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YOUNG PEOPLE & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION



1. Has the voting age been changed in your country since WWII?
Yes it has changed since WWII.

In 1969, the "Representation of the People Act", lowered the voting age from twenty one to eighteen, with effect from 1970 and remained in force in the UK until the "Scottish Independence Referendum Act", in 2013 which allowed sixteen year olds to vote for the first time but only in Scotland and only in that particular referendum.

In June 2015 the right to vote was extended when MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament) voted to allow sixteen and seventeen year olds the right to vote in **Scottish Parliament elections** and **Scottish Local Government** elections.

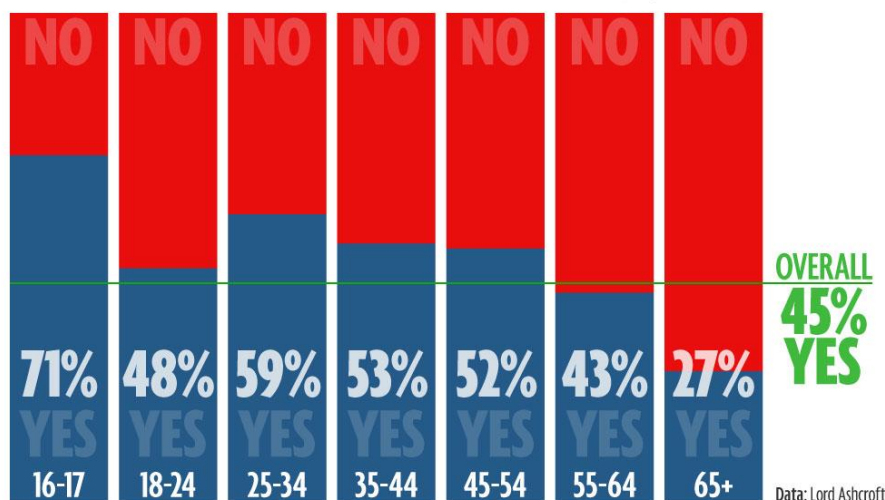
On the same day MPs in Westminster struck down an amendment to give the vote to all under-18s in the EU referendum. Sixteen and seventeen year olds in Scotland are now the same as in England and Wales but still do not have the right to vote in the General Election.

2. Are there any differences in voting ages in different kind of elections? (e.g. municipal, parliamentary, presidential etc.).

Yes there are.

As discussed above, in 2013 the Scottish Independence Referendum Act allowed Scottish sixteen year olds to vote in the referendum vote in 2014, the first group of under-eighteens to vote in the UK. This resulted in "unprecedented levels of political engagement, particularly with sixteen and seventeen year olds, who welcomed the opportunity to vote for the first time." They even had higher voter turnout rates than 18-24 year olds with 75% voting and 97% saying they would vote in future elections.

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES YOU VOTED YES TO SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE?
YES and NO referendum votes broken down by age



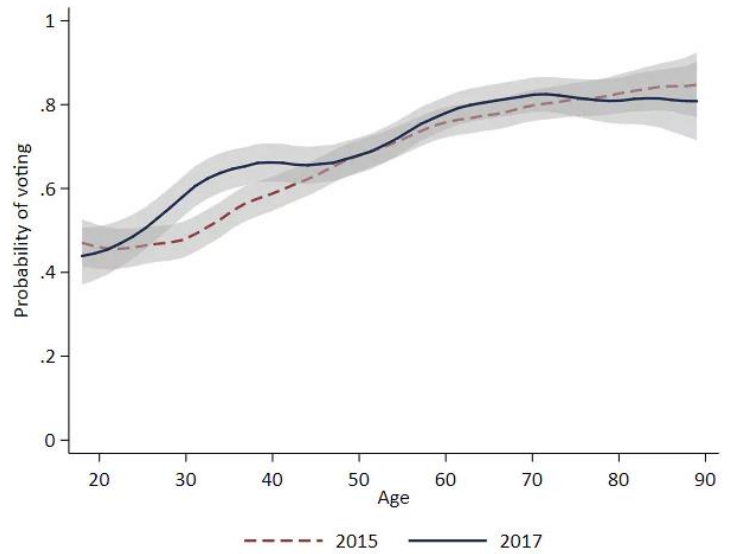
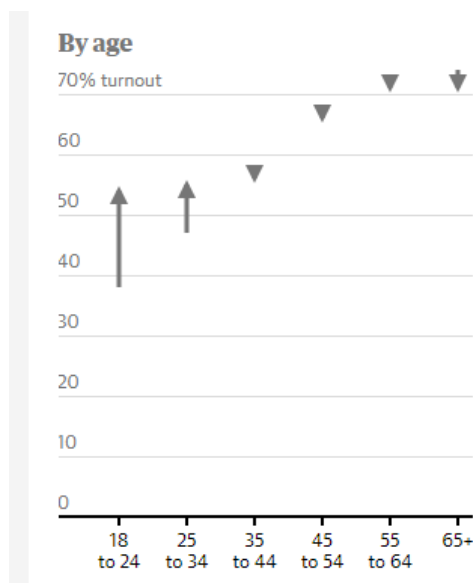
The following year, after the UK government had devolved the power of voting ages to the Scottish Parliament, a vote was unanimously passed to allow sixteen and seventeen year olds to vote in Scottish Parliamentary and local elections, the Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Bill.

This differs from general elections and the EU referendum, that was held in 2016, as the voting age was 18. However a Bill has been put forward in Wales, which would allow sixteen year olds to vote in local and Welsh elections.

3. What were the voter turnouts among the young in the previous elections in your country?

Turnout for the 2017 General Election was at a 25-year high, boosted by young people and BME (Black and Minority Ethnicity) voters

More than half of those aged 18-24 turned out to vote, an increase of 16 percentage points on 2015.



In the EU referendum, turnout was 64% among 18-24 year olds and 65% among 25-39 year old, which is closer to the population average than could have been expected. 71% of people aged 18-24 voted to remain in the EU, and 62% of 25-39 year old's.

4. Has the situation among the young in your country changed since WWII (e.g. are there fewer young voters now than before)? If so, how?

In the United Kingdom, the voting age remained fixed at 21 and over until the passing of the Representation of the People Act in 1969, which lowered it to 18. This remained in force in Scotland until the Scottish Independence Referendum Act in 2013, which allowed sixteen and seventeen year olds the right to vote.

In June 2015, the Scottish Parliament voted unanimously to reduce the voting age to sixteen for Scottish Parliament elections and Scottish local government elections.

During the Scottish referendum, according to ICM's survey, 75% of sixteen and seventeen year olds voted, and of the 3.6 million voters, more than 100,000 of the total were sixteen to seventeen-year-olds who had registered to vote that year.

This clearly shows that lowering the voting age has led to an increase in young people becoming more politically aware and making a conscious effort to vote and being able to voice their opinions more openly than they ever have in the past.

5. If the voter turnout among the young in your country is considered alarmingly low, what is being/ has been done about it?

The Scottish government initially lowered the voting age to 16 in 2013 in time for our Independence Referendum and then permanently for all Scottish parliamentary and local elections on the 18th June 2015.

Bruce Crawford representing the Scottish government said in 2012 "this would encourage participation by young people in the democratic process and would encourage them to vote in matters that affect them" some more cynically said that as young people tend to favour more left wing parties it was to influence the result. At that time a demos survey of the whole population of Scotland, 56% agreed in the lowering of the voting age and 41% disagreed.

75% of 16-17 year olds voted in the referendum according to the official parliament website which was higher than the 54% of 18-24 year olds. In the Scottish parliament elections two years later there are no figures that break down to show if these young voters maintained their enthusiasm for political engagement by voting however the overall figures show a turnout higher than any time since 1999 and the number of new 16 and 17 year olds registering to vote is high.

"What Scotland Thinks" is a web based project analysing attitudes on how the country should be governed and has specific emphasis on the opinions of those in the 14 - 17 year old age range.

- 6) Your personal point of view: how to increase young people's interest and participation in politics in general?

To increase young people's interest in politics we think the best way is by integrating politics into their everyday lives. This would include activities within primary schools which allow children to become more aware of politics while growing up which would mean young people would have the opportunity to make a more educated and researched decision on political parties and their views when they reach the voting age. Another way politics could be integrating into young people's everyday lives is by TV programmes tailored to younger people explaining politics in an unbiased way which would spark their interest.

Once people move up to high school, a lesson in politics once a week would also help to increase participation and hopefully interest due to lessons. It is important for young people to participate in politics are the decisions they make ultimately affect their future.

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