

The suffrage age – young people’s party vote and participation

If the suffrage age is lowered to 16 years, it would not significantly affect the political balance. Partly because young people do not, in terms of figures, comprise a particularly large group. Partly because young people’s party vote is similar to the rest of the population’s vote.

Young people – a small electorate

If the suffrage age was lowered to 16 years, the 16-17 year olds would comprise approx. 3 percent of the electorate. This would mean that new voters could potentially move 1-2 mandates in the Danish Parliament.

Lowering the suffrage age to 16 does therefore not represent a major change to the electorate behaviour, seen in the context of its current development.

Young people’s party vote

At the Parliamentary elections in 2007, the Danish Youth Council carried out a study that charted 15-17 year old’s party political orientation.

The study showed that overall a young person’s party vote followed the actual voting results from 2007, although with a tendency towards a slightly higher favour for the leftwing parties than the rest of the electorate. A 16 year old suffrage age at the 2007 Parliamentary elections would, by estimate, only have moved an individual mandate from the “blue block” to the “red block” – and would not have affected the results regarding government.

According to the study, 15-17 year old young people would have given the “blue block” (the Liberal Party, Conservatives, New Alliance and Danish People’s Party) 34.8 percent of the votes and the “red block” (the Social-Liberal Party, the Social Democrats, the socialist’s people’s party and the Red-Green Alliance) 65.2 percent of the votes.

It is worth noting that the traditional large parties of the Liberal Party and

YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTY VOTE AND RESULT OF THE 2007 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Parties	Young people’s party vote – Gallup study 2007	Election result – 2007 Parliamentary elections
A. The Danish Social Democrats	22,6 %	25,5 %
B. The Danish Social-Liberal Party	10,8 %	5,1 %
C. The Conservative People’s Party	10,6 %	10,4 %
F. The Danish Socialist’s People’s Party	17,6 %	13 %
O. Danish People’s Party	5,8 %	13,8 %
V. The Liberal Party of Denmark	15,5 %	26,3 %
Y. Liberal Alliance	6 %	2,8 %
Ø. Red-Green Alliance	8,7 %	2,2 %
Other parties/candidates	0,8 %	0,9 %

Source: 16-25 year olds / Gallup for Danish Youth Council 2007.
Blank and “don’t know” answers are not included.

	Ø	F	A	B	C	V	O
First-time voters	8	10	23	14	8	18	20
Gen Average	4	6	27	9	11	30	14

the Social Democrats receive fewer votes from young people, than from the rest of the population. In contrast, the center parties, the Social-Liberal Party and the New Alliance (now Liberal Alliance), have more votes from young people.

First-time voters

This trend was confirmed in relation to the first-time voters' voting behaviour. Which box new voters tick can never be confirmed with any certainty, but voting researcher and lecturer at Aalborg University, Johannes Andersen, has made the following estimate based on his own studies of the 2005 Parliamentary elections:

As shown in the table below, young voters in 2005 were placed all across the political spectrum. The young people are neither significantly more to the right nor the left than the national average: 40 % of young first-time voters are placed to the left.

The trend of young people's poor support for the Social Democrats and particularly the Liberal Party is once again clear in this study of first-time voters. The Social-Liberal Party and Danish People's Party had, in contrast, strong support from the youth. Danish People's Party had nearly one in five of all first-time voters.

The youth votes like the rest of the population. They are not par-

ticularly left or right-wing. Political parties can achieve a certain immediate success with young first-time voters, but such movement will often follow the general trend of the entire electorate. Just like with the overall population, some parties that are periodically more popular than others among young people.

Young people's vision of participation and democracy

Young people are interested in democracy and society's development. A study carried out by Gallup in 2009 shows that a whole 96 percent of the 16-17 year olds, either to a high or to some degree are interested in how problems in society are solved, and that 93 percent have an opinion regarding in which direction Denmark and the world should be developing.

The study further highlights that young people have a positive view of Danish democracy and that they think it is important to take part in it. This is expressed both in the young people's attitude towards taking active part in referendums and elections, and in their confidence in the democratic system. Thus 79 percent of the respondents answered that voting is a democratic obligation.

The study also measured confidence in the political system by asking 16-17 year old respondents about their confidence in the Danish political system and in Danish politicians. Here 79 percent answered that they had confidence in the politicians. Meanwhile 64 percent still believed that the politicians should listen more to young people's opinions.

The 16-17 year old also has a reflected opinion on the role of the media. Only 18 percent had direct confidence in the media, while 51 percent expressed a degree of mistrust.

I HAVE AN OPINION ABOUT IN WHICH DIRECTION DENMARK AND THE WORLD SHOULD DEVELOP

Completely agree	19 %
Agree	74 %
Neutral	7 %
Disagree	0 %
Completely disagree	0 %

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY (SUCH AS INTEGRATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, CLIMATE, ETC.)

Completely agree	30 %
Agree	46 %
Neutral	21 %
Disagree	3 %
Completely disagree	0 %