



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Our Project in Finland: “Young People and Political Participation”



Table of Contents

1. Has the voting age been changed in your country since WWII?.....	3
2. Are there any differences in voting ages in different kind of elections (e.g. municipal, parliamentary, presidentials etc.)?.....	4
3. What were the voter turnouts among the young in the previous elections in your country?.....	6
4. Has the situation among the young in your country changed since WWII (e.g. are there less young voters now than before)? If so, how?.....	7
5. If the voter turnout among the young in your country is considered alarmingly low, what is being / has been done about it?.....	9
6. Your personal POV: how to increase young people’s interest and participation in politics in general?.....	10
7. Bibliography.....	11

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

In Germany the voting age has actually changed since WWII:

- In 1945 the voting age was raised from 20 to 21 years
- In 1970 the right to vote was lowered from 21 to 18 years
- In 1995 the voting age for municipal elections was lowered to 16 in Lower Saxony
- In 2011 the voting age was lowered to 16 in Bremen for State Diet and municipal elections,
2012 Brandenburg and
2013 Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein followed.

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

In Germany there are elections for the European Parliament, the Federal Diet (=Bundestag) election as well as State Diet (=Landtag) elections and municipal elections (=Kommunalwahl).

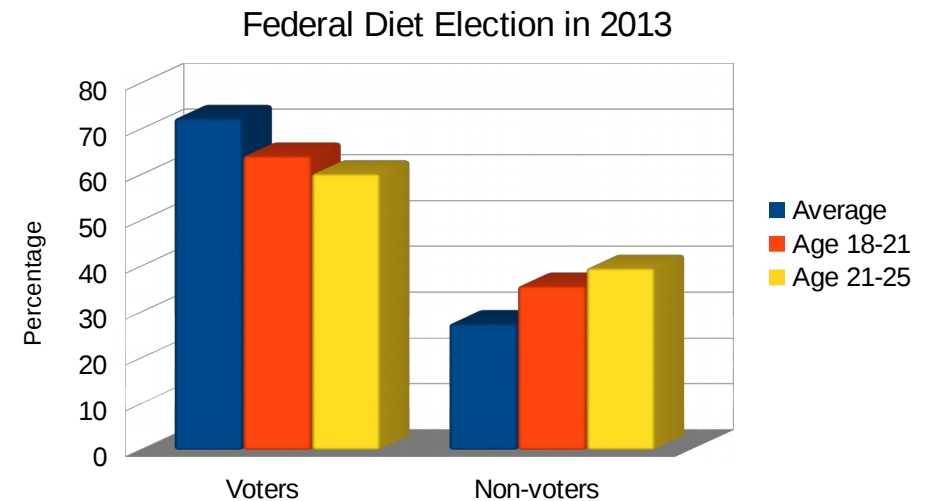
Only for the elections of the European Parliament and the Federal Diet the voting age is the same all over Germany. Germans are eligible voters at the age of 18 for these elections.

For the State Diet and municipal elections the voting ages are different, depending on the federal state of Germany:

Federal State	State Diet elections: Voting age	Municipal elections: Voting age
Baden-Württemberg	18	16
Bavaria	18	18
Berlin	18	16
Brandenburg	16	16
Bremen	16	16
Hamburg	16	16
Hesse	18	18
Lower Saxony	18	16
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	18	16
North Rhine-Westphalia	18	16
Rhineland-Palatinate	18	18
Saarland	18	18
Saxony	18	18
Saxony-Anhalt	18	16
Schleswig-Holstein	16	16
Thuringia	18	16

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

The last election in which the voter turnouts of the different age groups are mentioned is the Federal Diet Election in 2013.



As you can see, the voter turnouts of the young generation are about 60% which is about 10% less than the average voter turnout of the whole population.

According to that there were about 35% of the young people between 18 and 25 who didn't vote in 2013 which is 10% higher compared to the average number of non-voters.

(The Percentage of non-voters between 60-70 years is just about 20% which means that about 80% of the people between 60 and 70 voted in 2013.)

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

This statistic shows the voter turnouts according to the percentage of eligible voters of the Federal Diet elections from 1953 until 2009 structured by age groups.



As you can see, the graph of the voters who are younger than 21 starts in 1972, after the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1970. For the next two Federal Diet elections the number of voters younger than 21 falls but then increases again until 1983 before it starts a rapid decrease over the next elections down to the minimum in 1990. After increasing for the next two elections the graph again falls to a new minimum in 2009.

The reasons for the decreasing voter turnouts among the young are e.g. the demographic change of the German population which means that the population is getting older and older.

For this reason the number of young people is shrinking in relation to the elderly population:

In 1980 about 27% of the eligible voters were older than 60 and about 22% were below 30 years old. Both age groups had nearly the same size which means fair chances for the elections.

Today the eligible voters who are older than 60 are about 36%, whereas the people who are younger than 30 just have a percentage of 15%.

The feeling that politics seem to be far away from the young generation could be one reason for the decreasing voter turnouts as well. The problem is that this could develop into a vicious circle:

The young generation is just a small group of voters, consequently the parties don't really pay attention to them which, leads to fewer young people voting and therefore less attention is paid to them by the parties.

But this should not prevent them from voting, but should make it clear how important it is to vote so that as many opinions as possible can be represented by the politicians.

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

For making the political situation more interesting for young people politicians are debating and thinking about lowering the voting age down to 16. They hope to get them more interested and involved in politics. In addition, the schools could help the young to learn more about politics and voting.

Another project is presented by “wepublic”. They want to connect politicians and citizens with the help of an app which enables everyone to ask questions and get answers from the different parties. The “+me” app was created to help young voters to compare the different opinions of the parties.

Just before the Federal Diet Election in September 2017 many projects such as a youtuber live show or the “ThinkBig” project tried to show the young generation how important voting is and how they could influence politics with their own ideas.

6. Your personal POV: how to increase young people’s interest and participation in politics in general?

In my opinion a lot of young people are already interested in politics, but the problem is that we often have no chance to be a part of it and aren’t allowed to vote, which leads to the feeling that politics is meant for the older generation.

Lowering the voting age to 16 could be a step into the right direction and may help to increase young people’s interest if it comes along with a feeling of having a chance to change something or be a part of the political situation as well as being represented through the government.

But lowering the voting age doesn’t automatically mean that all young people are more interested in politics. Therefore, it would make sense to include politics more in schools so that we can learn something about the current situation, which opportunities we have and why it is important to vote or to get involved.

I think the most important thing is it to make clear that the politicians today decide how our situation will be in the future and that taking part in politics is our chance to change something today but to create our future as we want it to be, too.

7. Bibliography

- <https://patimes.org/happened-civics/voting-sheet/>
Accessed 15 Jan 2018
- <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahlrecht#Deutschland>
Accessed 13 Jan 2018
- https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/dam/jcr/cd805e63-c083-4f8b-ad7a-561b2fa110fd/btw13_heft4.pdf
Accessed 16 Jan 2018
- <http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/zahlen-und-fakten/bundestagswahlen/55594/nach-altersgruppen>
Accessed 16 Jan 2018
- <http://www.dw.com/de/wie-generationengerecht-ist-die-bundestagswahl/a-40351959>
Accessed 18 Jan 2018
- <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/bundestagswahl/wahlberechtigte-bei-wahl-2017-so-alt-wie-nie-zuvor-15211603.html>
Accessed 18 Jan 2018
- <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/btw17/junge-waehler-101.html>
Accessed 18 Jan 2018
- <https://www.udldigital.de/bundestagswahl-2017-think-big-kampagne-zur-mobilisierung-von-erstwaehlern/>
Accessed 18 Jan 2018