8	92.0	93.7	91.7	89.2
Finland	68.6	84.4	92.9	93.6	96.1	90.1
France	63.2	79.8	83.9	86.4	91.9	93.6
(West) Germany	84.8	90.5	92.1	93.6	93.0	93.4
Great Britain	81.0	88.4	89.4	88.7	90.0	89.4
Greece	88.5	98.9	98.0	100.0	98.1	97.4
Ireland	64.1	89.2	92.2	96.1	96.9	90.5
Italy	95.4	97.0	97.8	98.7	96.7	89.3
The Netherlands	86.2	93.5	96.0	96.1	94.8	92.5
Norway	75.9	85.4	89.4	89.1	93.5	93.0
Portugal	63.7	84.6	93.2	89.3	93.5	90.0
Spain	80.6	85.1	89.9	88.8	90.5	84.3
Sweden	89.3	93.3	95.6	96.8	94.6	94.5
Switzerland	50.2	62.6	66.8	72.6	75.0	62.9
All	80.9	88.9	91.4	92.3	93.0	90.0

This age-related increase in turnout usually stops at some point: around 55 years in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands and Sweden; around ten years later in Finland, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and Great Britain. Beyond a certain age, electors start experiencing problems and limitations associated with old age: isolation, illness, reduced mobility. Turnout drops for the highest age category (70 or over) in all countries but Germany and France, and it does so particularly in Finland, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Switzerland.

Traditionally, higher education levels lead to higher voter participation

This decline in electoral participation among elderly people can be interpreted as the result of decreasing social and political integration but it can also be attributed to – at least in part – the lower educational level of the elderly. Traditionally, it has been argued that higher levels of education increase the level of electoral participation.

... but the young, with the highest levels of education, show lower voter participation rates

According to this analysis, young electors pose a puzzle in two ways. First, they abstain more than any other age category: in all countries except for Italy and Belgium, even people over 70 participate substantially more than electors under 30. Secondly, abstention remains difficult to explain considering that young citizens today have higher levels of education and better access to political information than ever before, which should boost their participation levels.

3. Cross-National Differences in Youth Turnout

The previous section has demonstrated that turnout is particularly low among young electors in each of the 15 countries. Considering all 15 nations together, Table 4 shows that electors between 18 and 29 years old have a turnout level almost 8 percentage points lower than their country's average. In Ireland and Portugal, this difference reaches over 20 percentage points. The gap between youth turnout and the overall turnout level is particularly acute in Finland and France (over 15 percentage points), and Norway and Switzerland (over 10 percentage points). Belgium and Italy are the only cases where turnout among young electors is just slightly lower than the country's average.

Table 4

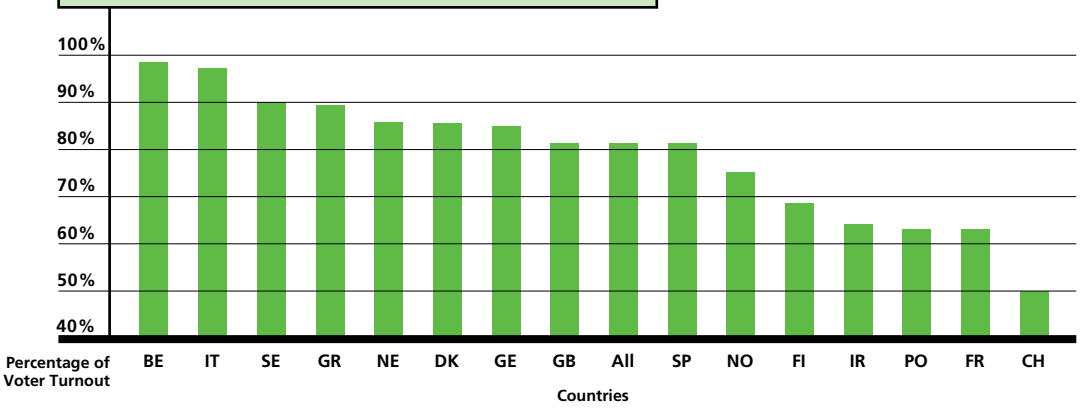
Youth Turnout Compared to Country Average

Country	Turnout among electors between 18–29 years	Average turnout of country (survey)	Difference
Belgium	96.7	97.1	–0.4
Denmark	86.0	91.3	–5.3
Finland	68.6	86.3	–17.7
France	63.2	79.9	–16.7
(West) Germany	84.8	90.4	–5.6
Great Britain	81.0	87.5	–6.5
Greece	88.5	96.4	–7.9
Ireland	64.1	86.5	–22.4
Italy	95.4	96.3	–0.9
The Netherlands	86.2	92.6	–6.4
Norway	75.9	86.0	–10.1
Portugal	63.7	85.4	–21.7
Spain	80.6	86.0	–5.4
Sweden	89.3	93.6	–4.3
Switzerland	50.2	63.7	–13.5
All	80.9	88.6	–7.7

Youth Voter Participation

In a comparative perspective, the turnout level for young citizens is particularly low in countries where the overall turnout level is also relatively low: Switzerland (50.2%), France (63.2%), Portugal (63.7%), Ireland (64.1%), Finland (68.6%), and Norway (75.9%). Spain and Great Britain show participation rates for electors between 18 and 29 years very close to the overall West European mean of 80.9%. (West) Germany, Denmark, The Netherlands, Greece and Sweden show levels of turnout between 85 and 90%, while in Belgium and Italy the turnout for this age group is over 95%.

GRAPH 17: Turnout Levels of Young Electors by Country



BE	– Belgium	NE	– The Netherlands	All	– All countries	IR	– Ireland
IT	– Italy	DK	– Denmark	SP	– Spain	PO	– Portugal
SE	– Sweden	GE	– (West) Germany	NO	– Norway	FR	– France
GR	– Greece	GB	– Great Britain	FI	– Finland	CH	– Switzerland

The higher the country's average level of turnout, the higher the level of participation

Thus, in general, the higher the country's average level of turnout, the higher the level of participation by young citizens. Only the case of Ireland stands out as an exception. While the overall level of turnout in this country is similar to that in Great Britain or Spain, the turnout rate of young citizens is much lower (64.1% as compared to over 80% in Spain or Great Britain).

Why do young people vote less? ... Lack of political experience and integration, or ...

The low level of turnout among the young can be explained in two ways. Young people may vote less because they lack experience with political matters and are generally less socially and politically integrated. According to this *life-cycle explanation*, if age represents experience, it is therefore not surprising that young, inexperienced citizens have the lowest levels of participation. As they grow older, they become integrated and more experienced, which in turn increases their turnout.

... feeling alienated or excluded from politics?

The *generational explanation* is based on the idea that low turnout among young electors is not explained by their lack of political experience and integration, but rather by the fact that they belong to a generation that does not attach enough importance to the electoral process, or feels excluded or alienated from politics, in part due to a particularly demobilizatory socializing process common to the whole cohort. This is a more disturbing explanation, as it implies that this young generation of electors will not start to participate in elections later in their life cycle, but will continue to show low turnout levels in years to come. Unfortunately, the data available here cannot be used to check which of the two explanatory hypotheses has greater merit; we would need to compare the turnout rate of several generations over time.

4. Comparing First-Time and More Experienced Young Voters

The impact of experience on the pool of young people can be measured by comparing the

turnout of newly-enfranchised electors with that of young but experienced electors, i.e. people who for the first time are entitled to vote because they have reached the voting age and those that had an opportunity to vote in a general election preceding the one analysed here.

Table 5 presents the percentage of turnout for recently enfranchised electors (necessarily below 30 years old), for young but experienced electors who were eligible to vote at least once before, and for electors over 30.[5]

The first remarkable finding is that experience does not necessarily make a difference in the sense of increasing participation among young electors. In Belgium, Denmark, (West) Germany and The Netherlands, more recently-enfranchised electors voted than young electors who had had the opportunity to vote before, although the differences are relatively small.

There are three other countries that show the opposite pattern: the turnout rate of new electors is very low when compared to that of other young but experienced electors. This is the case particularly in Ireland, where the turnout of new electors is only 40%, but also in Greece (70.7%) and Italy (85.7%). In these three cases the low turnout of young electors seems to be, at least partly, a matter of lack of experience.

Finally, in Finland, France, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, new electors vote less than young experienced electors, but the larger difference in turnout is found between the latter and electors over 30. It can be concluded that participation is not only a matter of experience, but also of age, and it may also be a generational phenomenon.

Table 5

Turnout among New Electors, Young Experienced Electors and Experienced Electors over 30

Country	Participation among new electors	Participation among experienced electors under 30	Participation among experienced electors 30 or older	Difference in turnout between young experienced electors and new electors	Difference in turnout between older and younger experienced electors
Belgium	97.2	96.5	97.2	–0.7	0.7
Denmark	90.0	85.4	92.5	–4.6	7.1
Finland	68.5	68.6	90.9	0.1	22.3
France	59.4	67.5	86.0	8.1	18.5
(West) Germany	86.3	84.6	92.2	–1.7	7.6
Great Britain	75.2	83.7	88.7	8.5	5.0
Greece	70.7	93.3	98.6	22.6	5.3
Ireland	40.0	74.6	92.8	34.6	18.2
Italy	85.7	97.3	96.6	11.6	–0.7
The Netherlands	88.0	85.9	94.6	–2.1	8.7
Norway	71.9	77.9	89.2	6.0	11.3
Portugal	55.4	71.1	90.3	15.7	19.2
Spain	78.3	81.4	87.8	3.1	6.4
Sweden	85.6	90.4	95.0	4.8	4.6
Switzerland	42.6	53.0	67.2	10.4	14.2
All	72.6	84.4	91.0	11.8	6.6

5. Factors that May Increase Turnout

The data shows that the pattern of cross-national variation in the turnout rates of young electors is similar to that of the respective electorate as a whole. This suggests that the factors explaining this cross-national variation are likely to be those traditionally identified by the literature as explanations for turnout variation.

Ample research has established that turnout is affected by a large number of factors. Some of them relate to the individual (such as age, level of social integration, interest in politics or attachment to a particular party). Others relate to the political context where elections take place (the presence or absence of compulsory voting, the type of electoral system, the characteristics of the party system and the election). All of these factors affect turnout, and at the same time they are inter-related, making it difficult to estimate their relative effects on the level of electoral participation. The data presented here should be considered an exploratory analysis of the effect of these variables on youth turnout. In order to reach more definitive conclusions, further multivariate analyses should be performed.

Table 6 presents the differences in youth turnout found between cases where some incentives to participation are present, and where they are absent.[6] As expected, in those cases where voting is compulsory, the turnout of young electors is substantively higher than in countries with voluntary voting (95.4% compared to 77.3%). Another institutional incentive to participation such as the presence of voting facilities (advance, proxy and postal voting) does not seem to have a significant effect on the turnout of young citizens. Youth turnout is also higher where the electoral system facilitates access to representation in parliament for small parties: 85.8% compared to 73.9% (high proportionality).

As expected, compulsory voting leads to higher youth turnout

But paradoxically, countries with high levels of party membership show lower levels of youth electoral participation

The density of political organizations which, after all, are agents of political mobilization, also seem to be related to youth turnout, although in this case the results are contradictory. Countries with high levels of party membership show lower levels of electoral participation among young people than countries with low levels of party membership. Conversely, the presence of high union density is associated with a high level of turnout (91.3% compared to 76.1%).

Greater youth politicization leads to higher turnout

Finally, another factor that seems to increase the level of electoral participation among the young is their level of politicization. Those that are interested in politics, or feel close to a party, or are members of political organizations show a higher turnout than young citizens without these attributes (87.2% compared to 74.1%).

Table 6

Youth Turnout by Incentives to Participation

Variable	Present	Absent	Difference
Compulsory voting	95.4	77.3	18.1
Voting facilities	81.2	80.7	0.5
High proportionality	85.8	73.9	11.9
High party membership	76.9	81.1	-4.2
High union membership	91.3	76.1	15.2
High politicization	87.2	74.1	13.1

Daniela Capaccio and Wolfgang Hirczy de Mino

C. Reasons for Low Turnout and Non-Voting

The previous chapter, documenting youth turnout across 15 Western European democracies, revealed a consistent pattern of young people being less involved in the electoral process than older cohorts. The purpose of this chapter is to probe the reasons for this phenomenon. International IDEA commissioned interviews with young people around the world to find out, in their own words, why they don't vote, and what could encourage them to do so. In approaching the question, we must remember that, while the turnout rate does of course describe behaviour of the electorate as a whole, it merely represents the sum of individual voting acts. Nevertheless, macro-level factors do affect the individual's participatory decisions and can be manipulated to achieve higher turnout.

1. Macro-Level Factors

Macro explanations for turnout, focusing on institutions and the political environment, establish links with the following factors[7]:

- **The nature of the electoral system:** It is argued that proportional representation (PR) systems in which the ballots of all voters have equal weight increase turnout.
- **The type and structure of the parliamentary system:** Countries with parliamentary systems should have a higher turnout than those with presidential systems because parliamentary elections are seen as more important. A unitary system rather than a federal structure vests more power in national institutions making those contests more decisive and increasing turnout.
- **The frequency of elections and referendums:** It is argued that voter fatigue increases with a rise in the number of elections; consequently, the more frequently elections are held, the lower the turnout.
- **The registration system:** Automatic or compulsory registration facilitates a higher level of turnout[8] as the responsibility to enrol lies with the government or electoral authority, rather than the individual.
- **The voting system:** Countries with compulsory voting tend to have higher levels of turnout than those with voluntary voting.

- **The availability of special voting provisions:** Absentee ballots which may be cast prior to election day, or provisions that allow citizens to vote outside their home district, facilitate voting.
- **The degree of competitiveness in the elections:** Highly competitive contests tend to stimulate an interest in voting and consequently result in higher turnout.
- **The number of parties:** A low number of parliamentary parties makes the formation of single-party governments more likely and thus increases the electorate's role in choosing the government.

2. Focus on Individuals

To understand why young people do or do not vote we must examine individual decision-making processes. Cross-national evidence in the previous chapter suggested that some of the factors listed above affect a country's overall turnout rate. However, it did not examine their impact on young people's decisions. In order to do so, we must also consider perceptions, values and political beliefs.

To begin with, we must recognize that the reason for non-voting is not the same for all abstainers. Some may not vote as a boycott; others may be unhappy about the choices; a third group may have no clear reason at all. Perhaps it does not even occur to them to make the trip to the polling station, or they may even be entirely unaware of the election, particularly if it is for a local office or on an issue of lesser importance than a general election. The same applies to voters taken as a group. They all cast ballots, but for different reasons. As we will see in Part III, the implication for stimulating participation is obvious: if there is no single cause for non-voting, it is unreasonable to hope for a single solution.

3. What Young People Themselves Have to Say

Too often the concerns of youth are discussed by their elders and commented on by journalists, scholars and politicians without any involvement on the part of young people themselves. Just how do *they* view the problem? To find out, *International IDEA* commissioned interviews[9] in 10 countries, some well-established democracies, others relatively new to the concept, and one having yet to experience a democratic transition. These countries also have different electoral systems and turnout rates. Two have mandatory voting. *(See Table 7 on page 39)*

The reasons provided by young people for not voting can be summarized as follows:

- Disillusionment about the political system;
- Complaints about the political parties and candidates (i.e. didn't like any candidate, parties unresponsive to their needs, lack of information about candidates);
- Not interested in the political and/or electoral process;
- Doubts about the effectiveness or the difference their vote would make;
- Complaints about corruption in politics;
- Too busy or concerned with other things;
- Not registered (or incorrectly registered) to vote;
- Uninformed about where and how to vote;
- Illness or unexpected emergency;
- Pressure from peers;
- Absent either through work, school or on vacation;
- Form of protest;
- Religious reasons;
- Simply forgot;
- No particular reason.

- **Disillusionment with the political system, political parties and candidates**

Maria Angeles Larcade, 24, architect, Argentina

"I voted blank for the president and for the city mayor and I will vote blank over and over again in the future. I feel it's terrible that they force me to vote when it is in their own interest and not in the interest of the community. A candidate in congress offers his name to a list. How can I vote for a list when I do not know who is behind it?"

Bernard Malaguti, 23, business student, Bologna, Italy

"The Italian government calls the citizens to decide matters that are too distant from our daily life, and formulates questions that are almost impossible to understand. I don't call that democracy – if I'm not given the instruments to make the right decision."

Leonie Pekeur, 21, fitness instructor, Cape Town, South Africa
In the first democratic elections in 1994 she was too young to vote.

"The feeling we had in 1994 was not the feeling we have now; a lot of promises were made and not a lot of them became real. I haven't found any party that I want to go for. There's no party that is really original, that really wants to help the people....Why should I vote? Nothing has changed, I mean most of the people who have registered to vote are old. I don't think they are a fair representation of our country."

Youth Voter Participation

Fredrik Tidelius, 20, student, Stockholm, Sweden

"If you're young and don't have any money, the politicians don't care about you, except to get your vote. And the people that are in control, the bosses of the big companies and the European Union elite, they only care about people like themselves: people with suits and ties, and thick wallets. That's my impression, at least."

Anton Artemiev, 20, student of economics, Moscow, Russia

"Just too many candidates, just too little political substance. Some of my friends voted to the right , some for the leftists. I felt lost. You just don't know whom to trust! I decided, after a long discussion with myself, not to vote at all."

Nony Lappan, 25, language student and cleaner, Zimbabwe

"I didn't want to play along. My husband at the time was a police officer, and from what he used to tell me about discrimination, I thought this wasn't right for me. I thought that if we're still discriminated against even with a black government, then the government is only out to get us, and I didn't want to play along. These people are just thinking of themselves, they aren't thinking of the people, they just want the people to vote for them. You can't say anything, so why should you vote? How can you vote for someone who says you can't say anything? Until people are free to speak, you might as well not vote. It's a one-party state, you've got no choice. You feel that whether you vote or not, it's the same thing."

Sabeen Hasan, 21, business student, Karachi, Pakistan

"I did not vote because elections bring the same set of rulers every time who had failed to deliver in the past. It's not worth it to vote for any of them. All major parties are dominated by feudal lords and industrialists who do not care about the aspirations and needs of the masses. There is little representation of people from the middle class in these parties. None of the major parties hold party elections; they are basically a one-man or -woman show who nominates the office bearers from top to bottom. But still they talk of democracy... We get only government's point of view in the electronic media, and we need independent media which also provides entertainment to the people. There are parties here which bring religion into everything. We don't want all this. They don't even allow students to have musical concerts, stage plays, picnics and film shows at the educational institutions. They have created an atmosphere of suffocation in which they give nothing to the youth."

Corruption in politics

Maria Angeles Larcade, 24, architect, Argentina

"Politics is a dirty business and politicians roll in the dirt. There is nothing they can do to change my mind. As long as I see that there is corruption I will not vote. Not one single candidate appeals to me. It is the same over and over again."

Martin Peire, 19, student of agronomy, Argentina

"I have never heard of any politician that was clean and open. No one has been able to convince me that what he or she was saying was the truth. Why should I give them my vote? They would have to change a lot and make clean offers to make me change my mind. I am tired of hearing that a deputy or members of the government have been caught in corruption scandals. That is why I do not wish to vote. There is simply no one to vote for. "

Lack of or poor information

Fredrik Tidelius, 20, student, Stockholm, Sweden

"I didn't feel I had enough information. I never noticed much of the campaigns, so to vote would have felt like cheating. How can I vote when I don't know what I'm voting for?"

Zhang Hong, 24, Beijing, China

"I participated once in the elections but not in the most recent one, mainly because I wasn't given any information about it, but also I didn't have any interest to vote. People don't take the elections very seriously, and even if we were given more information, how would we know if it's true or not? You cannot trust the information given by the government. *If she had to choose between spending time shopping or voting, she would go shopping, she says laughing. Why?* Voting isn't meaningful. I have no way of knowing if a candidate deserves my vote or not. It is like a blind person trying to pick one colour among others. How will he know which one to choose?"

Linda Nilsson, 24, Web designer, Stockholm, Sweden

"There was a lot of information from the various parties, but none that really caught my attention. The political parties have a lot to learn about appealing to a young audience."

Jon Möller, 20, unemployed, Sweden

"My conscience told me I wasn't well-enough informed to vote for any of the parties. I don't know anything about politics. But I think in Sweden it's not really accepted not to vote. At least not among my friends – so I chose the option to turn in a blank ballot paper."

Doubts that their vote will make a difference

Scott Levy, 23, videographer, New York, USA

"I did vote for the President, and I do vote in elections for Mayor and Governor, but I don't vote for the Senate or House of Representatives. It makes no difference who's there, because nothing ever gets done. I read the New York Times fairly regularly, but I'm not interested enough to read the local politics. And the television coverage wasn't helpful. All I saw on TV was slander."

Jesus, 22, unemployed, New York, USA

"I don't believe in it. It's useless – what's the point? When it's, like, so many people on this planet could make a difference. It takes one person to make a difference, but I don't see no difference being made. I have other things to deal with, trying to make a life for me and my family. I try to take care of my own life. I vote for myself. Voting right now for me is useless. Maybe I am not questioning myself enough. There are a lot of people I know that are not ready to deal with this, but when they're ready, they might get into a lot of political things. It's on a lot of people's minds, even people you don't think. There's a lot of truth in politics, but I think a lot of it is not, and people are being led."

José Manuel Gomez, 23, driver, Caracas, Venezuela

"I've never wanted to vote. It seemed stupid. It was always the same. It just never interested me. Politics never interested me. My vote wasn't going to make a difference, the same people were just going to win again. What's the point of voting? They just manipulated the ballots so that they could win."

The mechanical difficulties of voting and registering

Scott Levy, 23, videographer, New York, USA

"I didn't vote in the senatorial elections because I had just moved and I wasn't registered in my district."

Jonathan Borges, 25, clerical assistant, Caracas, Venezuela

"I didn't vote in Venezuela's past presidential election because of the queue to register to vote. I was with my girlfriend and we had a lot of bags. The queue was really long and we didn't feel like waiting. I wanted to vote because of Hugo Chavez (the newly elected president). But I didn't think he was really going to win. I should've waited in the queue. I should have voted. It really is necessary."

Pressure from peers

Santiago Mayorens, 24, music student, Buenos Aires, Argentina

"I voted blank because I was influenced by my anarchist friends who chose never to vote. I am not an anarchist but this is not democracy. They would have to change completely for me to accept this sort of democracy."

4. Hope for Change

Some of the other reasons for non-voting revealed in these interviews or in previous research involve problems that can be dealt with through relatively concrete action programmes. If voters don't know how to vote, they can be taught; if they don't understand, they can be educated. If people don't value their opportunity to vote, it may well be possible to convince them otherwise. In the same way, if they don't think their participation would make a difference, it may even be possible to change their minds.

Most of the impressions and opinions gleaned from our interviews, however, go deeper and are more difficult to address since, for the most part, they involve the political system, institutional or societal changes. Of course the perceptions of our respondents may be incorrect, but that's another matter. In any case, the interviews frankly contradicted assumptions that non-voting youth are apathetic or turned off. On the contrary, with very few exceptions, the young people, although pessimistic and critical, were concerned, full of ideas, and eager to participate if conditions were to change. Some of the hoped-for changes called for below will be integrated with action programmes in Part III.

Nony Lappan, 25, language student and cleaner, Zimbabwe

"Democracy – that's the first thing I would have to see to vote in the future. I want big, big, big changes in Zimbabwe. I want freedom of speech. When people are free to speak, then the government does listen to the people."

Zhang Hong, 24, Beijing, China

"The whole system needs to change. If the one-party system is abolished, then I would like to vote. But it will take a long time for the system to change, and an even longer time for people to change their minds about the usefulness of voting."

Youth Voter Participation

Jonathan Borges, 25, clerical assistant, Caracas, Venezuela

"I will vote when I see evidence of real change: when there's no corruption, when the problems are solved... I tried to register to vote because of Hugo Chavez (the newly elected president) who represented anti-corruption and change. I saw him like a normal person."

Sabeen Hasan, 21, business student, Karachi, Pakistan

"I want to vote for a party which is liberal and truly democratic and led by honest people. A party which involves people in decision-making, forms pro-people policies, promotes education and give an honest governance. It is important that they should give freedom to the media – especially to the electronic media – which is vital for democracy."

Carola Von Rouge, 22, student of psychology, Buenos Aires, Argentina

"I want more information and transparency from political parties. We need politicians to work for the whole of society, not just for one sector of it."

Bernard Malaguti, 23, business student, Bologna, Italy

"When I turned 16, I started to read about politics, I bought newspapers and magazines, I watched television programs with political candidates and followed discussions concerning the complicated situation of the Italian parliament and government. I was so deeply interested in the matter that I decided to study philosophy after high school. I only switched to business because the family factory needs an expert in marketing. I'm convinced that the best solution for my country would be a monarchy, or at least I would like the law to change and give more powers to our president of the republic. At the moment, I believe that in order to have a more democratic system only one person should be in power and make most of the decisions. I'm positive that in this way the democratic principle will be assured. But there must be one important condition: The person in power must be prepared and study before becoming a politician. During his career his competence should be periodically tested."

Leonie Pekeur, 21, fitness instructor, Cape Town, South Africa
In the first democratic elections in 1994 she was too young to vote.

"My family was classified coloured in the apartheid years. 1994 was the first time my mum voted in free elections. They were ecstatic. Even if nothing was going to change, just the fact that people could vote! They could have their own say. My sister voted as well. They were all very excited even though they had to stand in a long queue. It was a historical moment for them. What would make me vote? Perhaps if they start a youth party. We should actually make our voices heard. I don't think there's enough of that. I also think young people are more politically aware, say in Johannesburg, than here in Cape Town."

Anton Artemiev, 20, student of economics, Moscow, Russia

"Vote in the presidential election of the year 2000? Why not. After all, things are rapidly changing in this country. Nobody knows what will be tomorrow. Maybe tomorrow will give us another choice of possibilities."

Jon Möller, 20, unemployed, Sweden

"More information. Or rather, there probably is plenty of information, but they have to adapt it to a young audience. When I see politicians campaigning, I get the feeling they're talking to someone else, not me. I don't know their reality, and they don't know mine."

Linda Nilsson, 24, Web designer, Stockholm, Sweden

"I want something new, something that can rock the boat for all those overweight men in their fifties that have all the power. Since there was no alternative, I didn't bother voting. Maybe there is an alternative out there, but nobody hears about it. The media cover the main parties, and that's it. The next elections are in four years' time, so hopefully there is time for an alternative to surface. With internet and stuff, it's easier to reach people. I'm optimistic, I think I will vote in those elections. But I won't throw my vote away. If none of the political alternatives appeal to me, I'll stay at home for those elections as well!"

Table 7

Countries where interviews were carried out

Country	Electoral System[10]	Voting	Voting Age[11] (years)	Overall Turnout (last national) election)[12]
Argentina	List Proportional Representation	Mandatory	18	78.2% (1998)
China	No direct elections (one-party communist state)			
Italy	Mixed Member Proportional	Not Mandatory	18	82.9% (1996)
Pakistan	First Past the Post	Not Mandatory	21	37.0% (1997)
Russia	Parallel – First Past the Post	Not Mandatory	18	68.8% (1996)
South Africa	List Proportional Representation	Not Mandatory	18	86.9% (1994)
Sweden	List Proportional Representation	Not Mandatory	18	81.4% (1998)
USA	First Past the Post	Not Mandatory	18	63.4% (1996)[13]
Venezuela	Mixed Member Proportional	Mandatory	18	60.0% (1993)
Zimbabwe	First Past the Post	Not Mandatory	18	32.3% (1996)

Endnotes

[1] The only inference about group-specific participation rates to be derived from such exit polls would have to be based on a comparison of the age composition of actual voters with the demographic characteristics of the respective voting district (or the registered electorate), if known.

[2] Eurobarometers are public opinion surveys carried out in all European Union countries twice a year by the European Commission. They include a standard set of questions regarding political attitudes and feelings towards European integration as well as other questions on specific topics that vary from survey to survey.

[3] With gratitude to all the institutions mentioned here for making their data available. Neither the original collectors of the data nor the centres bear any responsibility for the analyses and interpretations presented here.

[4] In all tables the entry "All" refers to the joint analysis of all 15 samples so that each of them weighs proportionally to the weight of the country's electorate. Thus, these figures can be interpreted as referring to the whole of the "West European Electorate".

[5] The term "experienced" does not make reference to whether or not the citizen actually participated in an election before, but only to whether or not he/she was legally entitled to do so because he/she fulfilled the age requirements.

[6] Anduiza Perea, Eva, *Individual and Systemic Determinants of Electoral Abstention in Western Europe,* Florence: European University Institute, 1997.

[7] Examples of previous research conducted on this issue are International IDEA's *Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1997: a Global Report on Political Participation* (1997); Mark N. Franklin's chapter titled *Electoral Participation* contained in the book *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective, 1996*, edited by Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris; and André Blais and Agnieszka Dobrzynska's article titled *Turnout in Electoral Democracies* contained in the *European Journal of Political Research, 1998*.

[8] This is especially the case when turnout is measured as a percentage of the eligible electorate.

[9] The interviews with young people were held in early 1999 and were conducted by a different person in each of the ten countries.

[10] Source: Reynolds, Andrew and Ben Reilly eds, *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design,* Stockholm: International IDEA, 1997.

[11] Source: *Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1997: a Global Report on Political Participation,* Stockholm: International IDEA, 1997.

[12] Source: *International IDEA's Voter Turnout Database.* Website address is **http://www.idea.int/turnout** The turnout rate is based on the total number of people registered to vote.

[13] Official figures from the 1998 "mid-term" elections are not yet available.

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Part III

The purpose of this section is to present strategies which can be implemented by official policy-makers, political parties and candidates, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and many other associations and entities in order to overcome low youth voter turnout. In any case, the first consideration is a clear formulation of objectives.

There is no universal panacea for assuring youth involvement in politics. The social, cultural, and political context varies from country to country, and methods must be adapted accordingly. An approach that works in one situation may be doomed to failure in another.

Moreover, as is true with other social ills, some of the prescriptions for dealing with youth abstention are controversial. They raise questions, such as whether compulsory voting is a legitimate policy choice or whether teenagers under 18 are mature enough to vote.

Daniela Capaccio and Wolfgang Hirczy de Mino

A. Programme Objectives

Objectives may be divided into *behavioural goals* which, if achieved, are relatively easy to measure since they refer to actual, observable behavioural changes (in this case turning young non-voters into voters); *and attitudinal goals,* aimed at bringing about changes in an individual's orientations, value judgements and beliefs regarding the electoral process and participation in a democratic society.

Changing attitudes and behaviour

Behavioural objectives of programmes aimed at young people can be differentiated as follows:

- Promote voter registration by young people of voting age;
- Promote voting by young people of voting age;
- Educate young voters;
- Get young people to follow political news, seek information, and discuss politics;
- Prepare future voters through simulations, mock elections, and civics education;
- Get teachers to assume the role of civics educators;
- Get parents to introduce their children to democracy and act as role models.

Programmes aimed at changing attitudes attempt to accomplish one or several of the following:

- Persuade youth to value the right to vote;
- Instil civic norms, a sense of duty or citizen obligation;
- Get youth to affirm support for democracy through voting;
- Persuade youth that the vote is their choice, foster a sense that voting is a manner to influence politics, and to force politicians and parties to pay attention;
- Make youth aware of their (potential) voting power as a group;
- Raise group consciousness (get young people to think of themselves as part of a political group with distinct interests, ideas and needs);
- Persuade youth to vote in order to balance or counteract other groups' voting power.

B. Motivational Approach, Motto and Message

Non-voting can be viewed as one of many challenges confronting society in its attempt to get individuals to behave in socially desirable ways. To do this policy-makers and their non-official partners may adopt several options:

Coercion, rewards and persuasion

- **Coercion** — require people to conform through force of law (and possible sanctions). In the case of non-voting this option takes the form of mandatory or compulsory voting, which may not render voting enjoyable in the short-term, but may help establish or reinforce a social norm of participation as a citizen duty over the long-term.
- **Rewards** — encourage people to vote by means of incentives or rewards, in this case, social approval and reinforcement.
- **Persuasion** – convince youth to participate of their own free will.

Motivation versus facilitation

In some countries, such as the United States, emphasis is on logistic difficulties and consequently efforts are placed on countering low and declining turnout by simplifying registration and voting. By making it easier, these measures can tip the scales in favour of voting. But they cannot generate motivation, much less excitement, where none exists. If eligible citizens have no interest, no amount of facilitation is going to achieve the desired results, and this is doubly true for hard-core abstainers.

Motto and message

If the goal of a vote promotion programme is to change attitudes through persuasion, what message is to be communicated and what response is it meant to evoke? Programme organizers can, for example:

- **Appeal to young people's idealism, altruism, and sense of civic responsibility.**
  Goal: *To view voting as an exercise in good citizenship (norms and principles as sources of motivation).*
- **Appeal to young people's political beliefs and convictions.**
  Goal: *Use the vote to promote political goals and bring about change for the better (ideology and partisanship as sources of motivation). This requires that the vote be perceived as an effective tool to influence government.*
- **Appeal to young people's individual self-interest.**
  Goal: *Use the vote as an instrument to wield influence and make a difference (individual rationality as a source of motivation). This requires that the vote be perceived as an effective tool to promote one's interest.*
- **Appeal to young people's collective interests as an age group or generation.**
  Goal: *Use the vote as a collective "power tool" (group interest as a source of motivation). This requires that individuals see themselves as members of the relevant group and that the group's voting has an influence on the outcome of the election and/or behaviour of parties and politicians, i.e. that they be perceived as a relevant political group or constituency and are thus taken seriously.*

C. *What Official Policy-Makers Can Do*

For official policy-makers – which include not only the chief executive (prime minister or president) and cabinet ministers, but also institutional actors such as electoral management bodies, courts, state schools, even media establishments if their status is public (state-owned) – low turnout among youth constitutes a problem to be dealt with through public policy, and institutional, legal or administrative reform.

While not specifically aimed at increasing youth turnout, changes to the electoral system such as districting, re-districting and various reforms of electoral law may affect parties' and candidates' incentives to seek the support of young voters. Certain electoral systems, like proportional representation (PR) which allows for the emergence of new and unconventional parties (such as green and alternative), may facilitate development of youth-oriented parties or candidacies. The availability of preferential voting may also be relevant, for it allows candidates, including youthful candidates, to style themselves as advocates for specific political constituencies or demographic segments of the electorate – including youth.

→ *Electoral system reform*

What then are the options for official policy-makers? They cover a range of subjects: voter registration; voter education; mock elections; measures to facilitate voting; compulsory voting laws; lowering of the voting age; making first-time voting special; and ways of keeping the issue of youth participation on the public agenda.

1. Register Voters

In most countries registration is a prerequisite for voting. Non-voters can be divided into two groups: those who are registered but abstain, and those who do not appear on the voters' list. The challenge is to get both groups to vote, but for the latter group the first hurdle is to identify them and include them on the voter list.

In some countries, most notably the United States, the responsibility to register is on the individual. Where, on the contrary, the electoral authorities assume responsibility for compiling and maintaining the voter list, door-to-door enumeration must be carried out periodically, or information taken from sources like the civil registry, tax records or postal address change notices.

Targeted information and education campaigns

Voter registration may be voluntary or mandatory. But, regardless of which type of system is in place, electoral authorities can target young citizens through specially-designed information and education campaigns including the use of advertisements, pamphlets, radio and TV programmes, visits to schools and universities, and information displays at youth events.

Accessible registration facilities; Registration by mail, toll-free phone, or internet

Public authorities can encourage registration by providing facilities in places frequented by young people: schools and universities, at youth activities and events, in government offices (e.g., driver's licence offices), or in conjunction with other types of registration such as that for military service. They can also authorize registration by mail, even by toll-free phone, fax or via the internet.

Welcome message for first-time voters

Public authorities that have access to administrative records can also capitalize on special opportunities to approach first-time voters. These might be sent a welcome message along with information about the election process. Mailing lists could also be made available to political parties or campaign organizations for use in targeted appeals to new voters.

BOX 1

Registering Young Voters – Rock the Vote[1]

Rock the Vote is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting freedom of speech, educating young people in America about the issues that affect them, and motivating young people to participate by registering, voting and speaking out. Since its foundation in 1990 by members of the recording industry, Rock the Vote has brought young people together through the power of music to participate in the political process.

Rock the Vote has been actively involved in registering young people and has implemented a variety of strategies to achieve this goal. These include:

- In 1991, it lobbied the US Congress to pass the Motor Voter Bill to facilitate the registration process. First, it enabled driver's licence offices and other public assistance agencies to offer voter registration as part of their services. Secondly, it created a standard mail-in registration form, requiring states to

authorize registration by mail. The Bill was made law in 1993, and Rock the Vote's role in its passage was recognized by President Bill Clinton at the signing ceremony.

- Throughout the summer and fall of 1992, Rock the Vote volunteers registered young people at concerts and on college campuses across the country. Public service announcements promoting youth participation and featuring a number of artists from the music industry were aired on the popular youth television channel *MTV*. In-depth coverage of the issues and candidates in the 1992 presidential election was shown on television. On election day 11 million voters between the ages of 18 and 24 turned up at the polls, a 20% increase in their turnout rate from the 1988 election.
- In 1996, the focus was on voter registration, education and turnout for the presidential elections. Public service announcements featuring music artists were once again an integral part of the campaign. The announcements not only appeared on television programmes, but were also aired on alternative and urban radio stations. Print advertisements were placed on 2,000 buses in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C. Over 8,000 record stores promoted registration and voting by placing Rock the Vote materials and posters in their stores. In addition, the organization pioneered new registration strategies including the first-ever programme to register voters over a toll-free number and on-line registration through the Internet.

  Callers to the 1-800-REGISTER hotline provided the required voter registration information for their state over the phone. The recorded data was electronically transmitted and then transcribed onto a Federal Elections Commission voter registration form. The form was then mailed to the caller to be proofread and signed. Once signed, the postage paid and pre-addressed form was mailed back to the appropriate state elections office. Over 100,000 callers registered over the phone in the period between July 22 and 15 September 1996.

"Young voters don't have to get in line to register to vote. Now, they simply have to get on-line." (MCI Communications Director, Mark Pettit on 18 April 1996 during the launch of on-line registration)

  On-line registration followed essentially the same procedures. Internet users were able to fill out a registration form on-screen and then submit it. Approximately two weeks later they received a completed form in the mail, which they signed and returned to the state elections office in the provided envelope. A week before the election, the person received a reminder to vote. Nearly 50,000 "web-surfers" registered on-line in the period between April 15 and 15 September 1996.

  Rock the Vote was also active in the field with volunteers registering voters on college campuses and at concerts, clubs, and special events. In addition, it joined up with the MTV *Choose or Lose Bus* that traveled across the country making promotional stops in various cities. At each stop, volunteers distributed material, registered voters, recruited volunteers, and asked young people to complete "voter pledges". The pledges were then mailed back to them in the week before the election as a reminder of their commitment to vote.

2. Educate Voters

School-based programmes

State schools provide the best forum and opportunity to shape the political education of the next generation. School-based programmes enjoy a number of advantages. In the first place, students are a captive audience. Schools present an excellent opportunity to integrate citizenship education with the social studies curriculum, which offers the

added advantage of being less costly than a citizenship education campaign drawn up from scratch. Electoral authorities can also play a role in school-based civics education through classroom visits.

Youth magazines, radio and TV shows, and Internet sites; Public service announcements

Publicly-sponsored voter education is not limited to schools. Messages and information can be targeted through youth-oriented channels and venues, using commercial marketing strategies. This includes youth magazines, pamphlets and posters, radio and television programmes, movie theaters, and internet sites. Privately owned media establishments may also co-operate by providing free airtime for voter education spots to meet their public service obligations, if that is part of a country's licensing regime for broadcasters. An alternative strategy is to use direct mail to reach out to youngsters about to attain voting age, with names and addresses drawn from a civics registry or other official records.

Direct mail

BOX 2

School Visits – Australian Electoral Commission[2]

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is an independent statutory authority whose primary responsibilities are the conduct of federal elections and referendums and maintenance of the electoral register. It is also responsible for electoral information and education programmes to promote public awareness of electoral and parliamentary matters. The AEC provides a range of programmes and services to the general public and to particular groups in the Australian community. Among the targeted groups are students at all levels.

The AEC has a network of divisional and other offices located in most of Australia's 148 electoral divisions. Staff in these offices conduct electoral education activities in the schools in their area and assist with advice and resource materials. Their activities include:

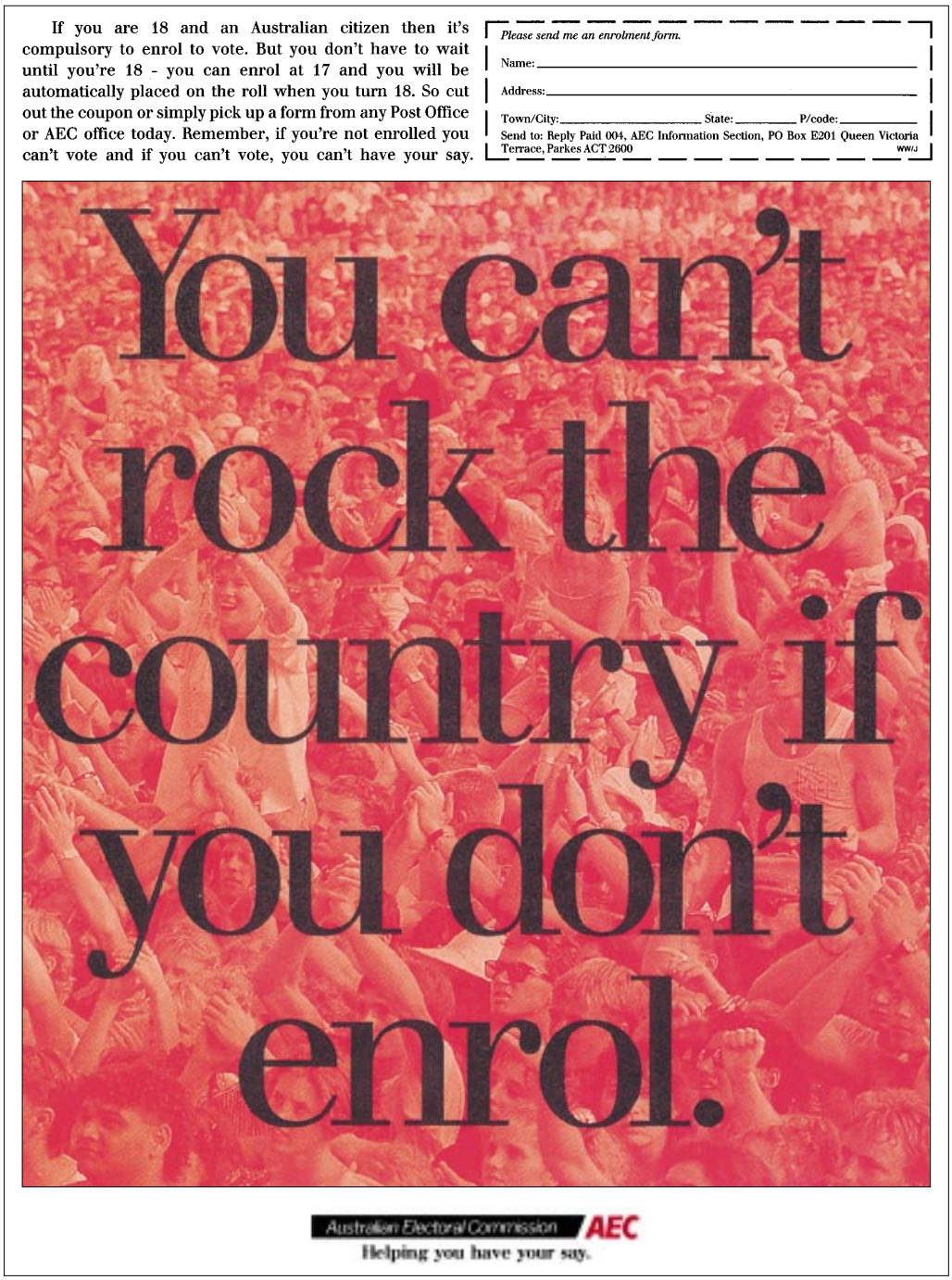
- Conducting classroom sessions on the federal electoral process, including the conduct of mock elections or referendums.
- Assisting with the conduct of student representative councils or other school elections.
- Visiting students who are 17 or 18 towards the end of the school year to provide information on registration and their rights and responsibilities, once registered. At these sessions, students who are 17 years and older are encouraged to complete an electoral enrolment form, thus providing an ideal opportunity to ensure that their names are on the electoral register.
- Providing resources to schools, including an electoral display stand that can be temporarily placed in schools that cannot be visited by an AEC staff member.

AEC staff have broad knowledge and experience in the Australian federal electoral process, which can be used to maximum benefit in a classroom setting by timing the visit to coincide with the subject matter being discussed in the class. For example, in a civics context, where the curriculum includes a topic on parliament, an AEC staff member may explain representation and how people are elected. The presentation is often supplemented with appropriate hand-out material or the organization of a mock election.

Youth Voter Participation

During the period from July 1997 to June 1998, the school visits programme reached 116,000 students across Australia. The Central Office Education Section in Canberra, which develops and distributes a range of educational materials including videos, posters, manuals, brochures, small ballot boxes and display boards, supports the programme.

In summary, the school visits programme allows a large number of students to be reached in a geographically widespread country like Australia. At the same time, it provides an ideal opportunity to inform and educate the future generation of voters about their rights and responsibilities as citizens.



Courtesy: Australian Electoral Commission

3. Support Mock Elections

Mock elections allow young and first-time voters to explore the practical workings of electoral procedures. Although the majority of mock elections are privately initiated and sponsored, public authorities play an important role as facilitators, especially in making state schools and polling places available for such programmes.

Learning by doing

Mock elections can also be integrated with the regular curriculum of the state school system or linked with other schemes for learning about democracy such as writing competitions, project grants and awards.

Mock elections have been successfully implemented by various organizations in the United States, Australia, Ecuador, Mexico, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. The British programme involved a school-based parliamentary mock election, for which results were reported along with the official results of the general election.[3] In Mexico, children aged between 6 and 12 voted on the rights of the child.

BOX 3

Children's Elections in Mexico – Federal Electoral Institute and the United Nations Children's Fund[4]

On 6 July 1997, while adults voted for political parties and candidates in Mexico's national parliamentary elections, almost four million children voted on the rights of the child. The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) organized the children's elections, the first ever held in Mexico. They aimed at familiarizing youngsters between the ages of 6 and 12 with electoral procedures and democratic practices, as well as promoting an understanding of children's rights.

To make the experience even more meaningful, the organizers decided to hold the children's elections on the same day as the national elections. In this way, they could also take advantage of IFE's structure and machinery throughout the country in organizing the national elections.

A second strategic decision involved the theme of the election. The theme had to relate meaningfully to the young children's daily lives, and enable them to express their preferences and needs. It was decided that they would vote on the rights of the child. In this way, they would learn about the importance of their rights, and at the same time become more familiar with their responsibility as future voters.

Prior to the election, children's focus groups were organized to ensure that the content and design of all promotional and electoral materials would be appropriate for the intended participants. Using this same methodology, the 54 articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were summarized in nine options on which the children would be asked to vote. Each child was instructed to vote for what he or she considered the most important right from among the following:

- To live in a place where the air, water and earth are clean.
- To live in a peaceful place with people who love me and always take care of me.
- To be healthy and eat well.
- That nobody hurt my body or my feelings.
- To have a school in which to learn and improve myself.

- To play, rest and meet with other boys and girls.
- To say what I think and feel, so that others will hear me.
- To receive the fair treatment all girls and boys deserve, while respecting our diversity.
- Not to have to work before reaching the legal age.

Radio and television advertisements were used for the publicity campaign, along with posters and banners. A comic-book leaflet was produced that explained the fundamental rights of children in brief and simple terms. Manuals were distributed to schools to assist in the teaching of children's rights. In addition, IFE and UNICEF officials gave interviews and appeared on media outlets accompanied by "child spokespeople" who encouraged other children to participate.

Children's voting stations, indicated by posters, were set up in parks, shopping malls, schools and busy public places. Inside the voting station, children were given a ballot paper on which they marked (with crayons) their age, sex and the right they chose, which they then placed in a special orange-coloured ballot box. Each child was given a sticker with the words "I voted for my rights" to indicate the value of their participation.

An atmosphere of festivity, order, and enthusiasm marked the day. Turnout was high; official results confirmed that 3,709,704 children participated. The right that received the most votes: the right "to have a school in which to learn and improve myself".

In summary, the elections provided children with an effective medium for exercising their right to self-expression and learning about voting and democratic values. A survey conducted afterwards revealed that children went to the polls of their own accord, enjoyed the experience and learned something in the process.

4. Facilitate Voting

Voting procedures should respond to three basic requirements: simplicity, accessibility and integrity.[5]

Conveniently located polling stations; Simple ballot format; Clear information on how to vote

A sufficient number of conveniently-located polling stations along with good information on their whereabouts will obviously make voting easier. Simplicity in the type and format of ballots and the method used for indicating preferences is also helpful. However, perhaps the most important prerequisite for increasing voter turnout is the provision of effective electoral information. This enables first-time young voters to understand the mechanics of voting and is especially relevant in countries with complex electoral and voting systems.

Election day on weekend or as national holiday; Simplify absentee voting; Voting cards; Voting stations on campus

To facilitate access to voting, public authorities can declare election day a national holiday or schedule elections on weekends, and simplify procedures for absentee and early voting. In addition, cards can be mailed to registered voters that include date, hours, and location of voting stations. Some countries make such voting cards – mailed in advance of an election – an integral feature of the election process by using them as proof of eligibility. The student vote can be facilitated by establishing voting stations on campuses or, again, simplifying absentee voting. A relevant country example is Ireland, where a recent referendum was scheduled on a weekend to facilitate student voting in their home districts.[6]

It is important not only that the voting procedures be reliable and satisfy integrity requirements, but also that they are perceived to do so. Suspicion of corruption can affect the willingness of people to vote. Therefore it is crucial that electoral authorities prevent voter fraud and implement measures to combat attempts at multiple voting, impersonation and ballot box stuffing.

BOX 4

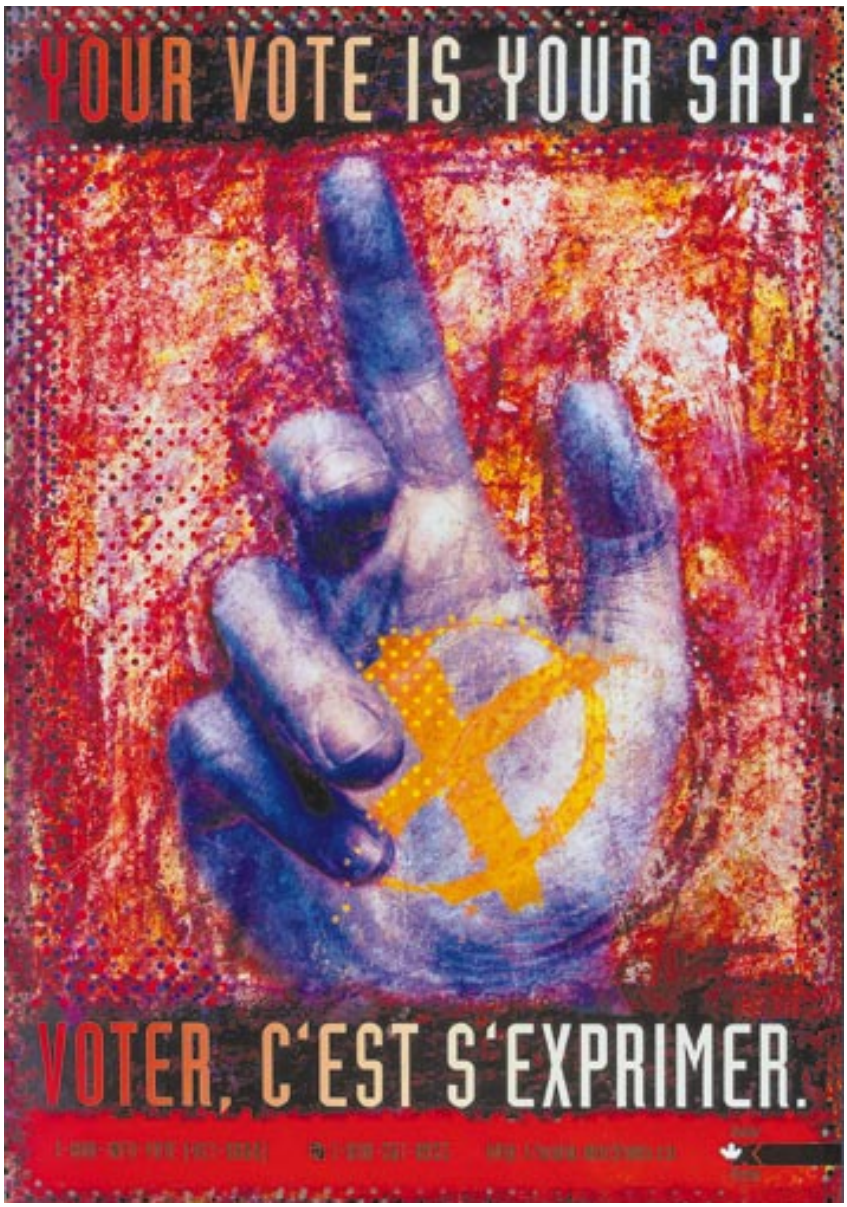
Facilitating Voting – Elections Canada[7]

Elections Canada is an independent, non-partisan agency responsible for the conduct of federal elections and referendums. On 2 June 1997 more than 53,000 voting stations in some 17,000 sites across Canada were set up for voting for the federal general election. However, Elections Canada had also implemented a number of measures to facilitate voting in the lead-up to the election. These included the following:

- **Sending *Confirmation of Registration* notices:** Prior to the election, all registered electors were mailed notices informing them of the location of their voting station and the hours of voting, as well as the contact details of their returning officer.
- **Advance voting:** Electors unable to vote on election day were given the opportunity to cast their ballot at the advance polls. Advance voting was available on three days from 12 noon to 8 pm (local time). Advertising for advance voting was conducted in daily and weekly newspapers, and on radio and television, including the *MuchMusic* specialty channel for young voters. Over 700,000 people voted at the advance polls.
- **Special ballot:** Electors either absent on the day of the election and during the advance polls or unable to go to a voting station were able to apply for a special ballot to be mailed to them. Advertising and public information campaigns using the theme *"At home or away, Canadians have a say!"* informed the public of the deadline for the required application form. Canadians who were away from their electoral districts could obtain an application from any returning officer, by calling the Elections Canada

information hotline, or by downloading it from Elections Canada's internet site. Each application form was accompanied by a detailed guide that explained the requirements for receiving a special ballot. The elector then received, by mail, a voting kit containing detailed instructions for completing and returning the special ballot before the deadline. Over 138,000 voters cast special ballots.

- **Hours of voting on election day:** All voting stations were open for 12 consecutive hours on the day of the election. The opening and closing hours varied from one time zone to another, with voting commencing at 7 am in the Pacific time zone to 9:30 am in the Eastern time zone. To facilitate voting for people working on election day, under the *Canada Elections Act*, employers are required to give any employee eligible to vote three consecutive hours in which to vote during the hours that the voting stations are open.



Courtesy: Elections Canada

5. Introduce Mandatory Voting

Mandatory or compulsory voting is the most direct, but also the most controversial, means by which to assure high turnout, both overall and among young people.

Mandatory voting is in effect in a number of countries including Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, and Turkey. Although high levels of turnout can also be found under voluntary systems, countries with compulsory voting enjoy a much higher turnout. Surprisingly, this does not appear to be solely a result of rigorous enforcement. Even in cases where no sanctions are imposed, compulsory voting seems to be working, as though the mere fact that voting is the law induces citizens to vote, at least in well-established democracies.

Compulsory voting is a highly effective...

Even under mandatory voting, of course, some people are discontent. Many express such sentiments by casting blank ballots or otherwise spoiling them. But the increase in invalid ballots is lower than the gain in turnout, and arguably even the casting of an invalid ballot is preferable to abstention, since it carries a political message (protest). It is more difficult to interpret an outright failure to vote which, generally in the absence of reliable data, can be attributed with equal plausibility to contentment, disaffection, or simply indifference.

There is spirited debate on the merits of compulsory voting in some of the countries that continue to have such laws, including Australia and Belgium; occasionally the issue is also debated in places where voting is optional. Those in favour of mandatory voting claim that voting is a public duty and that those who do not vote are "free riders" that benefit from the blessings of a democratic regime without contributing their fair share to its maintenance.

... but also a controversial means to increase turnout

Those who do not agree with the idea of compulsory voting regard it as an infringement of personal liberty. Although not contesting the principle that all adult citizens ought to enjoy the right to vote, they argue that they should have the right to decide whether or not to vote.

The debate over mandatory voting and the merits of the respective positions cannot be resolved here. Suffice it to say that compulsory voting is a highly effective and thus, from a purely empirical standpoint, an attractive mechanism to ensure high turnout. Admittedly, the major challenge is to create enough political momentum to make it a policy option that has some chance of being adopted.

6. Lower the Voting Age

While the minimum voting age varies, from 15 in Iran to 21 in places like Lebanon, Malaysia, and Western Samoa, it stands at 18 in a majority of countries. In recent years, Great Britain and Russia, for instance, have raised the issue of lowering the voting age from 18, arguing that citizens who do not vote do not count, and therefore teenagers have no opportunity to bring their concerns and demands to bear on policy-makers. The major counter-argument is that teenagers are not mature enough to make informed choices about political matters and consequently may not exercise their voting power responsibly.

A second argument in favour of a lower voting age focuses on the opportunity for early political socialization of young people as voters and their role in the polity. At age 18 or 19 most young people have completed their secondary education and are much harder to reach as a group. In contrast, while they are subject to compulsory education, they are a captive audience. Indeed, school-based voter education programmes would be much more meaningful if they prepared students to cast real ballots that help decide elections.

Earlier political socialization by lowering the voting age

There is, in fact, some evidence that lowering of the voting age does increase participation, either because of a novelty effect ("Wow, we can vote. Let's do it!"), or because young people respond to the responsibility entrusted in them and the fact that their input is valued. Whatever the explanation, some of the findings are encouraging. Empirical research from Germany shows that 16- and 17-year olds who were eligible to vote for the first time in local elections in Hannover had a higher turnout rate when compared to the remainder of the group of voters under 35.[8]

7. Make First-Time Voting a Special Rite of Passage

Some authorities make special efforts to reach out to newly-enfranchised voters and extend a hearty welcome to full citizenship. The US State of Arizona and the Rock the Vote organization, for example, sent congratulatory birthday cards to every Arizona voter turning 18 before the November 1998 elections.[9] Along with the greeting, a letter explained how and when to register for the elections. It also included a pre-addressed voter registration form. The organizers were following the lead of California, a state that pioneered such a programme a few years earlier. Where electoral authorities can draw on a civil registry or other official records, they could easily implement an outreach programme.

Send greetings to newly-enfranchised voters

8. Make the Issue a Priority

Given their unique position and the intense media attention they attract, top government leaders can do much to place and keep youth issues on the public agenda. Even legislatures can collectively accord the issue of youth participation priority status by, for example, scheduling parliamentary debates or hearings, passing resolutions or promulgating a "National Youth Voter Registration Day".

For example, in April 1994 the Tribunal Regional Electoral (TRE) in the state of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil launched a national campaign to register as many 16- and 17-year olds as possible and to encourage them to vote in the 1994 general elections. An integral feature of the campaign was declaring 30 May 1994 – the day before the deadline for registering new voters – as "State Voter Registration Day".[10]

Governments can also facilitate a better understanding of the scope, nature and roots of the problem of low youth participation by funding specific scientific surveys and providing grants for relevant research projects. This sound empirical knowledge base and understanding can be complemented with other sources of insight and input. Task forces, commissions of inquiry and advisory boards can be established to bring together young people, scholars, policy researchers, administrators, and representatives of youth organizations. The combined expertise and experience of these various actors can assist in identifying options and opportunities, as well as devising the most appropriate strategies.

Furthermore, government officials can play a useful role through rhetorical and symbolic support of privately-sponsored voter registration and mobilization campaigns. In 1997, the US President Bill Clinton, for example, appeared at a Rock the Vote reception to commend the achievements of the organization in reaching out and involving young people in the electoral process.[11]

BOX 5

Why Political Parties and Candidates Should Value the Youth Vote

A number of reasons can be offered why political parties and candidates should seek the youth vote. The most fundamental reason applicable to all age groups, not just the young, is that gaining additional voting support will assist in achieving their primary objective, whether it be winning the election, or maximizing the number of votes received. However, the youngest voters also present special opportunities.

First-time voters may be easier to attract because they lack firmly established partisan loyalties. At the same time, they may develop more easily such loyalties because they do not have to be won over from another partisan camp. Indeed, the youngest segment of the electorate should be seen as the most attractive pool from which to draw new supporters, because the investment in their successful mobilization will pay off over the long run. A strong partisan attachment is a source of motivation that may well inspire young voters, once recruited, to turn out and vote for their party on a regular basis. Yet such party loyalty can only develop when parties reach out to young voters and give them a political home. Furthermore, loyal young followers provide a recruitment pool for campaign workers, party activists, future party leaders, and candidates for public office.

Under certain conditions the youth vote may play the pivotal role in deciding an election outcome, particularly when the contest is tight and/or the youth segment is large enough to be in a position to tip the scales one way or another. This was evidenced in the 1997 presidential elections in Iran when it was reported that the youth vote won the presidency for Mohammad Khatami. Newspaper reports at the time stated that he owed his success to the wide support among the country's young. In Iran the voting age is 15, and at the time of the 1997 election more than half of Iran's 60 million population was under 18 years of age.[12]

Why parties might be reluctant to invest in youth mobilization

Those who question the potential of the youth vote and the wisdom of courting it raise a number of objections. They say that the young are volatile

and unpredictable, that the group-specific turnout rate is low, and that efforts to mobilize them are not cost-effective. Efforts to appeal to young people may also entail potential conflict with more established components of a party's constituency, particularly in the case of highly conflictual issues that divide generations.

However, all of these arguments can be answered. As for the notion that youth are disinterested and hard to mobilize, the perception may simply be wrong. Good survey data and more research can shed light on the state of their attitudes and orientations toward politics. Even if it is true that many young people do not vote and are "tuned out", this does not mean that they should be written off. It may just be that such disengagement is a rational response to the failure of the political parties to reach out to them and incorporate their concerns into their electoral manifestos and their concrete agendas for action when they form a government.

Young adults should be viewed as an untapped source of support, and thus an opportunity waiting to be capitalized on. The election in November 1998 of third-party candidate Jesse Ventura as Governor of Minnesota supports this idea. It demonstrated that a strategy of reaching out to those who would otherwise be ignored can stimulate high turnout and pay off in the form of election victory, even for an underdog who is given little chance of beating the odds against the main players in politics.[13]

The low youth participation dilemma can be seen as a chicken-or-egg problem: What came first – young people's disengagement, or the political classes' neglect of young people and their unique interests? It is up to the parties and other political actors to take the initiative. There is good reason to believe that youth will vote once they understand that their participation is welcome and that their input is valued. This does not call for selfless gestures on the part of politicians. Instead both groups stand to gain from youth involvement – young people by having an opportunity to influence politics, and the party by reaping electoral rewards.

D. *What Non-Governmental Organizations Can Do*

A key question for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with low youth participation is that of objectives and the strategies and tactics through which to pursue them most effectively. The nature of the message to be communicated – i.e. why young people should register and vote – is of fundamental importance in campaigns relying on education and persuasion.

A broad distinction can be made between appeals to altruism (civic spirit, voting as a citizen duty, democratic obligation) and appeals to the self-interest of the target group (e.g., if you don't vote, you don't count). The implications of the two distinct rationales for efforts to foster voter participation are quite distinct. In the former case, the challenge is to instil a norm that will induce young citizens to do something out of a sense of obligation. In the latter case, youth have to be convinced that their vote is indeed an effective means to make a difference, i.e. affect the complexion and decisions of government.

1. Voter Education Campaigns

In designing effective voter education campaigns targeted at young people, it is important that the objectives of the campaign are clearly identified, as different approaches are required to achieve divergent goals. In terms of objectives, voter education campaigns can be differentiated as follows:

- **Educating young voters about the logistics of the election process**
  This involves the "how to" of registration (if not conducted by electoral authorities) and voting. Information on times, dates and locations should be provided to help young citizens to be present at the right place at the right time, first to register and later to vote. Dissemination of information about absentee or early voting also falls into this category.

The "how to" of registration

- **Teaching the mechanics of voting, i.e. the "how to" of casting a valid vote**
  This will obviously depend on the history of elections (or absence thereof), the sophistication and education of the voters, and the complexity of voting and the electoral system. Rules determining valid and invalid votes, such as how many markings of what kind are acceptable, are also of obvious significance. Some of these instructions are suitable for printing on the ballot paper itself, but this option is only available if voters have a sufficient level of literacy.

The "how to" of casting a vote

- **Teaching the importance and role of elections and voting in a democracy**
  This involves educating young voters to understand that elections are one of the defining events of a democratic system. Voting allows them to make choices between individuals, parties and policy options. Campaigns should help young people to understand that their vote counts and has an influence on the political decisions of their country.

Every vote counts

- **Educating about the role, responsibility and rights of young voters**
  This involves appealing to young people's civic spirit, patriotism, responsibilities and duties as citizens of a particular country. If successful, it will provide the necessary motivation to participate in elections and develop good voting habits from a young age.

The responsibility of voting

- **Teaching cognitive skills to allow young voters to make a meaningful choice**
  Young voters need to be able to assess the competing views and positions of political parties and candidates in order to make a meaningful choice. This necessitates being provided with background information and relevant arguments on issues and information on the positions taken by the various candidates and parties. Public, media, and school-based debates as well as non-partisan voting guides can assist in allowing young voters to make informed choices and advance their own interests.

Making informed choices

2. Communication Channels

NGOs have a wide range of communication channels available to them once they have determined the programme objectives and the general strategy they intend to adopt. The critical decision is to determine the most appropriate technologies and channels to achieve the objectives in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Among the options available to reach out and mobilize young people are the following:[14]

- **The media**
  The use of television, radio and print (primarily newspaper) media allows educational messages to be conveyed to large audiences. It must be noted in countries where some or

all of the media are owned or controlled by the state or government that this is not a viable option. However, where the media is not state-owned, it is an effective means by which to reach young people. Media strategies could include targeting television and radio programmes with a strong youth following, youth newspapers and magazines, and the internet.

TV, radio, newspapers and the internet

Printed materials

Voter education programmes rely heavily on printed material, as they provide a fast and cheap way of preparing large volumes of material. This can take the form of books and booklets; posters and banners; comics and picture stories; pamphlets, brochures and fliers; stickers or badges; and various items of clothing. Whatever printed materials are used, it is important to take into account such factors as purpose, design, content, distribution, and placement, in order to maximize their relevance and effectiveness on young people.

Books, posters, banners, comics, brochures and stickers

Artistic and cultural activities

Rock concerts, plays, dance, music, street theatres and other forms of artistic and cultural activities have effectively been used to promote democracy, civic responsibility and voter education, especially among the young. In most cases, these performances have been used to celebrate political events, to mobilize support for political causes, and to gather people together to convey educational messages. However, there have also been examples where the activities incorporated registering young people and providing voter education.

Concerts, plays, music, street theatres, and dance

Other strategies

There are a number of other strategies that can be implemented by NGOs to mobilize youth. These include establishing information centres and telephone hotlines, direct mail, and advertising. Information centres and hotlines, where young people can either walk-in or telephone, allow information to be disseminated immediately on a need-basis. Direct mail tends to be used mainly by political parties and electoral authorities to provide general

voting information. However, where NGOs have access to mailing lists, especially those grouped according to age, it becomes an effective and direct means to reach large numbers of young people. Finally, using creative and imaginative advertisements in a number of prominent locations such as billboards, sports stadiums, and sides of buses and trains can assist in drawing the young's attention to the intended educational message.

Information centres, telephone hotlines and direct mail

E. A Key Challenge for Organizers

Although young people constitute a large segment of the electorate in many countries, and would thus seem to provide ample potential recruits, advocates face unique challenges in organizing them politically in significant numbers and in channeling their involvement into a lasting commitment to the group. The problem is that young people don't stay young long enough. The status of "youth" and thus membership in this group is temporary, which is in contrast with other politically relevant groups whose membership rests on more permanent or innate criteria, e.g., gender. Being young is a stage in the life cycle of an individual. Many age-dependent problems that might stimulate the politicization of young people become non-issues as they reach mature adulthood.

The age-based membership structure complicates the task of organizers. They cannot stop the clock in order to retain the existing membership of the group, and are forced to continually recruit new members to sustain momentum. Other politically relevant groups and social movements, by contrast, can develop much greater staying power and can become institutionalized without a need to replace their entire membership on a regular basis.

This does not mean that the challenge of having to target each successive age cohort cannot be met. Targeting and recruitment can be linked to grade levels in school, high school graduation, or the first year at university. But this does not alter the fact that there are no easy solutions to this dilemma. One could define and organize youth as a generational group, and have the group age along with its membership. A membership defined as an age group (e.g., under 25) would thus become a generational group, such as the Generation X-ers. But this involves a whole different set of issues and goes well beyond the scope of this project's focus on youth.

F. Towards an Agenda for Action

What can be done to involve today's young in tomorrow's democracy? How can we ensure that youth participation remains a topic worthy of public attention and effort?

To achieve greater effectiveness in reaching out to young citizens, it is essential to build strategic alliances and seek support from other interested parties. These could include private sector organizations such as business enterprises that see young voters as future subscribers or consumers, and other industries that cater to teenagers and young adults. They are likely to make good partners because their involvement will allow them to support programme goals while at the same time pursuing their own interests.

Build strategic alliances

To create and sustain momentum for efforts to get young people excited about their role as citizens, the problem of apathy and abstention and its implication for the future of democracy must be recognized and addressed. Think tanks, policy experts, researchers, civic organizations,

foundations, educational associations, professional societies and international organizations can all contribute toward greater problem awareness. The media can also play a vital role in this regard, because they largely shape the societal agenda and set priorities. The media is in a position to make the issue of low youth participation a priority by giving it greater and more credible coverage in its political reporting, through editorials, or in a variety of other ways.

Media can play a vital role

It is clear that many parties and organizations can play a useful and important role in mobilizing young people to actively participate in the electoral process. Whatever the motives of the various stakeholders, by reaching out and involving young people, they are collectively working towards the challenge of ensuring a vibrant democracy.

International IDEA has taken a step forward in making youth voter participation and its importance for the future of democracy a priority topic on a global scale. It is the hope of the Institute and the contributors to this report that public officials, politicians, leaders in non-governmental and private sector organizations, as well as young people themselves will follow suit not only by recognizing the problem of low youth voter turnout, but also by initiating new or supporting existing efforts to address it.

Endnotes

1 The following information is summarized from the Rock the Vote Website which is http://www.rockthevote.org

2 The following information is summarized from the Education section of the Australian Electoral Commission's Website which is http://www.aec.gov.au

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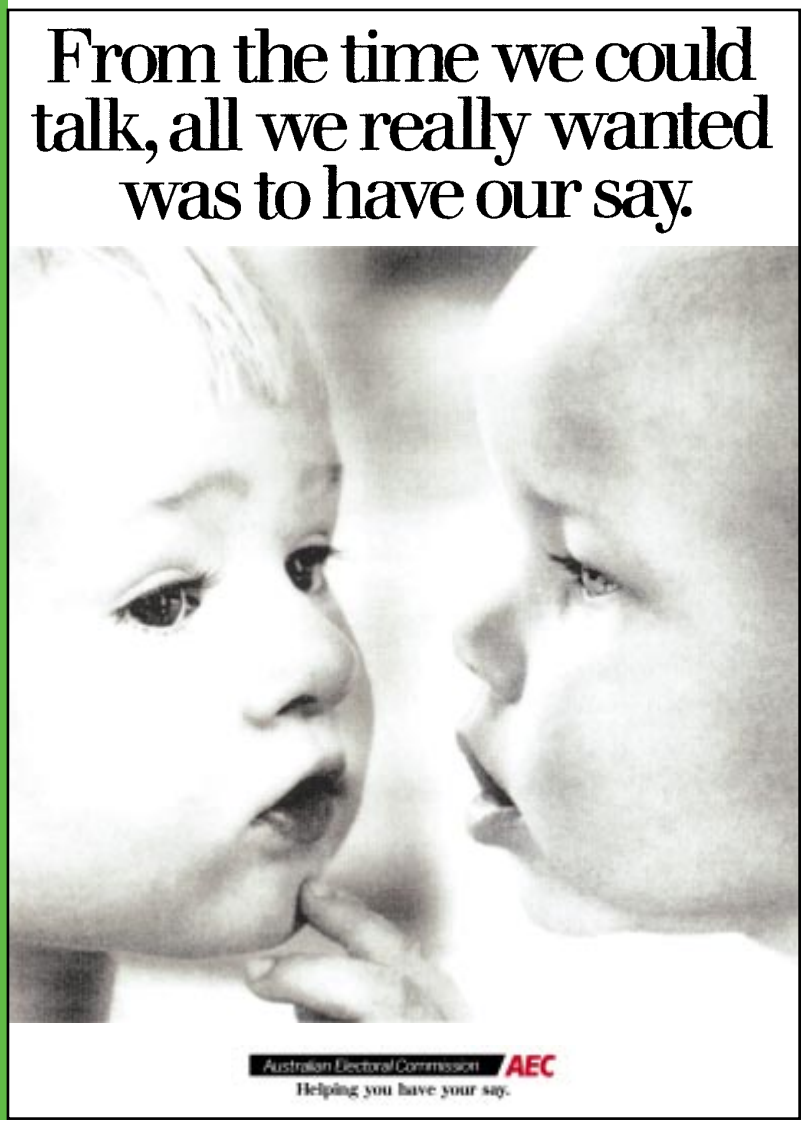


Courtesy: Australian Electoral Commission

"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth."

From a speech by Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, at the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth held in Lisbon, Portugal from 8–12 August 1998.

CASE STUDIES

Part IV

This section presents four in-depth case studies that reflect the diverse social, political and cultural contexts of Russia, Chile, South Africa and the United States of America. Highlighting different dimensions of the problem and the programmes implemented to increase youth participation, each study illustrates the variability in conditions and challenges youth organizers and policy-makers face around the world. They emphasize the range of issues that must be addressed, from registering young voters to educating them about the mechanics of voting, to actually getting them out to vote on election day. In so doing, they provide valuable lessons that can be applied or adapted in other countries and contexts.

ideas

Courtesy: New Perspectives Foundation

December 17, 1995
Elections of the Duma Deputies
Who if not you?

Promoting Democracy to Young People in a Post-Communist Society

The Experience of the New Perspectives Foundation

Leanne McDonald and Catherine Barnes

This case study outlines the different approaches and strategies used to inform, educate and mobilize Russian youth following the collapse of the communist state. The New Perspectives Foundation (NPF), a non-partisan NGO, played a key role in implementing these strategies. It successfully combined voter education with fun and entertaining activities to involve and encourage youth to participate in the electoral process. The study exemplifies the challenges of promoting youth involvement in a fledgling democracy against the backdrop of communism. It highlights the key role NGOs can play with the assistance of international and government agencies, and it demonstrates the unique problems of organizing vote-promotion campaigns in a geographically large and culturally diverse nation.

The Electoral Environment

The electoral process throughout the former Soviet Union has changed drastically since the collapse of the state in 1991. Nowhere has this change been more dramatic or complex than in the Russian Federation. Elections in Russia can be divided into two categories: national and regional/local. At the national level, elections are primarily held for either the State Duma (lower house of parliament) or the presidency.[1] Referendums can also be held at the national level, as was the case in the 1993 referendum on the constitution.

Elections for the State Duma are conducted every four years based on a mixed system of representation. One half of the seats are contested in majoritarian elections. Each of the 89 Subjects (regions) of the Russian Federation has at least one electoral district for the State Duma. The remaining seats are determined by a proportional, party-list system. Each party receiving 5% of the total valid votes cast will receive a seat in parliament.[2] During the 1995 State Duma election, four parties surpassed the 5% threshold. Presidential elections require a turnout of at least 50% of eligible voters with the winner receiving a majority of the valid votes cast. If this requirement is not met, a second round is held between the top two candidates.

Elections at the regional/local level include a myriad of issues and offices such as regional and local parliamentarians, governors, mayors, as well as referenda and recall elections. Some key regional officials also represent national offices. The governor and head of the regional legislature from each of the 89 Subjects also hold seats in the Federation Council (upper house of parliament).[3] Until 1995, the president

appointed the top regional offices. The change to direct election of these posts led to a flood of regional elections, which have and will continue to alter the political landscape at both regional and national levels.

Article 32 of the Russian Constitution specifies that citizens have the right to "elect and be elected". The constitution also grants Russian citizens the right to participate in the affairs of the state both directly and through representatives. While the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) briefly suggested lowering the age to 16 in 1997, the minimum voting age in Russia remains at 18. This right is only to be revoked when the citizen is found incapable (mentally incompetent) by a court of law or imprisoned by court decision.[4]

Young People and Their Concerns

Recent experience in Russia proves that merely granting 18-year olds the right to vote does not guarantee that they will come to the polls on election day. While pensioners are a consistently active constituency, low participation by younger voters reveals a problem familiar to new and well-established democracies alike — youth voter apathy.

Significantly reduced government investment in education, conditions faced by military conscripts, disillusionment over the Chechen conflict, pressures stemming from the economic crisis, and a sense of alienation from elected officials and political entities have contributed to an increasingly apathetic youth constituency. This apathy can be seen in the:

- Low overall youth voter turnout (estimated at approximately 20% of those who have the right to vote);
- Limited participation by young people in public service organizations;
- Lack of interest among young people about events occurring in their own country;

  Increase in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity among young people.

Young people in Russia today are facing a wide range of complex issues. Many issues relate directly to economic transition and the recent monetary crisis. The former social safeguards are bankrupt and young people are faced with challenges their parents never knew, such as unemployment and inflation. As Russia's youth as struggles to compete in the new marketplace, educational opportunities have also changed as many teachers have left the profession for more lucrative careers. Curriculums must be revised and the government budgetary crisis forces cuts to student stipends. Corruption has also invaded the higher education system, where solicitation of bribes for grades and/or degrees is not uncommon.

One societal concept that has suffered greatly under the new Russian State is volunteerism. A recent survey conducted by the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) found that two-thirds of young people have no interest in politics and most do not take part in any voluntary organizations.[5] The idea of volunteering service to benefit society is tainted by memories of Soviet state-sponsored "volunteerism". The introduction of capitalism and the rising importance of the dollar compound this reluctance to volunteer time. This attitude has a direct and negative impact on youth involvement, particularly in cash-strapped non-governmental organizations. Traditionally volunteer positions in other countries, such as campaign supporters or election observers, are often paid positions in Russia.

With this tremendous political and social upheaval, the nature of youth-oriented organizations has also changed. Through its youth-oriented, Communist party organizations such as the Octobrists, Pioneers and Komsomol, the Soviet Union provided a social support system for Russian youth. Since the demise of the USSR, there have been no state-sponsored or private organizations to rival the reach of these Soviet structures. Nevertheless, several governmental and non-governmental organizations have attempted to address some of the increasingly complex social and political needs of youth in Russia

today. Government organizations include the Committee on Women, Children and Youth in the State Duma; and three governmental ministries (Education, Culture, and Labour and Social Protection). The Russian Youth Union, the National Council of Youth Organizations, and the Federation of Pioneer and Children Organizations are among the largest youth-oriented NGOs.

Programme Development and Implementation

The New Perspectives Foundation (NPF) is a non-partisan, non-profit NGO dedicated to informing, educating and mobilizing upcoming generations of Russian citizens and training their leaders. While NPF also pursues some activities related to women and minorities, it is best known for its work with youth. The organization currently has over 50 member, affiliate, and partner organizations across the Russian Federation. Approximately half of these are member organizations registered under the NPF name. The remaining organizations are either affiliated youth clubs operating under the NPF banner or partner groups that routinely participate in NPF projects and activities. The leadership of this network is located in Moscow and headed by founder Nadia Seryakova. NPF has an eight-member Board of Directors which includes representatives of the State Duma Committee on Women, Children and Youth, the Russian Youth Union, the National Council of Youth Organizations, and the Youth League of Businessmen as well as a legal counsel and an accountant.

The idea for an organization dedicated to youth participation in political and electoral processes in post-Soviet Russia began taking shape in the early 1990s. The real impetus for the creation of NPF, however, grew out of a series of events in the mid-1990s. The first of these was the adoption of unique legislation on voting rights passed in 1994. This was immediately followed by a Presidential Decree (No. 558) on "Increasing the Legal Culture of Voters" which sought to further the rights enshrined in the constitution and provided for under the law through voter education. According to the decree, election commissions at all levels were required to undertake voter education programmes. In response, the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation (CEC) adopted a comprehensive programme for voter education and created a special working group dedicated to its implemention.[6] By this time, preparations had begun for the 1995 elections to the State Duma.

These events culminated in discussions between Russian youth leaders, the CEC, and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), which led to the creation of the new organization. In June 1995, the NPF was officially registered as a Russian NGO. The fledgling NGO was immediately faced with two overarching questions: what can be done to involve youth in elections, and who would be willing to fund such activities? These two questions have continued to challenge the organization ever since.

Early on, NPF was driven by the demands of parliamentary and then presidential and local elections. The primary focus of the organization was to turn out informed young voters in large numbers. The leadership of NPF understood that any voter education campaign needed to be innovative and interesting in order to attract and hold the attention of young voters. It also needed to combine indirect (mass mediated) and direct (involving personal interaction with the target audience) methods to ensure that awareness levels were increased *and* behaviour affected. In keeping with this methodology, the *Vkloochiś* ("plugged in") project was borne. This trademark project sought to combine pop culture with voter information messages delivered through television, radio, and print campaigns and special events at the national and local levels to a target audience of 18–30 year olds. While initial planning for the project was quite grandiose, limited financial support forced compromises throughout the course of the public information campaign (described in greater detail below).

Я имею право и Кому это надо

1

16 июня
выборы Президента
твоей страны.

Идешь голосовать?

"НЕТ"

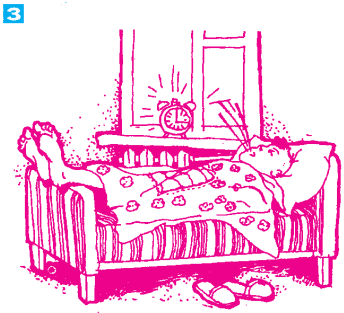
иди по
нечетным
страницам

"Да"

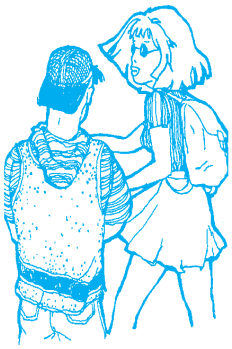
иди по
четным
страницам

2

3



Останусь дома,
валяюсь в постели.



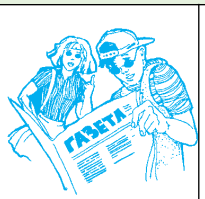
Я воспользуюсь правом выбора
Мир цел, если я его понимаю.

4

5

Голосовать?
Кому это надо!
Мой голос все равно
ничего не решит.

Все проще, чем кажется
с первого взгляда



Для того, чтобы принять участие в голосовании, необходимо достичь 18-ти лет.
Списки избирателей предоставляются для всеобщего ознакомления за месяц до выборов.

Информацию о кандидатах можно найти в периодической печати.

На Центральном телевидении с 15-го мая кандидатам предоставляется бесплатное время утром и вечером.

Приглашения на выборы, где будет указано место их проведения на твоем избирательном участке ты найдешь в своем почтовом ящике за 20 дней до выборов.

Время проведения выборов Президента РФ:
- 16 июня 1996 года с 8:00 до 22:00.

Но лучше об этом подумать всерьез.

6

7

Куда я пойду?
Я все равно не знаю, кто из них лучше.

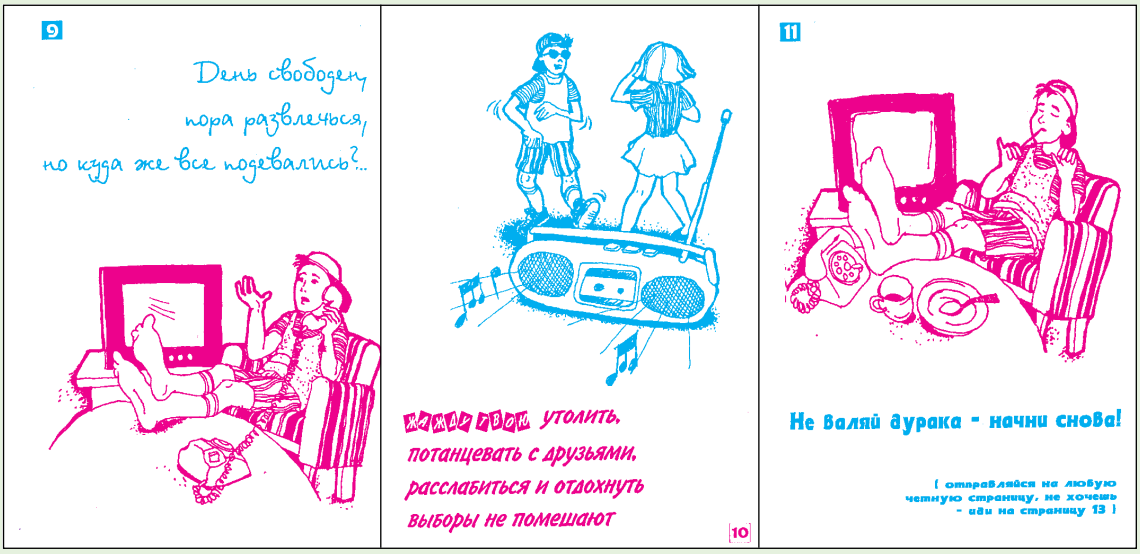
Думать
не
вредно!

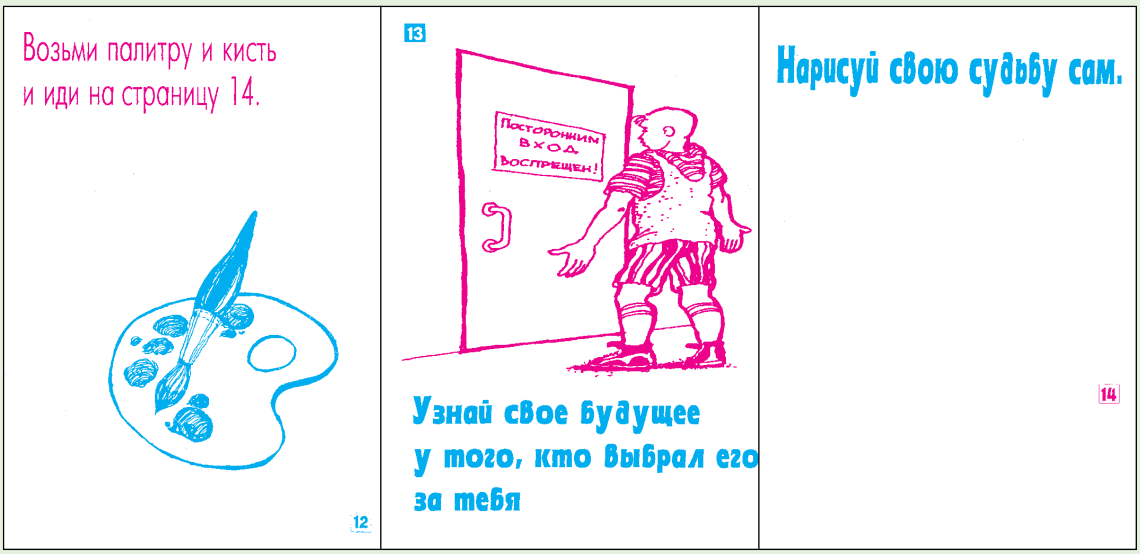
Выборы – это признанное исторической практикой обретение правительством поддержки народа. Во время выборов или референдумов власть в буквальном смысле слова переходит к народу, а претенденты на госдолжности и депутатские мандаты с замиранием сердца ждут конца избирательной кампании: поверили или не поверили, доверили или недоверили!

Участие в выборах – проявление социальной ответственности каждого взрослого человека. Мировая практика показывает: чем активней и сознательней участвуют в выборах граждане, тем скорее страна достигает экономического, социального и культурного расцвета.

8

Courtesy: New Perspectives Foundation





Cover: I HAVE THE RIGHT AND WHO NEEDS IT

p. 1 On June 16 – elections of the president of your country • Are you going to vote?

p. 2 "No" go to odd pages • "Yes" go to even pages

p. 3 I will stay at home – lie in bed

p. 4 I will make my choice • The world is a whole, if I understand it right

p. 5 Vote? • Who needs it! • My vote decides nothing anyway

p. 6 Everything is simple from the first sight • In order to participate in voting you have to be over 18 years old • A list of the candidates will be made available to the public one month before the elections • Information concerning the candidates is available in the press • The Central TV from June 15 is providing the candidates with a free morning and night air-time • 20 days before the elections start you will find in your mailbox electoral tickets indicating where the elections will take place • The elections of the President of the Russian Federation will take place on June 16, 1996 from 8h00 until 20h00 • You will, however, have to give it serious thought

p. 7 Where am I to go? • Anyway, I don't know who of them is the best

p. 8 Thinking doesn't harm! • Elections are the historically accepted praxis for the government to obtain support from its people. During the elections or referendums the governing power is in the people's hands and the candidates for the seats in the government and for the deputy mandates are holding their breath for the results of the election campaign – whether they have proved they are worthy to be trusted or, whether or not they will be entrusted! • Participation in the elections is the measure of social responsibility for each adult. The world praxis has shown that the more active and conscientious is the constituency the more rapidly it develops into a socially and culturally prosperous country.

p. 9 The day is free – it's time to have fun, but where is everybody?

p. 10 To quench your thirst • To dance with friends
To relax and have fun – these elections are not an obstacle

p. 11 Don't be stupid – start again and go to any of the even pages, or go to page 13!

p. 12 Take your palette and brush and go to page 14

p. 13 Unauthorized entry prohibited! • Find out your future from the one who is elected by someone else

p. 14 Draw you own future

Back cover: Take part in your own future yourself, by participating in the election • Rostov-on-the Don June 96 • The young are electing the future • Festival of the youth of Southern Russia.

Television Programming

In November and December of 1995, Russia's largest television channel (ORT) ran a four-part series titled *Arbat Parliament (Vkloochis).* The series was set on historic Arbat Street in Moscow, a symbolic meeting point of Russia's intellectual, artistic, and political communities and popular youth hang out. It featured live concerts and street interviews with prominent politicians, election officials, and young people. Each episode of the series also highlighted specific youth-related topics such as the military, economic conditions, and crime.

During the taping and editing of the series, pressures on the production company to create entertaining programming occasionally conflicted with the informational and educational objectives of NPF's information campaign. Feedback obtained from youth activists after the show was aired indicated that at least a portion of the intended message had given way to entertainment and that the primary viewing audience had shifted to a demographic group younger than the primary target age. Nevertheless, the series was the first youth-oriented programme in Russia to recognize the role of youth in politics and society.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the programme was that it inspired similar programming at the regional and local level in which several NPF affiliates participated. Each combined a live audience of young people, a question-and-answer format, and musical performances. Many of these regional spin-offs are considered to have been more effective in reaching the target group than the original national series.

Special Events

At the regional and local levels, NPF has effectively used special events under the *Vkloochis* banner to encourage young people to get involved in the electoral process and generate press coverage. These events have included rock concerts, special disco and club nights, college campus rallies, and cookouts. They have played a central role in alerting young people to upcoming electoral events and encouraging their informed participation. As part of the events, NPF leaders asked young people to pledge their commitment to become involved. This aspect of the public information campaign was particularly important as Russian citizens are automatically registered to vote at 18. As such, voter registration drives are not an option for mobilizing and engaging eligible voters. Instead, NPF designed pledge cards for participants to sign. These cards indicated that the signatories would become part of the *Vkloochis* movement. More importantly, the signatory pledged to become informed about the issues and candidates and to vote. Since the signatories also provided their contact information, the pledge cards became a useful database in selecting invitees for future NPF events. The national organization paid for producing the cards, which were then distributed to regional affiliates for use at regionally sponsored and organized promotional events.

Printed Materials and Specialty Items

Most printed voter information materials in Russia are produced either by the government, or by candidates and political parties. Obviously, all candidate information is partisan in nature, while the government materials tend to be extremely general and designed to inform voters of their electoral rights and the voting process. Neither source targets the specific needs of young and first-time voters. To fill this void, NPF developed an innovative print campaign to encourage youth voter turnout.

Most NPF printed materials are created and produced at the regional level, thus enabling NPF affiliates to design posters highlighting what is important to each region. For example, Kalmykia created a "get-out-the-vote" poster using decorations native to ethic groups within its region. Vladivostok's posters called young people to vote in order to address their pressing energy crisis. With electricity available

only a few hours a day, basic needs were a motivating factor in voter turnout. One of the most creative ideas involved a competition for the best voter education poster, held through a local newspaper in Voronezh. The winning design with the slogan "Who, if not you?" became the tagline for numerous NPF products.

In addition to posters, other printed materials and specialty items included booklets, voter's guides, pins, stickers, and T-shirts. Some regions produced booklets on general voting rights for distribution to younger voters. These included abstracts of federal laws regarding elections. They also described the basic history of NPF. To reduce costs, several regions combined funding to produce materials in greater quantities. Another popular publication was a booklet created by the NPF branch in Rostov-on-Don in conjunction with the Rostov Subject Election Commission (SEC). The booklet used cartoons and humour to compare activities of young voters and young non-voters on election day.

Training of Trainers

One of the most important aspects of NPF's work is in training its regional activists to design and conduct grass-roots "get-out-the-vote" campaigns and manage their local organizations. NPF has held training sessions for its own regional affiliates as well as for youth leaders from neighbouring countries, at conferences held in conjunction with representatives from the Russian government and international organizations.

In November 1997, NPF hosted a two-day conference designed to motivate youth activists while providing them with new information and ideas. The conference centred around a mock referendum on a youth constitution and the election of a leader among the regional affiliates and international partners. Participants received personalized training on developing a platform and conducting a campaign. Because many of the participants had previously conducted mock elections in their own regions, participation was extremely dynamic.

As new affiliates continued to join NPF, these opportunities to share ideas and reinforce lessons learned and successful practices were very important in strengthening institutional knowledge. In addition to these role-playing activities, international experts shared their experiences of voter and civic education including design of a civic education curriculum, implementing a civic advocacy programme, and developing effective lobbying techniques. Unfortunately, the size of NPF, both in number and geography, rarely allows for all of the affiliates to participate in these training events.

Mock Elections and Youth Parliaments

NPF was one of the first to initiate mock youth parliaments in Russia. While many programmes focus only on the mock election aspect of youth parliaments, some NPF affiliates also gave these "elected officials" the opportunity to understand the responsibilities of public office.

On one such occasion, students met their counterparts in real life. One Moscow school conducted a role-play game on "Elections to the Presidency". The mock-elected president started his work with an official visit to the State Duma and met with deputies and members of two of the major factions. The visit to the State Duma was more than a tour of the building, as the students were able to ask questions of their deputies. In another region, these young "elected officials" were given the opportunity to role-play in government service itself.

Organizational Development and Challenges

As NPF has evolved as an organization, its goals have broadened in scope to include the provision of civic education for young people and the non-governmental sector through educational and

informational programmes; developing mechanisms to influence youth-related policy; and cultivating young leaders in politics, business, culture, and education. By working towards these goals, NPF seeks to popularize the ideals of democracy with young people and encourage stability and co-operation in Russian society.

Defining specific objectives under these broad goals has been difficult for the NPF. Regional concerns, competing priorities, and the demands of donors heavily influence the development of more specific objectives. Because NPF consists of over 50 regional organizations, some of them quasi- or fully autonomous, the objectives of any one organization may be very different from those of its counterpart in a neighbouring region. While the last national level election was held in 1996, regional and local level elections have been conducted continuously across the Russian Federation since 1996. Understandably these elections and the issues tied to them are of primary concern to many regional organizations. As the NGO sector continues to grow as a source for addressing the needs of Russia's fledgling civil society, NPF is showered with suggestions. Any successful Russian NGO, particularly one with international, governmental, and cross-national contacts, is solicited to participate in projects ranging from women's rights to elementary school curriculum development. Potential donors, Russian government agencies, and the personal desires of NPF members add additional pressure on the organization to expand its scope.

Perhaps the greatest strength of NPF is also its greatest weakness — its size. NPF struck a chord with Russian youth. From its humble beginnings in mid-1995, the organization grew to 38 affiliates by the 1996 Presidential elections. Today, it counts over 50 affiliates without a substantial increase in staff at its national headquarters. This unbalanced growth provides for significant autonomy for the regional affiliates, but substantial communication and management challenges at the national level.

Some of the obstacles to communication were overcome by providing 20 NPF organizations with much needed e-mail access and Internet training.[7] All other organizations, affiliates, and partners communicate with the Moscow office through fax, mail, sporadic phone calls and site visits. With poor phone lines and in a country spanning eleven time zones, the difficulties in co-ordinating any nationwide initiatives are obvious. One approach that has reduced some of the burden on the Moscow office is the development of several strong regional leaders. These activists have been involved in NPF for several years, effectively conducted fund-raising for their regional organizations, and attended many NPF training events, as well as participating in observation missions abroad. The best of these organizations have developed specialized skills or have access to resources that can be of use to the other regions. For example, one organization boasts strong publishing resources; consequently, several multi-regional or national NPF publications are produced there. Furthermore, they have developed a youth-oriented tourist agency to subsidize their voter education activities.

Russian partners of NPF are numerous and vital to the success of programming. These include the election commissions at both national and regional levels. Although the CEC has not provided direct funding to NPF since 1995, the commission continues to express support for the organization's activities and interest in acting as a partner in future nationwide projects.

Support from the Subject Election Commissions (SECs) is currently of greater importance to the network. SEC support can mean access to state-owned TV time and participation in state-sponsored voter education projects. Other government partners include the Ministries of Education, Culture, and Labour and Social Protection; and youth-oriented committees in the State Duma. Non-governmental partners include major youth organizations such as the Children's Foundation, the Russian Youth Union, the National Council on Youth Organizations, the Federation of Pioneer and Children's Organizations, Russian Association of the Trade Union Students' Organization, and the Association of Young Leaders.

NPF has also developed partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations and funding institutions in the US, UK, Germany, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Portugal, Finland, Bulgaria, and Ukraine, mainly for the exchange of ideas and information. The most successful have been with the UK and the US. British organizations, including the Know How Fund, Democracy International, and the Citizenship Foundation, have sponsored election observation missions for NPF members and a special training visit for the NPF Board of Directors. US organizations including the Mott Foundation, USAID, the Open Society Institute, and the Ford Foundation have contributed significant funding for select projects. The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) has provided office space and shared its resource centre with NPF since the Russian NGO's creation. Financial and in-kind contributions by a number of private companies have also been made at national and regional levels.

The popularity of NPF both among Russian youth activists and the international community creates a paradox for the organization. While NPF welcomes the opportunity to meet with other youth and voter education specialists, the time and energy expended on these international visits can pull NPF activists away from much needed work at home.

Observations and Lessons Learned

Due to its size and layered approach to programming, NPF is a unique organization in the former Soviet Union. Its experience provides transitional democracies with many do's and don'ts in implementing voter education programmes for young people. Some of these lessons relate to how the NGO is organized, others to NPF programming itself.

Organizational

- **Local representation is key**. NPF has gained the attention and respect of the Russian political community by expanding and providing what few other NGOs could: a viable national network of youth activists. With a country the size and complexity of the Russian Federation, implementing voter education programmes relevant to individual localities would be almost impossible without these regional contacts which constitute a two-way street for participants. While regional affiliates provide the NPF with nationwide reach, the affiliates enjoy the security of being connected to a national organization. Not only does the relationship provide affiliates with fresh ideas and funding contacts, but it also gives them a psychological boost when they feel isolated and discouraged by progress in their own region.

- **Mutually beneficial partnerships with government.** NGOs that have grown out of a communist environment can be extremely distrustful of the government. Voter education is one area in which a co-operative relationship can be very useful. Because the government is responsible for administering elections, through election commissions, they are a valuable source of information and access regarding the process. Trust on both sides can be difficult to develop; however if the NGO can prove that it is completely non-partisan and can serve as a resource to the commission, it may find the relationship mutually beneficial. The commission will find an ally in completing its voter information responsibilities. The NGO will find a powerful partner in gaining media time, access to polling sites, and information on the elections.

- **Do not be tempted by partisanship**. Non-partisanship in voter education is a rare commodity in the former Soviet Union. However, once the non-partisan reputation is secured, the organization will gain the respect of both the domestic and international community. In 1996, the Yeltsin campaign launched a very expensive and impressive youth-oriented voter education programme. *Choose or Lose* replicated many aspects of the 1995 *Vkloochis* project including the use of pop musicians to promote voting. Most importantly, the campaign offered young activists the opportunity to be paid for promoting youth voter turnout.

This campaign was the most visible, but not the only direct challenge to the non-partisan, volunteer nature of NPF, which had already made some difficult choices to maintain its non-partisan reputation. NPF broke with its St. Petersburg representative in 1997 due to issues of political bias. The regional organization argued that its co-operation with the political party *Nash Dom* (Our Home is Russia) was necessary in order to be effective. NPF Leadership determined that this affiliation could directly threaten the work of its other organizations in the communist-dominated southern "Red Belt". NPF has since identified a new representative in St. Petersburg.

- **Don't overlook organizational development.** In the enthusiasm of developing a "get-out-the-vote campaign", infrastructure needs can often be ignored. In the spring of 1997, IFES developed a voter education manual for NPF. However, during preparatory focus groups with regional activists, the author of the manual decided that basic NGO management skills should be included if programming suggestions were to be effectively implemented. NPF affiliates echoed this observation in a recent survey by requesting information on managing volunteers, fund-raising and developing innovative voter education practices.

- **Determine what else your organization can do to survive.** Many NGOs in the former Soviet Union are faced with few, if any, possible domestic sources of funding. This forces more and more of them to look towards the international community for long-term financial assistance. Understanding that most international sources are finite and short-term in nature, NGOs must find other means of financial survival. Domestic sources unwilling to contribute financially may be able to provide in-kind contributions. The organization should also determine if any of its work could be marketable, such as organizing conferences or facilitating travel. The organization must, however, make sure that none of these fund-raising activities compromise its good reputation.

Programmatic

- **Strike a balance between education and entertainment.** NPF has been most effective when it has been able to make voter and civic education fun. Rallies, dances, and television programmes have helped raise voter awareness of NPF and the *Vkloochis* project. These activities must not, however, overshadow the educational element. One of the dangers of entertaining programmes for increasing youth voter turnout is that the young person may enjoy the dance and chant the slogan but fail to grasp the purpose of the event. Unfortunately, there is no magic formula for determining the most effective balance between education and entertainment. Finding the perfect mixture is often a matter of trial and error. Tracking participant responses to these activities may help in ensuring that the educational aspects of these activities are not lost. Testing activity ideas and slogans prior to the event with someone outside of the immediate activists' circle can also help ensure that the message is on target.

- **Keep messages clear and simple.** An important hallmark of successful voter education campaigns is the clarity and simplicity of their messages. Over-generalization can result in the target audience missing the point, while exceedingly complex or verbose messages may lose the audience altogether.

- **Combine direct and indirect methods.** Surveys, focus group research, and interviews in a host of established and transitional democracies have shown that while indirect methods of voter information/education are crucial to raising awareness, they do not necessarily produce behavioural changes. By combining indirect and direct methods, an organization has a better chance of turning out large numbers of informed voters on election day. The *Vkloochis* project successfully wed its electronic media and print campaigns with a variety of interactive activities including special events and mock parliaments.

- **Don't lose sight of the target audience.** The target audience should not be viewed simply as a particular age group but also targeted according to interest level. The Russian youth electorate can

be divided into three basic levels of interest, all of which should be involved for a programme to be successful. The first group is the youth activists themselves. Keeping volunteers interested and engaged is vital to any NGO, particularly if it is under-funded and growing quickly. Young activists can lose focus and energy as work continues beyond the initial election cycle. The second group is young people who already have some interest in and commitment to politics, and thus will want facts about the electoral process and issues in their locality. They may also express an interest in working as election observers. Activities for this group should be somewhat sophisticated since it may constitute a potential base for future youth activists. The largest group is the apathetic majority who may not see the relevance of voting or have become jaded by the slow progress of change in their region. They may need attention-getting messages and events to shift their focus to the importance of voting. They may also require an initial benefit, such as a dance or a concert, before getting involved. The challenge to any youth-oriented organization is to develop activities that can actively engage young people from all three levels.

- **Use survey data to identify target audiences and select communication media.** If at all possible, organizations are advised to collect data, either through public opinion polls or focus group research, or through access to existing data on the targeted market and media share. NPF has used surveys both to determine the media most appropriate to their audience and identify pop culture icons with the greatest appeal to their audience, and to assess the needs and potential of its own organization.
- **Sometimes smaller is better.** While large national programmes are tempting and may get the most national press coverage, targeted regional programmes can provide a cost-effective, high-impact means of increasing voter turnout. Discrete regional projects can focus on a particular issue or election and incorporate local traditions and celebrities. Negotiations for in-kind contributions such as air time or talent may be easier at the regional level where the demand for assistance is not as great. Also, if the project works in one locality, it can be adapted and shared with other regions.

While many NGOs have emerged in the Russian Federation over the last four years, including several related to the electoral process, none cover as many regions as NPF. Its continued growth testifies to the hard work and enthusiasm of youth activists throughout Russia. President Nadia Seryakova has joked many times that no one is more surprised than she that NPF is still in existence. The true challenge to the future of the organization is to find a niche in which it can survive, both politically and financially, as Russia faces it second and third rounds of national and regional elections. With a recent survey showing that a plurality of 18-29 year olds do not believe that Russia has a democratic form of government and with only one in five claiming to have a good understanding of how democracy is supposed to function,[8] there won't be any shortage of work.

Endnotes

1 State Duma Elections were held in 1993 and 1995. Presidential Elections were held in 1996.

2 The Law on Elections to the State Duma is currently under debate. Revisions to the current mixed system are being considered.

3 The actual title of the positions vary depending on the Subject. For example, the head of the executive branch of a Subject can be called Governor, President or Head of the Administration.

4 Only convicted criminals are denied the right to elect and be elected. Those citizens who are incarcerated awaiting trial are eligible to vote.

5 Dobson, Richard B., *Young Russians' Lives and Views: Results of a May 1998 USIA Survey,* Office of Research and Media Reaction of the US Information Agency: Washington, D.C., 1998.

6 This programme was formally approved by Decree of the President No. 228 dated 28 February 1995.

7 The project was sponsored through a grant from the Ford Foundation.

8 Dobson, Richard B., *Young Russians' Lives and Views: Results of a May 1998 USIA Survey,* Office of Research and Media Reaction of the US Information Agency: Washington, D.C., 1998.

Courtesy: Corporación PARTICIPA

REGISTER TODAY!!!

to decide your future

WE ARE A DECISIVE FORCE

Young people who have never voted in an election represent 50% of the potential voters of our country. Nevertheless, an enormous percentage of them have yet to register.

If we don't register to vote others will decide for the young people and determine the next eight years of our lives.

Let's register now to decide our future.

Citizen Participation in the Transition to Democracy ... and Beyond

The Experience of PARTICIPA

Mónica Jiménez de Barros
and Pedro Mujica Barrientos

This case study[1] examines the challenges faced by Chileans in making the transition to democracy. In 1988, while still under military authoritarian rule, Corporación PARTICIPA, a private, non-profit organization, initiated a voter education programme aimed at encouraging all Chileans to register to vote in a plebiscite. The plebiscite would determine whether the military regime remained in power or free elections would be held. The outcome: a return to democracy.

But by 1996, voter registration had decreased significantly, especially among young people. A second campaign was implemented to focus on educating the young and involving them in the political process. This case study highlights the important role citizens can play in effecting democratic change, and the on-going challenge to keep citizens, particularly the young, engaged in the process.

Background and Context

Before analysing the Chilean case of participation in electoral processes, it is important to remember that during the first 15 years of the authoritarian military regime, elections were not held at all. On 11 September 1973, the armed forces removed the government, dissolving congress. A military junta took over the legislative and executive powers and in November 1973, established a commission made up of several lawyers, some of who were opponents to the military regime and who later resigned from the commission.

Once approved by the government junta, the constitution was submitted to a plebiscite on 11 September 1980. When the plebiscite took place, the country was in a State of Emergency that enabled the suspension or restriction of constitutional guarantees, the prohibition of political parties and control of the media by the government junta. There was neither an electoral registration institution nor an electoral court.[2]

The decree-law of 1980 (No. 3.465) established compulsory voting for all Chileans above 18 years of age and optional voting for resident foreigners. Anyone registered to vote that does not do so is to be punished with a prison sentence that can be commuted for a monetary fine. In practice however, this law is seldom, if ever, enforced. The choices in the plebiscite were to vote "yes" or "no". A "yes" implied approving the entirety of the proposed text for the constitution, the continuation of the military regime until 1990, and acceptance of General Augusto Pinochet as President of the Republic until 1990. A "no" vote

implied a rejection of these three conditions. 67% of the people participating in the plebiscite voted "yes".

The new constitution entered into effect on 11 March 1981, beginning a transition foreseen by the constitution itself in which the National Congress would begin functioning in March 1990. During those years, power would remain in the hands of the government junta, which retained constitutional and legislative powers. General Pinochet was made chief executive as well as commander-in-chief of the army.

According to the Constitution, a plebiscite would be held in 1988, again offering two possibilities. A "yes" vote would elect Pinochet as President of the Republic for an additional eight years. A "no" vote meant a call for free and competitive presidential elections. The plebiscite was held under the same circumstances as that in 1980, under numerous legal decrees that restricted personal liberties and freedom of expression. However, unlike the 1980 plebiscite, an electoral registration institution and a fully empowered electoral court were in existence. On 5 October 1988, 54.7% of the people rejected the re-election of Pinochet. Political forces later negotiated a modification to the 1980 Constitution, whose text was approved by the government junta on 14 June 1989. The people ratified the reforms through another plebiscite held on 30 July 1989.

BOX 6 **The Electoral Process and Information on Youth**

The Electoral Environment

In Chile, elections are held for the President of the Republic, part of the Senate, members of the House of Representatives, municipal mayors and council members. For citizens registered to vote, voting is compulsory; registration itself is not.

The President of the Republic is elected through a system of direct voting, for a period of six years, by an absolute majority of valid votes, without the possibility of re-election for an immediate period. In the case that no candidate obtains an absolute majority, a second round of voting is held between the two candidates who received the greatest number of votes.

The system of congressional and municipal elections, established during the authoritarian regime, is characterized by electoral regulations that break with the electoral tradition of the country, developed on the basis of the 1925 Constitution. It has moved from a principle of proportional representation to a majority one, reflected in a binominal electoral system.

The Electoral Service is an autonomous organization that serves to supervise the electoral organizations established by law (electoral juntas and registration juntas), ensure the fulfillment of the electoral norms, and compile the electoral register that contains the list of people entitled to vote.

Voting Rights and Exercise of the Vote by Youth

Any Chilean over 18 years of age whose name appears on the official register is, by law, compelled to vote. The minimum voting age requirement is the same for all elections. To be elected President of the Republic, the candidate must be at least 40 years of age. The same age requirement applies for senators. For representatives or mayors, candidates must be at least 21 years of age. The common requirement to occupy these offices is to be a citizen with the right to vote and to have completed secondary education.

According to the data available from the Electoral Service, there are currently one million young people (between the ages of 18 and 29) that have not registered to vote.[3] A study done by the National Institute for Youth (INJ) and the Institute of Political Science of the University of Chile showed that a third of young people over 18 are not registered to vote (34.28%).

A deliberative survey performed by the Center for Development Studies (CED)[4] indicates that the failure of young people to register does not constitute a deliberate choice against the democratic system and/or institutional well-being of Chilean society since, on the contrary, they value democracy as a system of social life. Over 75% of those surveyed indicated that it is worth making an effort to maintain democracy. Over 78% consider that it is very important that young people elect people they want to run the country. In response to the question of whether democracy is registering to vote and voting, 14.3% were very much in agreement, 24.7% were in agreement, 32.7% were in disagreement and 28.3% were very much in disagreement. Asked if it was necessary for people to register to vote in order to be represented in the democratic system, 71% of the young people surveyed answered affirmatively. In spite of this contradiction, the percentage of young people who do not register to vote upon turning 18 years of age is over 55%.

The study concludes that one of the most important arguments explaining the lack of participation in the democratic system is the loss of confidence in the mechanism of elections to influence or provoke changes. In response to the question of why they don't register to vote, 31.4% responded that they feel their vote wouldn't change anything; 24.5% responded that politics is boring and doesn't interest them.

Institutions, Official Bodies of Youth Representation, and Policies Relating to Young People

In Chile, the National Institute for Youth (INJ), created by the government of Patricio Aylwin, is the only existing institution dependent on the executive power that is responsible for developing policies related to young people. This institute is currently limited to serving as a co-ordinator of youth policies that are developed, implemented and financed directly by various ministries. In Chile, there is no institution or public official responsible for receiving the concerns of young people.

However, there does exist a Youth Parliament. It was created in 1997 and its objective is to serve as a connection between the House of Representatives and the presidents of student bodies in secondary schools around the country. It meets twice a year in the same location as the House of Representatives and follows the same formalities and rules. A House Commission determines the agenda of the sessions. This year, the Youth Parliament approved operating by-laws.

There are currently various issues regarding the system of higher education that concern young people: the need for more economic benefits to finance studies, state contributions to the budgets of the so-called traditional universities, and participation of young people in the decisions of the universities, including the election of deans. Unemployment, access to health, cultural and recreational spaces, and the need for justice in the area of human rights are also issues of interest to young people.

Two Civic Education Campaigns

Below is a description of two voter education campaigns carried out in Chile. The objective of the first campaign was to initiate the transition to democracy while the military authoritarian government was in full force, the second was organized in the context of a municipal election after six years of democratic government.

"Crusade for Citizen Participation" 1988:[5] Origin and History

In March 1988, Chileans lived in a climate of scarce freedoms and constitutional guarantees. Despite the Law of Registries and Voter Registration that was in place, only half of the eligible voting population was registered to vote.

The legal existence of political parties had recently been allowed, and there were only five political parties legally registered at that time, three of which were supporters of Pinochet's government. The poorest and most marginal sectors lived in constant fear because of frequent raids on their homes, carried out by the police and military officials.

In sectors with greater political development, the environment was one of scepticism: few people believed that the plebiscite would be held and that if it were, it would be clean. At the same time, the government put out propaganda in its favour through all communications media.

In this context, a small group of people decided to fight to have a democratic plebiscite in a climate of peace and to disseminate as much information as possible to potential voters. This is how the "Crusade for Citizen Participation" was born.

Objectives of the Campaign

- To promote and assist every Chilean over 18 years of age to register to vote;
- To motivate and collaborate so that all registered Chileans cast their vote with sufficient information and awareness;
- To encourage citizen control over the plebiscite and to guarantee its transparency.

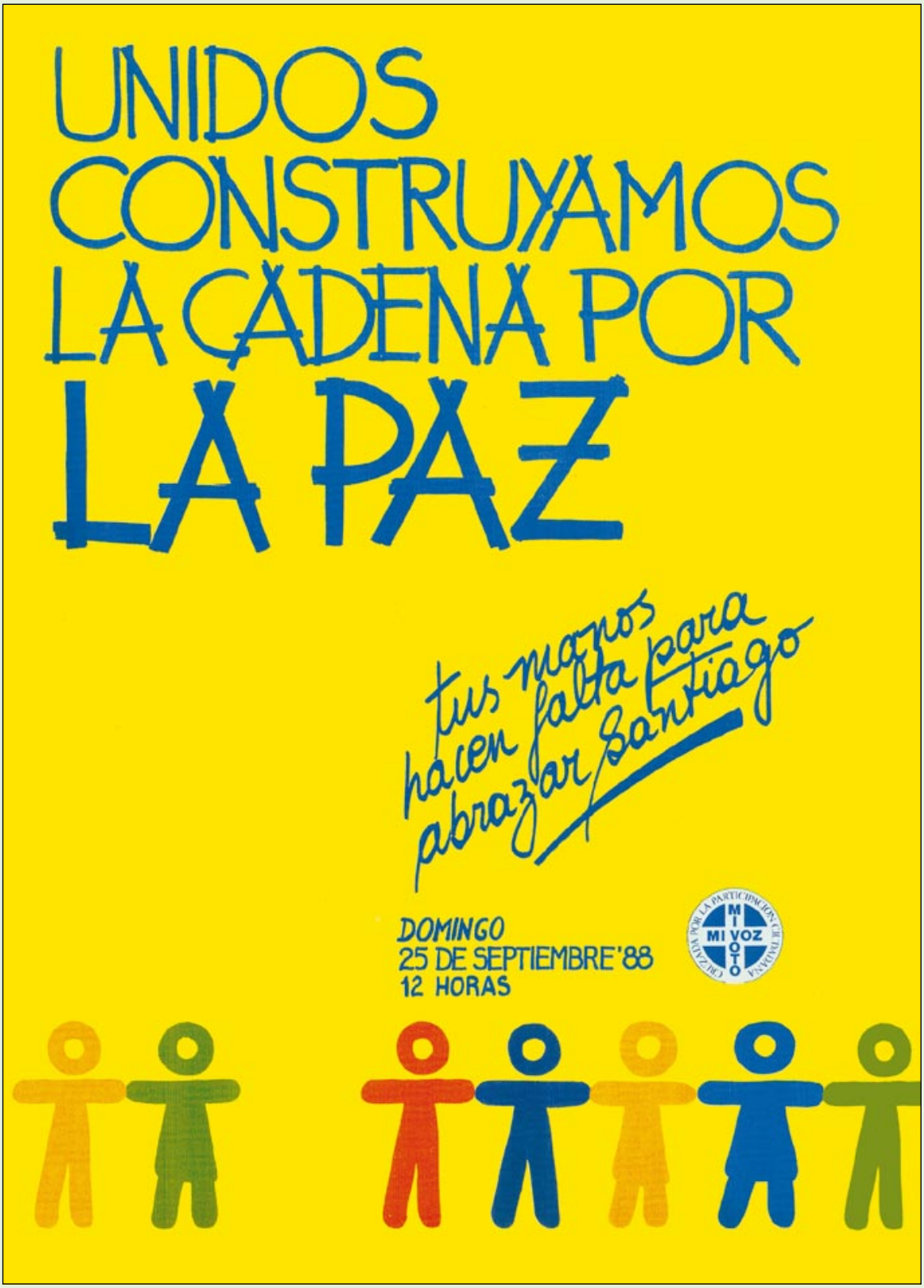
Campaign Activities

The Crusade initially trained 500 volunteers, characterized by their leadership capacity, commitment, and great spirit of service, who in turn trained another 7,000 volunteers grouped in 150 community teams throughout the county. The training model used was the "training of trainers". Volunteers made home visits (door-to-door) to sensitize the community to its right to vote or on voter registration, and provided information material.

Information tables located in strategic points of the city where large numbers of people passed (public parks, shopping centres) were also used. At these sites, volunteers provided written and verbal information on the plebiscite and conducted mock voting so that voters could familiarize themselves with the voting process and instruments. Volunteers distributed flyers and informative sheets containing technical and political information about the elections. Forums where the candidates or representatives debated issues and problems of interest were held, in addition to events directed to specific groups such as unions, co-operatives and student organizations.

This experience led to realization of the need to specialize volunteers in issues such as voting procedures, functions of a congress or a municipality, and constitutional reform procedures. Workshops, seminars and discussion groups were held to train the volunteers.

Since the goal was to try and reach young people, musical and artistic activities were especially popular. Informative materials on the electoral process were distributed at these events. At some of the



Courtesy: Corporación PARTICIPA

TOGETHER LET'S BUILD THE CHAIN FOR PEACE
Yours hands are needed to embrace Santiago
Sunday
25 September 1988
12 noon

events, a prerequisite for entry was to show proof of voter registration. Imaginative displays and visual expositions in public places, schools, parks, universities and sports clubs were set up to explain the voting process using various graphics, pictures, drawings and attractive images. Various symbolic events were held, such as giving flowers that symbolized peace, or hosting a meeting of religious and political figures to show the union of citizen values. The "Crusade" is remembered for the Chain for Peace, a human chain around the city of Santiago with more than 100,000 people participating.

Results of the Campaign

The objectives proposed by the "Crusade for Citizen Participation" were fulfilled. The campaign motivated voter registration through publicity campaigns and special events. In just five months, three million people registered, adding to the four million who had already registered for a total of 7,435,913 – a statistic that went beyond even the most optimistic expectations (opposition political parties hoped for six million people registered). The plebiscite was held on 5 October 1988, in an environment of social tranquility, though politically tense. The people assumed their role as citizens with profound serenity. In spite of the difficulties, abstention was minimal, only 2.4%. The country had never seen an electoral process with such low abstention. Social and political actors recognized that the Crusade for Citizen Participation made an important contribution towards this great achievement.

The Crusade was also recognized for its contribution to the peaceful climate that reigned. Despite provocation by groups that did not accept elections or plebiscites and continued to believe in an armed, confrontational path, as well as the official military intelligence services, the people did not allow themselves to be frightened and acted with overwhelming bravery.

In the plebiscite, the "no" option won. 54.7% of the people said that they did not want Pinochet to continue in power. They called for free, competitive and democratic elections to elect a President of the Republic, which according to the constitution should be done in 1989, in conjunction with the election of congress.[6]

The rapid counting system organized by the Committee for Free Elections, and carried out by the leaders of the "no" option parallel to the official count, had special importance in the plebiscite. The collaboration of volunteers of the Crusade was fundamental in the recompilation of voting data from 2,000 polling stations, distributed throughout the country as a representative sample of the population. This rapid count provided information on the winning tendency of "no" early on to various authorities, political parties, foreign observers, diplomatic corps and others. Today, it is believed that this rapid count played a historic role by preventing fraud by some sectors that supported Pinochet.

"Constructing a Young Democracy" 1996: Origin and History

In 1996, after six years of a democratic process and on the eve of a municipal election, the decrease in voter registration by young citizens was seen with concern. After a massive registration in 1987 and 1988, registration was only reactivated in 1992 and 1993, before the presidential elections of December 1993. The process lay dormant in 1994 and 1995, and was taken up again in 1996 due to a campaign especially directed towards youth.

Before initiating the campaign, registration rates as well as the results of several prominent surveys made it clear that young people were not interested in participating in the political process. There was a drastic decrease in voter registration among youth. The percentage of young people between the ages of 18 and 19 who were registered to vote dropped from 28.8% in 1993 to 6.5% in 1996. Among those between 20-24 years of age, voter registration dropped from 71.5% to 53.2% and in the 25–29 year range, registration dropped from 95.9% to 83.7%.[7] Several political surveys carried out by the National Institute for Youth, Latinobarometro and PARTICIPA help to explain these figures. One survey found through

direct questioning that 33.7% of people surveyed said they had little interest in politics, and 46.7% said they had no interest in politics. When asked what feelings politics produced, 39.3% of those surveyed said that politics produced feelings of distrust, 34.3% felt indifference and 28.2% felt boredom. This last sentiment was especially strong among young people, reaching 34.4% in those between 18 and 24. Surveys also consistently showed that among institutions, political parties inspired the least confidence among citizens. Of young people between the ages of 25 to 29, 70.4% said they were not affiliated with any political party. Of young people between 18 and 24, 62.7% did not identify themselves with any political party. Given these attitudes among youth, the campaign organized by PARTICIPA had to not only inform young people about the voting process, but also had to change their attitudes towards politics.

Corporación PARTICIPA worked with the National Association of Municipalities and the Ministry of the Interior to conduct a campaign targeted towards young people. The campaign considered the organizational structure of the municipalities and included as many actors as possible.

Objectives of the Campaign

- Encourage youth participation in the municipal elections;
- Bring young people closer to the municipality; inform them of its functions, the importance of the municipality in the resolution of citizen problems and channels of participation for young people;
- Encourage the registration of young people.

Activities and Results of the Campaign

Given the available resources, the costs of previous campaigns (half a US dollar per person registered), and the fact that it was a municipal election which did not attract as much attention as a presidential one, the registration goal was to add 150,000 people to the electoral register.

The campaign was to unite the various forces and secure alliances with all the municipalities and with their candidates for the mayor's office and council positions, with student and social organizations, with the media and to the extent possible, with a significant group of teachers. In addition, the campaign was to be national, involving not only the most populated cities but also reaching more remote communities. Two strategies were defined, one of direct contact and another of indirect contact through media, especially the radio. The campaign focused on young people in state secondary schools who also participated in social organizations.

The campaign involved 335 municipalities in the country, from which 2,000 secondary schools were chosen. Handbooks were distributed to teachers that provided them with information on the problem being addressed by the campaign, such as the concept of citizenship and the functions of voter registration. Since it was a municipal election, the handbooks also explained the functions of the municipalities and the municipal electoral system. Finally, the handbooks included suggestions of activities to motivate students to register. In addition to this teaching material, brochures and posters were printed so that at least 400,000 young people received the information. The campaign material was distributed through the network of state schools.

From the central co-ordination of the campaign – carried out by Corporación PARTICIPA – permanent contact was maintained with the 335 municipalities, ensuring that they received the material, that it was distributed, and that they organized activities involving debates within the educational establishments. Campaign co-ordinators visited the communities and maintained contact by telephone and fax. The greatest difficulties of the campaign were in the larger municipalities, where bureaucratic barriers had to be overcome. Once contact was made with the educational establishment, the teachers took charge of speaking with young people using the material they had received.

Courtesy: Corporación PARTICIPA

IN MY MUNICIPALITY
I Participate and I Vote
Register yourself on the Electoral Rolls!

In addition, the campaign had the support of the transport company, Metro S.A., which allowed campaign advertisements to be posted in the 37 metro stations in the Santiago metropolitan region. A third of Chile's population resides in the metropolitan region and in 1996, approximately 500,000 people used the metro daily. Public buses also supported the campaign. Three bus lines that run through the major streets of the metropolitan region and incorporate 100 buses publicized a giant advertisement calling for young people to register to vote.

The National Institute for Youth was responsible for the campaign in social organizations and youth homes. It distributed 100,000 brochures among young people that were involved in activities at the local level. The Ministry of Education made a special call to teachers to join the campaign, facilitated permits so that students could go to electoral registers to sign up during class time, and requested maximum support from principals of educational establishments.

Through the radio and some television coverage, the campaign sought to reinforce the activities carried out by the teachers. The campaign appeared in the press 1,194 times with some mayors and council members participating. Six press conferences were held with young people and teachers, and interviews were held with some community co-ordinators of the campaign and opinion leaders. Thirty-six micro radio programmes or spots were made, taped and distributed free of charge by the radios. Six radio stations voluntarily joined this effort and transmitted the radio spots in time slots specially chosen to reach young listeners. There were a total of 1,069 transmissions and the message reached listeners 64,967,165 times.[8]

The campaign also featured coverage in newspapers. On 20 occasions during June 1996, four of the main newspapers in the country published a large advertisement calling for young people to register to vote.

The campaign resulted in 150,000 new registrations – 25,000 in April, 30,000 in May and 95,000 in June 1996 – thus achieving its minimum goal. The cost of obtaining this registration was half a US dollar per person. A well-executed campaign requires money for direct action as well as paid publicity. Nevertheless, upon evaluating the campaign, it is clear that the problem goes much deeper. Young people, in general, do not want to participate in electoral processes.

Lessons Learned in these Two Citizen Education Campaigns

- **Intensive and massive campaigns**
  The electoral civic education campaigns were held during the months prior to elections in a political community and were carried out in a way that was both intensive and massive. Intensive, because they aimed at reaching people in a short time with different messages and information which would enable them to efficiently fulfill their role as citizens. Massive, because they aimed at reaching all members of the target population.

- **Non-partisan nature of campaigns**
  The campaigns were oriented towards citizen education; they did not support any candidate, and allowed the voter the freedom to choose.

- **Objectivity of the information**
  The content of the messages were carefully drafted and considered the various technical, electoral and political aspects. For instance, during the plebiscite the objective was to educate voters as to the implications of a "yes" or "no" vote, and thus the explanations could not show any bias. It was vital that the different candidates recognized the legitimacy and impartiality of the messages conveyed through the campaign.

Each campaign valued the person as a voter

It was emphasized that popular sovereignty rested in each citizen. The vote, exercised in a free, secret and informed manner, was considered the voice and expression of each citizen. Each person was encouraged to understand her or his vote as deciding the political future of their community.

Volunteers were a key element in the campaigns

Converting volunteers into educators is an essential task of a campaign. Each one of them should give testimony and embody the democratic values of dialogue, tolerance and respect for individuals. The effectiveness of a campaign depends on the capacity to count upon a group of volunteers supported by the necessary material. In the first campaign, Corporación PARTICIPA had a group of volunteers that worked for nine months; in the second campaign, the teachers from the 2,000 educational establishments acted as volunteers for the campaign. It is fundamental to ensure that volunteers are motivated and to make them feel as though the challenge of registering and getting young people to participate is their own personal challenge.

Alliances with other organizations

Although financing may exist, the various activities of the campaign require the capacity to attract as many actors as possible. The more actors who participate and are able to motivate themselves, the better the results will be. Networks and alliances are vital in a campaign of citizen education.

Central team to co-ordinate campaign

In order for alliances and networks to function and the objectives to be reached, it is necessary that the campaign has a central co-ordinating team. This team should be responsible, in a direct or indirect form, for:

- The direction, orientation and co-ordination of the campaign
- Training and supervision of volunteers
- Territorial and functional organization of volunteers
- Elaboration of educational and training materials
- Public relations and communications
- Financial and material resource administration.

Organization of the team of volunteers

Within the group of volunteers, there needs to be a distinction between their various functions, i.e. those involved in recruitment and selection, training, and supervision.

Distinguish between modalities of direct and indirect action

Among the modalities of direct action are: home visits (door to door), information tables located in strategic places, street flyers disseminated by volunteers, forums and debates with the citizens, cultural encounters such as music concerts for young people that also promote civic education, symbolic events that involve a large number of people, and graphic shows. Among the modalities of indirect action are publicity by television, radio and written press; the support of any editorials that the media may contribute; and the use of advertising space in public areas.

Context in which campaign is held

Finally, perhaps the most important lesson when looking at the campaigns from a current perspective is the importance of the context in which they are held. Political, economic and social factors strongly condition the voter. In 1988 Chile was at a crossroad. The "yes" or "no" in the plebiscite marked a significant difference, thus it was relatively easy to motivate people, as the adversities faced by the people were a motivating force in itself. Today on the other hand, young people do not see possibilities of change through their participation in elections. It is a challenge and a duty to discover what motivates them and which channels of participation will most stimulate them.

Endnotes

[1] This case study was originally written in Spanish and translated into English.

[2] An electoral court is the institution responsible for determining if an election (or plebiscite) has been fairly and legally conducted.

[3] According to the Electoral Service, the total potential number of voters grows annually by approximately 250,000 people.

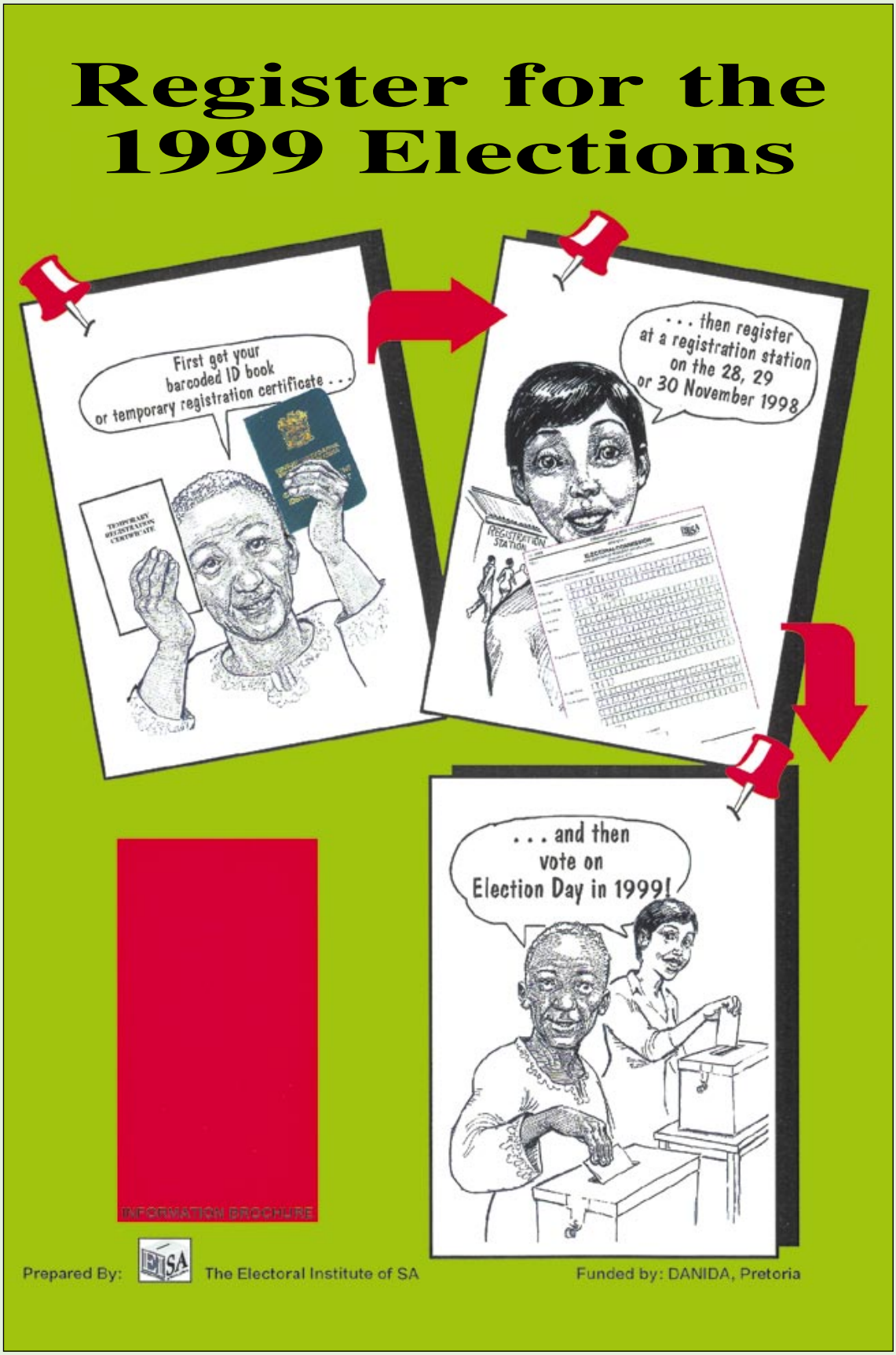
[4] The survey included approximately 400 young people of both sexes in the last two years of secondary school. The majority of students were between the ages of 16 and 18. The students were selected from four socio-economically diverse communities in Santiago, Chile.

[5] The 1988 campaign was called "Crusade for Citizen Participation". At that time, its name was not misinterpreted, nor was it assigned a religious or military overtone. Nevertheless, since then the word 'crusade' has not been used, precisely because of its religious and military connotations.

[6] In the 1989 elections, PARTICIPA led a second campaign called "Democracy is Everyone's Responsibility".

[7] Figures from the Electoral Registry, 1998.

[8] This number is an estimate according to the number of messages transmitted multiplied by the rating of the radio used. It refers to the number of messages received, counting the same individual multiple times.



Courtesy: Electoral Institute of South Africa

Register for the 1999 Elections

Note to Teachers

According to a newspaper article in The Star (December 8 1998) very few young people - "only 10,25 percent of those aged between 18 and 20" - registered last year. Many of these young people can be found in the senior classes of our schools. You, as educators, are in a situation where you can play a critical role in forging a culture of democracy in South Africa.

Do you have students who will be old enough to vote in this years general elections? (Those who are 18 and above as well as those who will be 18 by the time the elections take place next year.) Do you know whether they have registered? Have you discussed what it means to be able to use your right to vote?

The health and sustainability of a democracy depends on the participation of all its citizens, young and old! Democracy aims to treat all people equally - young people need to be convinced they are valuable members of our society, they are needed and can make a difference. Your role is crucial in encouraging the young people you teach to exercise their right to vote - to make their voices heard.

"South Africa is still fledging democracy, and it is accordingly not in the country's interest to have the voter apathy found in established and stable democracies. As many eligible voters as possible should be encouraged to go out to exercise their democratic right for which many have fought and died, to vote."
Kaizer Nyatsumba, The Star, 21.10.98

Focus 1 - My vote counts

Outcomes:
By the end of this lesson, learners can:

- explain that participating in elections is both right and the responsibility of democratic citizens
- reflect on the importance of the vote of each citizen (including themselves)

"Elections demonstrate that political power derives from the people and is held in trust for them; that it is to the people that politicians must account for their actions."
Introducing Democracy, David Beetham and Kevin Boyle, UNESCO

Method

1. Ask learners to stand in a straight line. Make a statement about how every person's vote counts. Ask those who agree to step out of the line - those who disagree stay where they are.
2. Discuss as a group how people responded and why. What are the reasons people don't participate in elections? (Issues such as dissatisfaction with the government of the day could be raised). Think what might happen if every person decided not to vote because they thought their vote did not count - what would the result be?
   Consider how one vote might make all the difference to whether or not a party wins seat.
3. Reflect on the vote as a means of bringing change, as a way of voicing dissatisfaction with existing leadership or perhaps as a way of expressing confidence and ensuring representation.

Step by Step through the Registration process

One
Take your bar-coded ID book or temporary registration certificate to the registration station in your voting district.

Two
Move to the access control area where an official will check your ID document / temporary registration certificate and your address.

Three
At the next table officials will help you complete an application form in which you must give your name, date of birth and address.

Four
The details on your form will then be checked and you can move to the registration officer.

Five
The registration officer will scan your ID document using a Zip-Zip machine. Your name and ID will be electronically entered on the voters rolls. A receipt will be stuck into your ID book or onto your temporary registration certificate.

Six
Now you will be able to vote!

For more information on Education for Democracy
Contact Sherri or Ilona
at EISA (011) 482-5495

Focus 2 - Make your voice heard

Between May and July this year, we will be electing representatives of the National Assembly and the Provincial Legislatures. In order to vote you need to register. South African Citizens who are 18 years or older can register (this includes people who will be 18 at the end of July). The country has been divided into voting districts and you may only register in one district. You must then vote where you have registered.

Outcomes:
By the end of this lesson, learners can

- recognise that in order to participate in the elections they need to register
- understand the registration procedures

Method

1. Read the extract below and ask learners why so much emphasis is placed on registration for elections.
   "Voters seriously, patiently and harmoniously queued for hours, even days on end. "The icy early morning breeze and the midday scorching sun did not deter them. There was no shelter and the dusty streets brought no comfort - but love and victory filled the air" according to a journalist who visited polling stations in the townships".
   ACP Strauss, Journal for Contemporary History, October 1994
2. Create a role-play of the registration process. (See the Step by Step box).
   Characters to be allocated:
   the person registering; a supervisor who helps people through the process; an official to check the ID document or temporary registration certificate; officials who hand out registration forms and help fill them in; an official who checks the voting district on the form; and a registration officer who scans the ID and hands out a receipt.
3. Wrap up by confirming details of who can register, where, when and how.

Prepared by: EISA Electoral Institute of SA

Sponsors: DANIDA, Pretoria
The Open Society Foundation for South Africa

Courtesy: Electoral Institute of South Africa

CASE STUDY

SOUTH AFRICA

Educating all Voters in Support of a Multiracial Democracy

Julie Ballington and Glenda Fick

This case study discusses the challenges of educating the majority of a country's citizens about the voting process, following the demise of the apartheid regime that had denied them the right to vote. Registration was not a requirement for the 1994 elections. The primary goal of voter education was to teach first-time voters, many of them illiterate, about the mechanics of voting in democratic elections.

However, the enthusiasm and high voter turnout experienced in 1994, especially among youth, has dropped significantly. The challenge today, in the lead-up to the 1999 elections, is to undertake youth mobilization drives aimed at encouraging young people to register and vote, and to educate them about the importance of their active participation in the electoral process.

Information on Youth

The involvement of youth is an integral part of the development of democracy in South Africa. As democratic elections are new to the political landscape, youth must be encouraged to exercise political rights, including the right to vote. In an emerging democracy, many obstacles inhibit voter turnout among young people, including a lack of familiarity with voting processes.

The term "youth" is accorded various social, legal, cultural and historical meanings. It is statutorily defined as the age group between 14 and 35 years.[1] Survey reports indicate that 39% of South African society fall within this age group, meaning that 16.2 million South Africans are between 14 and 35 years.[2] Of this group 49.5% are male and 50.5% female; 77% are African, 11% White, 10% Coloured, and 3% Indian. Given their numbers, the participation of all young South Africans is critical not only to the performance of political parties at the polls, but also for the consolidation of South Africa's democracy.

In June 1996, the National Youth Commission (NYC) Act established a Youth Commission in South Africa.[3] The Act represents one aspect of the government's plan to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the problems and challenges facing young men and women.[4] It is a statutory requirement that the NYC comprise a broad cross-section of the country's youth, and develop an integrated national youth policy. One of the guiding principles of this policy states that "there must be promotion of young people's participation in democratic processes".[5] In the pre-election period, the Electoral Commission and the NYC face considerable challenges in preparing young people to participate in and foster an understanding of electoral processes. Arguably, information and education programmes serve as important mechanisms through which participation of young people can be increased. They also have important implications for voter turnout in an emerging democracy.

The Electoral Environment

On 27 April 1994 images of the long lines of South Africans waiting patiently to cast their votes captured the attention of the world. The day marked the end of institutionalized apartheid, and the beginning of a system of constitutional supremacy in South Africa. During the 1994 election, the National Assembly and provincial legislatures were elected (for a period of five years) according to a system of closed list proportional representation. Voter registration was not a requirement for voting in this election. The statute[6] that regulated the election stipulated that any person 18 years or older who was a citizen or permanent resident in South Africa, and who was in possession of a voter eligibility document, was entitled to vote.

In 1995 and 1996, democratic elections took place in South Africa at the local government level. Constitutionally, local government elections were required to take place according to an electoral system that included both proportional and ward representation. However, unlike 1994, voter registration was a requirement.

The South African Constitution[7] provides that the second election of the National Assembly and provincial legislatures in 1999 will be conducted according to the same system of proportional representation as in 1994. However, unlike 1994, a national common voters' roll is a constitutional requirement for the 1999 election. Compliance with this requirement has resulted in the promulgation of a statute that requires voters to register before being eligible to vote with a statutorily-defined identity document.[8] Like its predecessor, the statute provides for a minimum voting age of 18 years. South Africa's next local government elections are scheduled to take place in the year 2000.

The parliamentary and provincial elections in April 1994, together with the local government elections in 1995 and 1996, marked the first voting experience for roughly 80% of the South African population. One of the most significant democratic exercises in electoral planning in South Africa has therefore been educating first-time voters, many of them illiterate, about the mechanics of voting in democratic elections. In the 1994 election and 1995/96 local government elections, considerable expenditure was devoted to voter education.[9]

Voter Turnout

Extraordinary enthusiasm, euphoria and a massive voter turnout among youth characterized the 1994 election. Although no voters' roll was compiled for the election, a total of 19,533,498 of the estimated 22,700,000 voters cast their ballots, representing an estimated 86% voter turnout.[10] Differences in terms of age or gender were not captured, but survey results indicate that "among youth there was a massive 93% voter turnout".[11] For most youth, the liberation election was reason enough to participate, and arguably accounts for the high turnout.

Voter turnout dropped significantly in the local government elections. Survey results show that some 43% of young people did not vote in the elections, indicating that non-voting youth increased by 36% in just 19 months.[12] Overall, non-voting in the elections decreased with age. The youngest cohort, the 18- to 20-year olds, were the most likely not to vote[13] ; only 35% voted in this category.[14] There are obvious differences between a local and national election, and a reduction in voter turnout is not unusual. The local elections also involved more complex voting procedures than the national election, and the same enthusiasm among voters was not as prevalent as in 1994. Low levels of participation among youth recurred in the voter registration drive ahead of the second national election. What appears to be a significant drop in turnout among youth is indeed troubling for a fledgling democracy.

Voter Education

The move towards democratization in 1994 meant that the electorate, largely unfamiliar with the process of voting and democracy, had to be educated about the mechanics of the election. Mainly NGOs, churches, civic bodies, and political parties conducted voter education. Various voter education programmes were co-ordinated and organized through the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the Independent Forum for Electoral Education (IFEE) and the Democratic Education and Broadcasting Initiative (DEBI) at the national level. National and foreign governments and donors provided funding for voter education.[15]

The approximately 40 member organizations of IFEE, together with members of DEBI, which promoted voter education on television and radio, aimed to reach every voter in the country.[16] Voter education programmes included, *inter alia*, video material, pamphlet campaigns, mock elections, role-plays, dramas and workshops.[17] It appears that little effort was made to target specific categories, such as young voters, since voter education programmes generally targeted all first-time voters.[18] However, survey results indicate that video, role-playing, workshops and drama events increased the participation levels of younger voters.[19]

Voter education efforts, largely focusing on voting technique, were generally effective in explaining how to vote. This is perhaps borne out by the 1% ballot spoilage. However, while it is estimated that 87%[20] of first-time voters would not have known how to vote without training, there has been little detailed investigation into the success of specific programmes employed, or how they impacted on youth. While not equivalent to the national election, the local government elections provide a useful point of comparison and opportunity to examine voting patterns and factors affecting voter turnout among youth.

A challenge in the local elections was to achieve a level of voter literacy and turnout similar to that of the 1994 elections. Since the majority of young South Africans were voting only for the second time, the voter education campaign was again an important part of the election process. NGOs played a central role, both advising on the best ways to reach the electorate and conducting voter education nationally. Voter education initiatives focused *inter alia* on the registration and voting process and the purpose of local government. Some education programmes targeted youth specifically. For example, organizations held workshops with teachers and students in schools, or in church youth clubs.[21] The materials used included pamphlets, comic books, newspapers, videos and the use of community radio stations.

Lessons Learned

With regard to voter education, many programmes focused on explaining the "how to" of the voting process, rather than specifically addressing the needs of youth. Post-election studies suggest that voter education campaigns placed great emphasis on getting the public to vote correctly. For example, in the local elections, "messages about the rights and responsibilities of local government, local councillors and so on were muted".[22] A survey conducted on knowledge of voting procedures among youth found that "increasing people's knowledge around voting procedures would have little, if any, affect on the incidence of voting". Rather, increasing the levels of knowledge about government and why it is important to vote may make voter education more effective in influencing voter turnout.[23] A population that votes effectively, but without knowing why or for what, is not the basis for a healthy democracy.

While the high voter turnout among youth was expected in 1994, the local government elections also reveal certain "micro" explanations for non-voting among youth that need to be addressed. Survey results indicate that technical problems were the main reasons for non-voting among youth.[24] They include the following:

- Low levels of registration amongst young people, with the lowest registration level among the 18- to 24-year old category (where only 66% registered)

- Many young voters did not possess the required identity document to register and vote
- Certain young voters were not made aware of where to register or vote
- A number of voters found that their names had been incorrectly recorded on the voters' roll, and consequently were unable to vote.

Technical facilitation, whereby young people are assisted in registration and voting, is therefore an important mechanism to increase turnout among young voters. This need has been demonstrated in the registration drive prior to the second election. Large numbers of young people have indicated an unwillingness to participate in the electoral process by abstaining from the required voter registration. But this is not the only reason. A plethora of reasons is advanced to elucidate this low participation including, once again, non-possession of the required identity document; a lack of interest in and knowledge of the registration process; lack of political awareness; apathy and disillusionment about the perceived poor performance of political parties; and the timing of the registration process.

New Initiatives

This low participation of young people has prompted the IEC, the NYC and youth organizations to undertake youth mobilization drives.[25] Among the proposed initiatives to encourage young people to register and vote are the following:

- Utilization of the mass media, which include youth radio stations and TV programmes
- The dissemination of posters, stickers and pamphlets containing election messages in areas of low media penetration
- Endorsement of the voter registration drive by young and "hip" sports, music and business personalities
- The establishment of a youth information service help line to assist with electoral-related queries
- The presentation of road shows at schools and tertiary institutions as part of the outreach programme to young people
- The targeting of youth at music and kwaito festivals, and other places of entertainment.

One important strategy is taking electoral messages to young people at schools, tertiary institutions and youth "hang-outs". The IEC has spearheaded an education programme comprising information pamphlets, posters and newspaper advertisements informing the electorate about registration and voting procedures.

NGOs and community organizations also undertake voter education initiatives. The Electoral Institute of South Africa (EISA) has instituted a programme targeted at youth and teachers in schools, advancing the slogans "Voting Refreshes" and "Vote and Make Yourself Heard". The programme focuses on preparing young people to participate in elections as part of the democratic process in South Africa. It emphasizes the importance of democracy, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Training materials, posters and pamphlets are widely distributed to urban and rural schools and are designed to appeal to young people by using catchy slogans and bright colours.

Continuing voter education is an important instrument for increasing the participation of youth. However, the analysis above suggests that while it is important to increase knowledge of voting procedures, "explaining to youth how to vote or explaining to them who it is they are voting for" does not necessarily increase the incidence of voting. Rather, it appears that "an explanation of why youth should vote would influence the incidence of voting".[26] Broader democracy and civic education may be one way to achieve this. Furthermore, it is essential that voter education initiatives be formulated taking into account South African youth culture with all its nuances.

Endnotes

[1] Section 1 of the National Youth Commission Act 19 of 1996.

[2] Based on an October 1995 Household Survey conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE).

[3] Act 19 of 1996. The Office of the Executive Deputy President houses the National Youth Commission.

[4] Youth Information Service Website. Address is http://www.yis.co.za/principles.htm

[5] Bhengu, M. 21 December 1998. *'The National Youth Commission Throws a Lifeline for First-Time Voters'*. Media Statement.

[6] South Africa's first democratic election was regulated by the Electoral Act 202 of 1993.

[7] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.

[8] The 1999 election will be regulated by the Electoral Act 73 of 1998. This Act repeals the Electoral Act 202 of 1993.

[9] *The People Shall Govern: A Dream Realised*, Johannesburg: Co-Operative for Research and Education (CORE), p. 12, 1995.

[10] *Report of the Independent Electoral Commission: The South African Elections of April 1994*, Johannesburg: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), p. 74, 1994.

[11] Jennings, R., D. Everatt and G. Masebe, *Youth Politics: Voting Patterns Among Youth in the 1994 and 1995 Elections*, Johannesburg: CASE, p. 3, 1998.

[12] Ibid. p. 4.

[13] Ibid. p. 5.

[14] Idem.

[15] Camay, P. and A. Gordon, *There Will Be Elections: An Evaluation of the Local Government Elections in South Africa*, Johannesburg: CORE, p. 108, 1996.

[16] Moller, V. and T. Hanf, *Learning to Vote: Voter Education in South Africa's 1994 Elections*, Durban: Indicator Press, 1995.

[17] For example, NGOs involved in voter education included, *inter alia*, the Independent Mediation Service of South Africa, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, and Project Vote.

[18] This is not to imply that no voter education was targeted at youth, but that on the whole, efforts were directed to the general electorate, most of whom were first time voters.

[19] Moller and Hanf. op cit., p. 15.

[20] Ibid.

[21] For example, Project Vote in Western Cape went into many schools and held workshops. These workshops included those younger than eighteen, with a view to getting them involved so that they would want to vote upon turning eighteen.

[22] Isserow, M., D. Everatt and A. Gulati, *A Review of CASE Studies and Additional Literature Relating to the 1995 Local Elections*, Johannesburg: CASE, p. 8, 1996.

[23] Idem

[24] Jennings et al. op cit., p. 6.

[25] For example, at a national summit held in early 1999 and attended by the NYC, IEC and sixty youth organizations, agreement was reached to work collectively to ensure the maximum participation of young people in the election process.

[26] Jennings et al. op cit., p. 9.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Securing the Future of Democracy by Involving Kids Today

The Experience of Kids Voting USA

Munroe Eagles
and Thomas Jacobson

This case study describes a unique programme developed by Kids Voting USA, a private, non-partisan organization, to involve children in the democratic process before they reach voting age. The basic concept is for schools, families, and communities to work together to ensure that children grow up to appreciate democracy and value their future role in it. Students from kindergarten through high school participate in an active curriculum that introduces them to the political process and provides them an opportunity to engage in deliberation and debate. This learning is put into practice on election day as kids go to official polling sites to cast their own (mock) ballots, alongside their parents or guardians. The primary objective of this programme is the early development of participatory attitudes and habits that will assure an informed electorate and help sustain democracy. It also adds an interesting dimension by presenting evidence that a programme aimed at children can also increase participation by their parents.

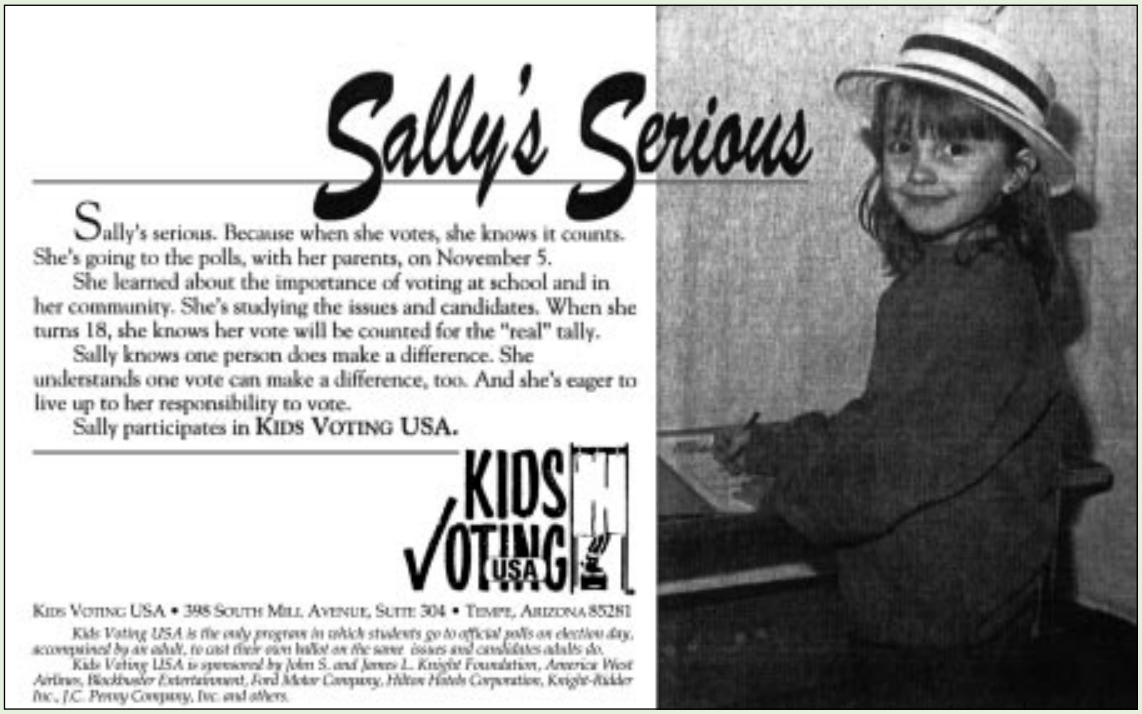
Electoral Context

If opportunities to vote in competitive elections were sufficient for establishing a strong democracy, the United States ought surely to be among the strongest democracies and Americans the most experienced voters in the world. Nationally, citizens can vote on the first Tuesday of November every two years for the 435 members of Congress and about a third of the 100 senators, and every four years for the presidency. Beneath this, there are a host of state and local elections.

Voter Turnout

Expressions of concern about the health of American democracy are increasingly being heard. Voter turnout in the 1996 presidential election was 49%, the lowest level since 1924. Off-year, or mid-term, elections draw less voter attention and interest, and turnouts for these elections since the 1970s have ranged between 37 and 40%. Despite last minute million-dollar "get out the vote" blitzes on election day, the November 1998 election (where no presidential contest was taking place) involved only 38% of the eligible adult electorate (about the same level as the 1990 and 1994 elections).

The problem of electoral non-participation is especially acute among the young. Since the passage of the 26th amendment to the American Constitution in 1971, all citizens over the age of 18 have the right to vote in elections at any level in the country. However, voter turnout for the youngest group of eligible voters, the 18- to 24-year olds, is the lowest of any age group. Only 42.8% of this age group claimed to have voted in the 1992 Presidential election, a figure that fell further to a 30-plus year low of 32.4% in the 1996 Presidential election.[1]



Sally's Serious

Sally's serious. Because when she votes, she knows it counts. She's going to the polls, with her parents, on November 5.

She learned about the importance of voting at school and in her community. She's studying the issues and candidates. When she turns 18, she knows her vote will be counted for the "real" tally.

Sally knows one person does make a difference. She understands one vote can make a difference, too. And she's eager to live up to her responsibility to vote.

Sally participates in KIDS VOTING USA.

KIDS VOTING USA

KIDS VOTING USA • 398 SOUTH MILL AVENUE, SUITE 304 • TEMPE, ARIZONA 85281

Kids Voting USA is the only program in which students go to official polls on election day, accompanied by an adult, to cast their own ballot on the same issues and candidates adults do.

Kids Voting USA is sponsored by John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, America West Airlines, Blockbuster Entertainment, Ford Motor Company, Hilton Hotels Corporation, Knight-Ridder Inc., J.C. Penny Company, Inc. and others.

Courtesy: Kids Voting USA

Reasons for Not Voting

The reasons given for not voting by young people are not significantly different from those given by older non-voters. According to a survey by the US Census Bureau, among the leading reasons given by 18-24 year olds in 1996 were "too little time" (just over a quarter gave this reason), "lack of interest" (16.5%), and being "out of town" on election day (13.4%).

Other research has shown, however, that on the whole young people are likely to be less rooted in their communities, less familiar with the registration and electoral process, and less clear about what they have at stake in the electoral process.[2] There are surprisingly and frustratingly few opportunities to improve this state of affairs. In an age where political cynicism runs high, where people often move from community to community, and where poverty makes the daily struggle for survival a basic concern, low voter participation is often accepted as a sign of the times.

Description of the Overall Programme

A variety of programmes have been implemented in recent years to attempt to enhance electoral participation among America's youth. One particularly successful programme of intervention has been Kids Voting, USA. Founded in Arizona in 1988 by three businessmen, it was based on a programme they observed while on vacation in Costa Rica. Costa Ricans turn out at the polls at a rate of approximately 80-90%, and for over four decades have encouraged kids to debate the issues and to "vote" alongside their parents in the polling booths. The three businessmen were convinced that such a programme held considerable promise for improving voter participation in America. This brief case study describes the national programme, its chief characteristics and successes, before focusing on one of its state affiliates: Kids Voting, Western New York.

The initial pilot project for Kids Voting, USA was conducted in 1988 in six Arizona communities and involved 30,000 students. In the decade since, the organization has spread geographically. In the 1992 election it operated programmes in 11 states, and by 1994 it had opened affiliates in 20 states and the

District of Columbia, reaching 2.3 million students at a budgeted cost of $5 million.[3] By 1996 the Kids Voting network of affiliates had grown to number more than 40 organizations, and in 1998 Kids Voting programmes were expected to reach five million students and 200,000 teachers in 60,000 schools nationwide. Kids Voting bills itself as a non-profit, grass-roots-driven voter education project aimed at instilling both knowledge of, and a taste for, voting in school kids. The organization's mission statement "is securing the future of democracy by educating and involving youth in the election process today". Although centred in the schools, Kids Voting state affiliates enlist support from the corporate community, media companies, and institutions of higher learning.

The basic idea is as simple as it is appealing: Kids who have been active in the political process as part of their elementary, middle and high schools' basic activities will be better prepared to assume their full civic responsibility as an adult. Participating schools and teachers are provided with a curriculum geared to each grade level that emphasizes the importance of the vote, and encourages students to gather and weigh information from a variety of media outlets. Teachers report using the curricular materials between 6 and 12 hours in the weeks leading up to the November elections.[4] It encourages students to discuss political issues related to the election with their parents. Students are tutored in the balloting process. They learn how to identify their electoral districts, the candidates and their positions on the main issues of the campaign.

In the lowest grades, kindergarten through grade six, the curriculum features interactive lessons and craft activities to introduce the concept of democracy, the one person-one vote principle, leadership, the right to vote, the idea of registration, the electoral process, and the concepts of political parties. Curricular materials for the middle school (grades seven and eight) develop these same themes but add activities that emphasize the collection of data and the weighing of evidence in drawing political conclusions. For the high school classes, lessons and activities stress various political issues, the history of franchise reform, and the importance of student and political activism. The emphasis throughout the programme is on developing an appreciation of the role of informed voting for the democratic political process, and on gathering information and engaging in deliberation and debate. In doing this, Kids Voting curricula attempt to bring the democratic process alive, something traditional civics education in the schools has not been successful in doing. According to a leading political scientist, "K-12 civics education gives too much attention to our government's clean constitutional components and arrangements and too little attention to the natural give and take (and sometimes rough and tumble) that inevitably occurs when large numbers of diverse people are allowed and even encouraged to get involved in government".[5]

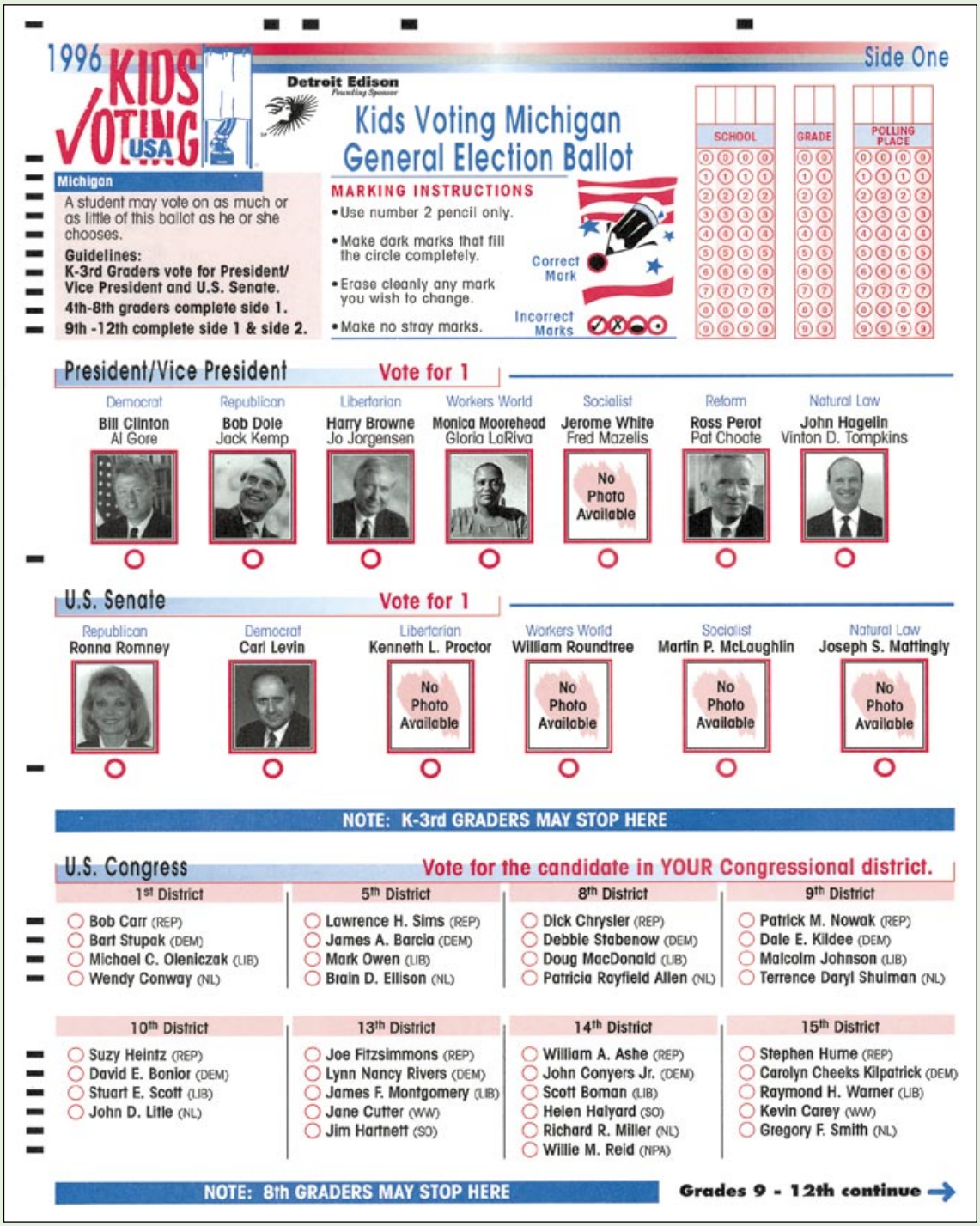
Programme Objectives

Kids Voting USA has identified three broad objectives for its activities. The most important and explicit of these is nurturing life-long civic-minded and participatory democrats. However, this objective can only be fully evaluated in the longer term, when the full effects of exposure to Kids Voting programmes are visible (i.e. by interviewing kids who have participated in all 13 Kids Voting elections that are possible through their school years).

In the meantime, however, researchers have assessed the performance of more limited Kids Voting objectives. First, investigators have determined that Kids Voting programmes initiate a "trickle up" process whereby adult turnout rates in areas where these programmes are active are on average approximately 2–4% higher than comparable areas where the programmes are not in place.[6] Survey evidence of samples of voters from areas in which Kids Voting programmes were active suggest that between 2-3% cast ballots primarily *because* of their kids' involvement with these programmes.

In relation to another Kids Voting objective, that of stimulating short term student interest in and engagement with the electoral process, the evidence from existing research is also highly positive.

Student respondents to a large-scale evaluation of 20 state programmes suggest that the materials and exercises were positively received, and that students were active in them. Slightly smaller proportions of students across various age groups reported discussing politics at home with their parents, and a majority (55%) reported actually voting on election day. Summarizing the satisfaction of students with Kids Voting programmes, 85% responded "yes" to a question asking whether they "would like to have Kids Voting as a part of what you learn in school the next time there is an election".[7] Teachers were similarly positive in their reactions; 89% expressed either "favourable" or "very favourable" overall impressions of Kids Voting programmes.



1996 KIDS VOTING USA — Side One

Detroit Edison

Kids Voting Michigan General Election Ballot

Michigan

A student may vote on as much or as little of this ballot as he or she chooses.

Guidelines:
K-3rd Graders vote for President/ Vice President and U.S. Senate.
4th-8th graders complete side 1.
9th -12th complete side 1 & side 2.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS
- Use number 2 pencil only.
- Make dark marks that fill the circle completely.
- Erase cleanly any mark you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks.

Correct Mark
Incorrect Marks

SCHOOL | GRADE | POLLING PLACE

President/Vice President — Vote for 1

Democrat	Republican	Libertarian	Workers World	Socialist	Reform	Natural Law
Bill Clinton / Al Gore	Bob Dole / Jack Kemp	Harry Browne / Jo Jorgensen	Monica Moorehead / Gloria LaRiva	Jerome White / Fred Mazelis	Ross Perot / Pat Choate	John Hagelin / Vinton D. Tompkins
				No Photo Available		

U.S. Senate — Vote for 1

Republican	Democrat	Libertarian	Workers World	Socialist	Natural Law
Ronna Romney	Carl Levin	Kenneth L. Proctor	William Roundtree	Martin P. McLaughlin	Joseph S. Mattingly
		No Photo Available	No Photo Available	No Photo Available	No Photo Available

NOTE: K-3rd GRADERS MAY STOP HERE

U.S. Congress — Vote for the candidate in YOUR Congressional district.

1st District	5th District	8th District	9th District
Bob Carr (REP)	Lawrence H. Sims (REP)	Dick Chrysler (REP)	Patrick M. Nowak (REP)
Bart Stupak (DEM)	James A. Barcia (DEM)	Debbie Stabenow (DEM)	Dale E. Kildee (DEM)
Michael C. Oleniczak (LIB)	Mark Owen (LIB)	Doug MacDonald (LIB)	Malcolm Johnson (LIB)
Wendy Conway (NL)	Brain D. Ellison (NL)	Patricia Rayfield Allen (NL)	Terrence Daryl Shulman (NL)

10th District	13th District	14th District	15th District
Suzy Heintz (REP)	Joe Fitzsimmons (REP)	William A. Ashe (REP)	Stephen Hume (REP)
David E. Bonior (DEM)	Lynn Nancy Rivers (DEM)	John Conyers Jr. (DEM)	Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (DEM)
Stuart E. Scott (LIB)	James F. Montgomery (LIB)	Scott Boman (LIB)	Raymond H. Warner (LIB)
John D. Litle (NL)	Jane Cutter (WW)	Helen Halyard (SO)	Kevin Carey (WW)
	Jim Hartnett (SO)	Richard R. Miller (NL)	Gregory F. Smith (NL)
		Willie M. Reid (NPA)	

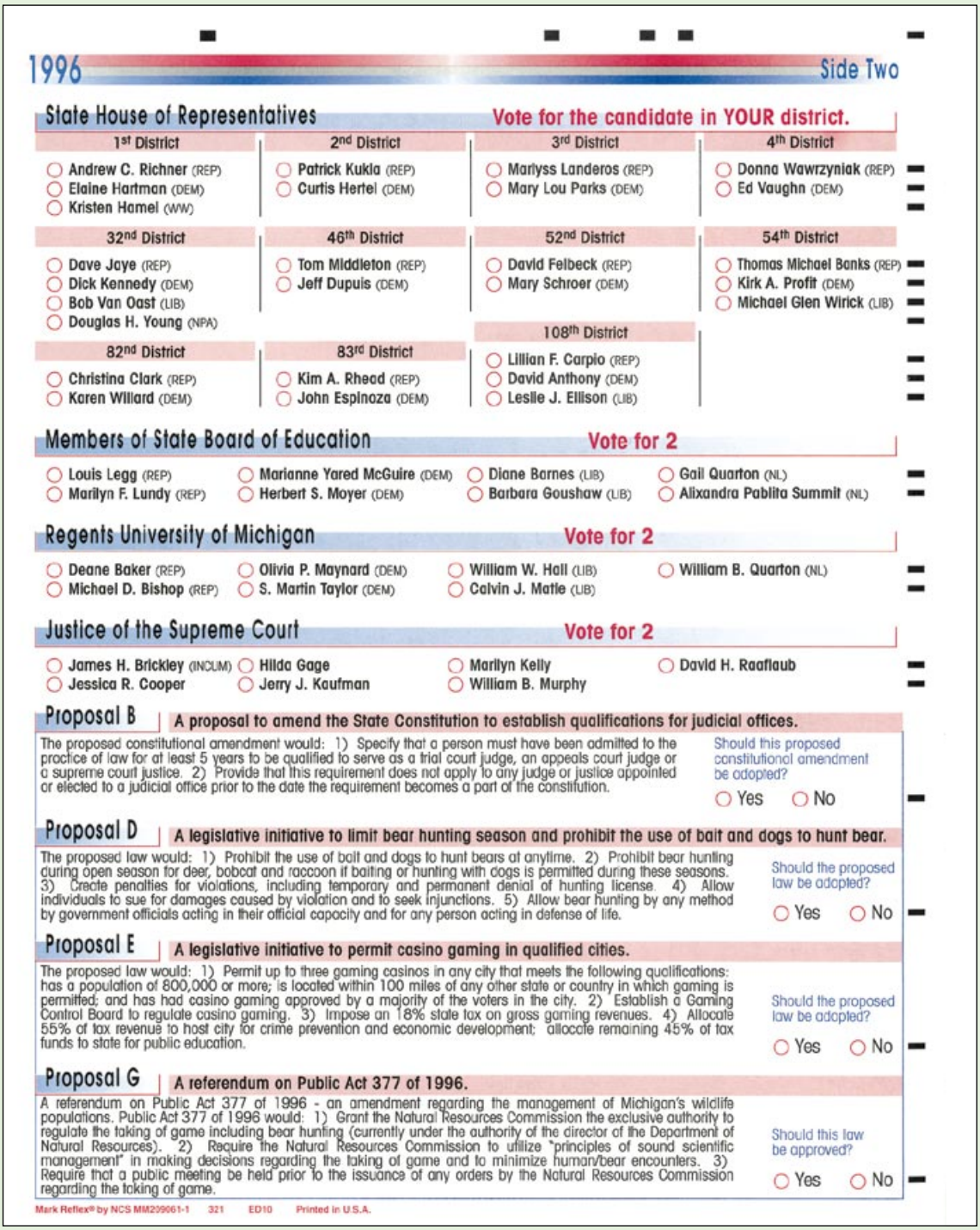
NOTE: 8th GRADERS MAY STOP HERE

Grades 9 - 12th continue →

Courtesy: Kids Voting USA and Kids Voting Michigan

Western New York Experience

A brief look at the Western New York experience with Kids Voting helps identify some of the factors contributing to the success of the organization. Like the national organization itself, the Western New York operation grew rapidly. It was founded in 1996, and in its first year of operation it involved over 100,000 students, recruited over 7,000 volunteers to work the "polls" on election day, and recorded over 67,000 ballots from students. In the local elections of 1997, more than 10,000 volunteers and 7,000 teachers were involved, and some 58,000 students cast ballots. And in its third year



1996 Side Two

State House of Representatives — Vote for the candidate in YOUR district.

1st District
- Andrew C. Richner (REP)
- Elaine Hartman (DEM)
- Kristen Hamel (WW)

2nd District
- Patrick Kukla (REP)
- Curtis Hertel (DEM)

3rd District
- Marlyss Landeros (REP)
- Mary Lou Parks (DEM)

4th District
- Donna Wawrzyniak (REP)
- Ed Vaughn (DEM)

32nd District
- Dave Joye (REP)
- Dick Kennedy (DEM)
- Bob Van Oast (LIB)
- Douglas H. Young (NPA)

46th District
- Tom Middleton (REP)
- Jeff Dupuis (DEM)

52nd District
- David Felbeck (REP)
- Mary Schroer (DEM)

54th District
- Thomas Michael Banks (REP)
- Kirk A. Profit (DEM)
- Michael Glen Wirick (LIB)

82nd District
- Christina Clark (REP)
- Karen Willard (DEM)

83rd District
- Kim A. Rhead (REP)
- John Espinoza (DEM)

108th District
- Lillian F. Carpio (REP)
- David Anthony (DEM)
- Leslie J. Ellison (LIB)

Members of State Board of Education — Vote for 2

- Louis Legg (REP)
- Marilyn F. Lundy (REP)
- Marianne Yared McGuire (DEM)
- Herbert S. Moyer (DEM)
- Diane Barnes (LIB)
- Barbara Goushaw (LIB)
- Gail Quarton (NL)
- Alixandra Pablita Summit (NL)

Regents University of Michigan — Vote for 2

- Deane Baker (REP)
- Michael D. Bishop (REP)
- Olivia P. Maynard (DEM)
- S. Martin Taylor (DEM)
- William W. Hall (LIB)
- Calvin J. Matle (LIB)
- William B. Quarton (NL)

Justice of the Supreme Court — Vote for 2

- James H. Brickley (INCUM)
- Jessica R. Cooper
- Hilda Gage
- Jerry J. Kaufman
- Marilyn Kelly
- William B. Murphy
- David H. Raaflaub

Proposal B — A proposal to amend the State Constitution to establish qualifications for judicial offices.

The proposed constitutional amendment would: 1) Specify that a person must have been admitted to the practice of law for at least 5 years to be qualified to serve as a trial court judge, an appeals court judge or a supreme court justice. 2) Provide that this requirement does not apply to any judge or justice appointed or elected to a judicial office prior to the date the requirement becomes a part of the constitution.

Should this proposed constitutional amendment be adopted? ○ Yes ○ No

Proposal D — A legislative initiative to limit bear hunting season and prohibit the use of bait and dogs to hunt bear.

The proposed law would: 1) Prohibit the use of bait and dogs to hunt bears at anytime. 2) Prohibit bear hunting during open season for deer, bobcat and raccoon if baiting or hunting with dogs is permitted during these seasons. 3) Create penalties for violations, including temporary and permanent denial of hunting license. 4) Allow individuals to sue for damages caused by violation and to seek injunctions. 5) Allow bear hunting by any method by government officials acting in their official capacity and for any person acting in defense of life.

Should the proposed law be adopted? ○ Yes ○ No

Proposal E — A legislative initiative to permit casino gaming in qualified cities.

The proposed law would: 1) Permit up to three gaming casinos in any city that meets the following qualifications: has a population of 800,000 or more; is located within 100 miles of any other state or country in which gaming is permitted; and has had casino gaming approved by a majority of the voters in the city. 2) Establish a Gaming Control Board to regulate casino gaming. 3) Impose an 18% state tax on gross gaming revenues. 4) Allocate 55% of tax revenue to host city for crime prevention and economic development; allocate remaining 45% of tax funds to state for public education.

Should the proposed law be adopted? ○ Yes ○ No

Proposal G — A referendum on Public Act 377 of 1996.

A referendum on Public Act 377 of 1996 - an amendment regarding the management of Michigan's wildlife populations. Public Act 377 of 1996 would: 1) Grant the Natural Resources Commission the exclusive authority to regulate the taking of game including bear hunting (currently under the authority of the director of the Department of Natural Resources). 2) Require the Natural Resources Commission to utilize "principles of sound scientific management" in making decisions regarding the taking of game and to minimize human/bear encounters. 3) Require that a public meeting be held prior to the issuance of any orders by the Natural Resources Commission regarding the taking of game.

Should this law be approved? ○ Yes ○ No

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Courtesy: Kids Voting USA and Kids Voting Michigan

of operation in 1998, more than 270 schools and 175,000 students at all grade levels took part in the Kids Voting programme.

In addition to the standard Kids Voting programmes, the local affiliate has for two years held a "Kidsvention" – essentially a debate competition in which school teams present opposing positions on important issues of the day. In the 1998 competition, school teams researched and advanced arguments for or against such propositions as "formalized prayer should be allowed in schools" and "colleges should be accountable for students' excessive drinking". Selected teams appear as finalists on live television on a special two-hour programme. In addition, the same propositions appear on the students' ballots on election day, so all Kids Voting participants can express their views.[8]

Assessments undertaken of the Kids Voting programme in Western New York mirror the results of the national research. Like students and teachers in other states, participants in the Western New York programme seem to like the activity. In 1998, a survey of participating students by University of Buffalo's Department of Communication showed that 90% would like to see the programme continue, and 98% of teachers surveyed felt that the programme increased students' knowledge of the electoral process.

Evidence of a "trickle up" effect is also forthcoming, and if anything it is stronger in this area than in other states with Kids Voting programmes. A public opinion survey of Erie County voters in the local elections of November 1997 suggested that approximately 11% of voters cited the programme as *the decisive factor* in drawing them out to the polls. The numbers of adults who report voting because of Kids Voting was slightly lower in 1998 (9% of a sample of voters). 30% of Erie county voters surveyed following the November 1998 election cited Kids Voting, Western New York as an important factor in their decision to turn out. Even more remarkable was that 76% of voter respondents who had children participating in the Kids Voting, Western New York programme took the children with them to the polls. By any short-term standard, then, this is a remarkably successful programme.

Reasons for its Success

What accounts for this success? A full answer to this question will require a systematic comparative study (presently under way) of the various Kids Voting programmes across the United States. At this point, some tentative explanations based on the Western New York experience may be advanced as hypotheses.

- **Leadership**
  First, the role of leadership in co-ordinating and mobilizing a wide range of community resources and assets seems to be crucial.

- **Range of Actors**
  Secondly, it is important to involve as broad a range of community actors as possible, and in as broad a range of capacities as possible. The Western New York affiliate successfully mobilized support from (among others) a private foundation, a supermarket chain, the local state university, local cable television and newspaper outlets, a manufacturer, a health care company, local law firms, a telecommunications firm, and two county legislatures. Each of these actors contributed financially and in other ways.

- **Strong Media Support**
  A third factor that probably contributed to the success of the programme locally is the strong support it received from the community's only daily newspaper, *The Buffalo News*. The paper not only contributed heavily to the organization with donations of advertising space (worth an estimated US$ 300,000 in 1997), but also provided physical space and institutional support for the organization's local office.

Adoption in School Curricula

Finally, the readiness of school administrators and teachers to adopt the Kids Voting programme was likely to have been heightened by the local organization's efforts to explicitly integrate the curricular materials with New York state's educational standards. Doubtless there will be other factors that emerge from a more systematic and comparative analysis, but these appear likely to be important in the explanation for the success of at least the Western New York affiliate.

Limitations of the Programme

Some limitations of the programme should also be mentioned. At present, while most states have programmes in place and more are planned, the coverage *within* these states is often quite concentrated. The Western New York affiliate, for example, organizes only a portion of students in two counties in the state, leaving the vast majority of New York state's school children in other counties without access to the programme.

The problems of growing this grass-roots organization are clearly daunting and will persist long after the 50th state signs on to the Kids Voting programme by opening an affiliate. Such expansion is obviously more labour-intensive than the widely publicized "Rock the Vote" programme, and it will largely depend on the emergence of committed local leaderships in other communities in all corners of each participating state.

At present, the highly decentralized nature of this organization makes it difficult to organize and orchestrate anything approaching a universal access across schools and communities. Similarly, the penetration of Kids Voting into the schools in a geographic area is likely to be contingent on a number of factors outside the organization's control. In areas where education is a high priority and is well-funded (as in Western New York State), the participation rate of schools is likely to be high. Other areas lacking the necessary financial and/or social capital resources, and who therefore could possibly benefit most from Kids Voting programmes, may prove to be less open to such a voluntary programme.

Endnotes

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