

**VOTE16  
RESEARCH NETWORK**

# **Vote16 Literature Review**

Prepared by the University of  
Maryland's Civic Innovation Center and  
Center for Democracy and Civic  
Engagement on behalf of the Vote 16  
Research Network

Authored by Michael Shull

April 2022



SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC POLICY  

---

CIVIC INNOVATION CENTER



CENTER FOR  
DEMOCRACY AND  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

# Introduction

As widespread interest in the policy idea of 16- and 17-year-old voting has increased among advocates and policymakers in recent years, so too has interest in academic research on the topic. Scholars in the fields of political science, law, psychology, and beyond, from the United States and around the world, have contributed to collective understanding of the policy idea both in theory and in practice.

This literature review seeks to summarize the most relevant research on the topic. Our hope is that this document introduces readers to the wealth of research that exists in this area, serves as an entry point for further investigation, and inspires ideas for new, original research to help expand our collective knowledge.

The document includes a short summary of the most important takeaways from the research reviewed, followed by detailed summaries of individual sources, which are presented alphabetically by author.

Please visit [vote16research.org](http://vote16research.org) for more information on the Research Network and to get in touch, including to recommend new research to be added to future editions of this review.

## SUMMARY

Governments across the world are lowering the voting age. Within the last two decades, Austria, Estonia, and Matla lowered the voting age to 16-years-old for all elections, as have Scotland and Wales for local and parliamentary elections. Eleven of Germany's 16 states use a voting age under 18 for state or local elections, and five cities in Maryland have adopted the policy of 16- and 17-year-old voting in the last nine years. In California, the cities of Berkeley and Oakland have approved a lower the voting age for school board elections, and efforts to lower the voting age for city-wide elections in San Francisco have lost by narrow margins. These policy shifts have stimulated research and discussion on all aspects of the policy idea, including what effects lowering the voting age may have on democracy.

A review of the literature and research on youth voting in ten different countries reveals that 16- and 17-year-olds are by and large ready and capable to vote. Large-scale studies from different times and places show that young people are as plugged in and informed as their enfranchised near-peers and often meet or surpass their voter turnout.

### **Are 16 and 17-year-olds Ready to Vote?**

Most studies show that 16 and 17-year-olds have the capacity and inclination to vote, especially when compared to 18 to 24-year-olds. Teens across North America<sup>1</sup> and Europe<sup>2</sup> have expressed an interest in politics on par with enfranchised young people. Once given the right to vote, even in mock<sup>3</sup> or trial<sup>4</sup> elections, 16 and 17-year-olds become more interested and engaged in the politics<sup>5</sup> and begin to have more faith in their ability to affect change by voting.<sup>6</sup>

Research also shows that 16 and 17-year-olds generally know as much (sometimes more<sup>7</sup>) about civics and politics as other young voters.<sup>8</sup> Enfranchised 16 and 17-year-olds also

---

<sup>1</sup> Hart and Atkins 2011; Mahéo and Bélanger 2020

<sup>2</sup> Wagner et al. 2012; Eichhorn 2014

<sup>3</sup> Stiers et al. 2021

<sup>4</sup> Bergh 2013

<sup>5</sup> Zeglovits and Zandonella 2013; Breeze et al. 2017; Eichhorn 2018; Borg and Azzopardi 2021

<sup>6</sup> Aichholzer and Kritzinger 2020; Huebner 2021

<sup>7</sup> Hart and Atkins 2011

<sup>8</sup> Wagner et al. 2012; Mahéo and Bélanger 2020

vote in a way that is as ideologically coherent as most adults<sup>9</sup> and tend to stay politically consistent across multiple elections.<sup>10</sup>

This consistency casts doubt on the common concern that 16 and 17-year-old voters would simply vote the same way as their parents or be influenced by politically biased classroom instruction. In fact, multiple studies found that household influence on politics is roughly the same for all members of the home,<sup>11</sup> and while schools may play a role in encouraging civic and political engagement,<sup>12</sup> they do not seem to bias young voters.<sup>13</sup>

Several studies produced different results. Most notably, a study British youth found that 16 and 17-year-olds were not as interested or knowledgeable of politics as adults,<sup>14</sup> and studies on mock and trial youth elections have produced mixed results.<sup>15</sup> However, the collective research on youth voting broadly indicates that 16 and 17-year-olds are, or would be, as capable voters as young adults.

## **Turnout**

Voter turnout varies predictably with age. When the minimum voting age is 18, voter turnout for 18 and 19-year-olds is relatively high but drops significantly for voters in their early-to-mid 20s. The voter turnout rate does not regain its initial peak until voters are about 35-year-old. This age-based dropoff in turnout, which is consistent over time and has been observed in multiple democracies, is believed to be the result of the instability of young adulthood.<sup>16</sup>

Youth voting appears to reduce the dropoff in young adult turnout and raises overall voter turnout. Enfranchised 16 and 17-year-olds turnout to vote at similar rates to the average population<sup>17</sup> or higher,<sup>18</sup> and regularly turnout more than 18 to 21-year-olds.<sup>19</sup> Importantly, youth who start voting age 16 and 17-years-old maintain high rates of voter turnout through multiple

---

<sup>9</sup> Wagner et al. 2012

<sup>10</sup> Franklin 2020; Hart, et al. 2020

<sup>11</sup> Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Hernæs 2019; Hart, et al. 2020

<sup>12</sup> Milner 2020

<sup>13</sup> Eichhorn 2014; Hernæs 2019

<sup>14</sup> Chan and Clayton 2006

<sup>15</sup> Bergh 2013; Stiers et al. 2021

<sup>16</sup> Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Hernæs 2019; Ødegård et al. 2020

<sup>17</sup> Leininger and Faas 2020; Huebner et al. 2021

<sup>18</sup> Toots and Idnurm 2020

<sup>19</sup> Bergh 2013; Zeglovits and Aichholzer 2014; Bronner and Ifkovits 2019

elections,<sup>20</sup> and the overall turnout rate increases over time in countries with youth voting.<sup>21</sup> In short, lowering the voting age to 16-years-old increases overall voter turnout and appears to create a new cohort of lifelong voters.

### **Public Support**

Public support for lowering the voting age tends to be initially low, but increases after allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote.<sup>22</sup> While public support for lowering the voting age tends to scale from low-to-high on the right-to-left political axis, negative opinions can often be swayed by advocacy campaigns and framing the issue as an extension of civil rights.<sup>23</sup> Youth-led campaigns appear to be particularly effective in improving public opinion and have resulted in a number of wins and near-misses at varying electoral levels in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Bronner and Ifkovits 2019

<sup>21</sup> Franklin 2020; Eichhorn and Bergh 2021

<sup>22</sup> Larsen et al. 2016; Huebner and Eichhorn 2020; Eichhorn and Bergh 2021

<sup>23</sup> Greenwood-Hau and Gutting 2021

<sup>24</sup> Franklin 2020; Wray-Lake et al. 2021

## AICHHOLZER AND KRITZINGER (2020)

Aichholzer, Julian, and Sylvia Kritzinger. "Voting at 16 in Practice: A Review of the Austrian Case." *Lowering the Voting Age to 16*, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 81–101. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_5).

**Introduction:** "The idea of lowering the voting age has, among other ideas, been put forward to counter low or decreasing levels of political participation, specifically electoral turnout, and therefore as a way to encourage involvement in politics at an early stage of social and political socialization (see, e.g., Franklin, 2004). The present chapter empirically assesses this policy proposal that was implemented in Austria more than a decade ago when a general voting age of 16 was introduced in 2007. In this study, we aim to further our knowledge about characteristics that might distinguish 16- and 17-year olds from other voters and the medium-term impact of lowering the voting age to 16, taking Austria as a unique case study."

### SUMMARY

- ❖ What distinguishes 16-17 year olds from other voters?
- ❖ What is the medium-term impact of lowering the voting age to 16 in Austria?
- ❖ Research Design
  - Electoral registers
    - Data for five elections from 2005-2015
  - Austrian National Election Survey (AUTNES)
    - Pooled seven datasets from 2013 and 2017 surveys
      - 2016 presidential election was highly contested and had higher-than-average turnout
    - 516 aged 16-17 years old voters; 1051 aged 18-21 years old first-time voters; 19,117 voters over 21 years old
- ❖ Results
  - High turnout for 16-17 year olds
  - Political interest lower for 16-17 year olds than rest of population
    - the difference lessened from 2013-2017
  - Lower internal political efficacy for 16-17 year olds in 2013
    - no difference in 2017
  - Higher external political efficacy for 16-17 year olds and other young first-time voters
  - Political coherence/consistency lower for 16-17 year olds in 2017
    - no significant difference in 2013
    - "Note, however, that due to the way the dependent variable has to be operationalized, the sample sizes for this analysis are very low."

## **BERGH (2013)**

Bergh, Johannes. "Does Voting Rights Affect the Political Maturity of 16- and 17-Year-Olds? Findings from the 2011 Norwegian Voting-Age Trial." *Electoral Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, Mar. 2013, pp. 90–100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2012.11.001>.

**Abstract:** "A key question in an ongoing debate about voting age is whether people below the age of 18 are politically mature enough to take part in elections. Previous research indicate that 16- and 17-year-olds are not as mature as other voters when the voting age is at 18 (Chan and Clayton, 2006), but that such age-differences are evened out when 16-year olds are given the right to vote (Wagner et al., 2012)."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Does lowering the voting age affect political maturity?
- ❖ 2011 Norwegian Voting-Age Trial
  - Conducted by national government to study lowering the voting age
  - 143/430 municipalities applied, 21 selected to participate
    - Municipalities selected partially according to attempts to encourage youth political engagement
  - 16-17 year olds allowed to vote in municipal elections, but not broader city council elections
  - Turnout in trial municipalities:
    - 16-17 year olds: 58%
    - First time voters (18-21 years old): 46%
    - Overall: 63%
  - Voter eligibility in Norway determined by age at end of election year, not age on election day
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2011 Norwegian Social Science Data Survey
    - Biennial student survey conducted before elections
    - 30,758 student respondents
      - 1803 students 16-17 years old in trial municipalities
      - 755 students over 17 years old in those municipalities (assumed to be 18)
- ❖ Results
  - Increased political interest among 16-17 year olds in trial
  - Lowered voting age does not appear to affect:
    - political self-efficacy
    - political attitudinal constraint (cohesion of political attitudes)
    - consistency between political attitudes and vote choice

## **BHATTI AND HANSEN (2012)**

Bhatti, Yosef, and Kasper M. Hansen. "Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout among First-Time Voters." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, vol. 22, no. 4, Nov. 2012, pp. 380–406. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2012.721375>.

**Abstract:** "Recent studies have indicated that, contrary to common belief, the relationship between age and turnout among the youngest eligible individuals is not monotonically positive, but rather strongly negative – at least for the first few years of adulthood. With a unique dataset from government records for more than 145,000 young adults, we offer a possible explanation for this intriguing pattern – changing social influences as the young adult leaves the family nest. Parental turnout influences the young adults' turnout, and young adults living at home vote more than those who have moved out on their own. When young adults leave home, the influence of their parents' strong voting habits decreases while the weaker voting patterns among their peers have a greater impact. This partly explains the surprising negative relationship between age and turnout and indicates that while political socialization indeed matters, part of the parental influence on young adults stems from voting being a social act."

### **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Voter participation in low among young adults
  - Low participation in youth can lead to low participation later in life
  - Participation decreases during initial years of voter eligibility
  - Parental influence appears influential, decreases when young adults leave home
- ❖ Research Design
  - Data from 2009 Danish municipal elections
  - 44 municipalities; 2.3 million voters; 145,785 voters 21 years old or younger
  - Includes address, turnout, and family ties
- ❖ Key Hypotheses
  - Likelihood of voting increases with parental turnout
  - Living with parents increases youth turnout
  - The effect of parental voting depends on living with parents
  - After leaving home, likelihood of voting related to turnout of new household
- ❖ Results
  - Turnout sharply decreases from 18-21 years old
    - Higher turnout for 18-19 year olds than 20-21 year olds
    - 1% drop in turnout for each added month in age for 18-19 year olds
    - Turnout flattens at 20 years old, then rises
    - 18 year old turnout approx. same as 35 year old turnout
    - Results mirror those of elections in Finland, Texas, and Germany
  - Parental turnout influences youth turnout
    - Positive relation for voting parents, negative relation for non-voting parents
    - Parental effect decreases once youth leaves home
    - Peer influence greater than parental influence in new household



## **BOONEN ET AL. (2014)**

Boonen, Joris, et al. "The Link between Social Attitudes and Voting Propensities: Attitude-Vote Consistency among Adolescents in Belgium." *Electoral Studies*, vol. 36, Dec. 2014, pp. 81–93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2014.07.002>.

**Abstract:** "Research on the political development of adolescents is mainly focused on political engagement and attitudes. The more complex relationship between attitudes and voting behavior is less studied among citizens under the legal voting age. We investigate whether there is a link between social attitudes and voting propensities among Flemish adolescents, using data from the Parent–Child Socialization Study 2012. We observe attitude-vote consistency for three Flemish parties with a clear-cut ideological profile – the Green, radical rightist and Flemish Nationalist party. Findings show that adolescents' attitude-vote consistency is reinforced by their level of political sophistication. The correspondence between social attitudes and vote choice, however, is not impressive and significantly lower than among experienced adults, leaving room for other influential factors."

### **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Are social attitudes and voting behavior consistent among 16-17 year olds?
- ❖ Hypotheses
  - There is a link between adolescent social attitudes and vote choice
  - This link is stronger among politically sophisticated adolescents
  - The link between social attitudes and vote choice is stronger among experienced adult voters than inexperienced adolescent voters
- ❖ Research Design
  - Belgium
    - Three major ideologies: Green, rightist, Flemish Nationalist
  - Parent-Child Socialization Study 2012
    - Collected data on political attitudes, voting behavior, and sociodemographic characteristics of adolescents
    - 3426 Dutch-speaking 15 year olds
    - Similar questionnaire for adolescent, mother, and father
      - 67% response rate for mothers, 61% for fathers
- ❖ Results
  - Higher turnout intention for rightist 15 year olds compared to adults
    - Slightly higher for Green adolescents, lower for Nationalist adolescents, compared to adults
  - Significant link between social attitudes and voting intentions among adolescents
    - Stronger effect associated with higher political sophistication
  - Stronger cohesion between attitudes and voting intention among adults compared to adolescents

## **BORG AND AZZOPARDI (2021)**

Borg, Maria, and Andrew Azzopardi. "Political Interest, Recognition and Acceptance of Voting Responsibility, and Electoral Participation: Young People's Perspective." *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 0, no. 0, Routledge, Apr. 2021, pp. 1–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2021.1902963>.

**Abstract:** "In March 2018, Maltese parliament effectuated a constitutional amendment by which voting rights were conferred on circa. 8,000 younger citizens aged sixteen and seventeen. Concerns over the integrity of this decision primarily emanated from the prevalent portrayal of young people as politically apathetic citizens with no appreciation for the responsibility implicit in voting. This widely aired apprehension served to motivate the present study, in which the validity of these concerns was determined through measurement of young people's levels of interest in politics, their recognition and acceptance of voting responsibility, and their intended electoral participation. The research's objectives were accomplished through a quantitative methodology and the involvement of 143 of the newest members of the electorate. Results revealed that participants predominantly maintained moderate levels of political interest and high levels of recognition and acceptance of voting responsibility. Moreover, the greater number of participants expressed intentions to vote in the upcoming general and European Parliamentary elections. The study's outcomes bolstered the integrity of parliament's decision to extend the franchise to younger citizens and simultaneously undermined the legitimacy of certain opposing arguments."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Malta lowered voting age to 16 for all elections in 2018
  - 16-17 year olds were eligible to vote in 2015 local elections
    - 62.3% turnout
  - Maltese youth scored higher on political interest than average European youth in 2016
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2019 survey of Maltese 16-17 year olds
    - 143 respondents, total population approx. 8,000
    - Online questionnaire
    - 8% sampling error
- ❖ Results
  - Low-to-moderate levels of political interest
  - 53% reported increased political interest after becoming eligible to vote
  - Plurality report following political news
  - 85% characterized voting as a moderate-to-high responsibility
  - Recognition and acceptance of political responsibility outweigh political interest
  - all are significantly related to voting intention

## **BREEZE ET AL. (2017)**

Breeze, Maddie, et al. "Becoming Independent: Political Participation and Youth Transitions in the Scottish Referendum." *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 68, no. 4, 2017, pp. 754–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12288>.

**Abstract:** "Sociological debates on youth engagement with electoral politics play out against a backdrop of supposed 'decline' in civic participation (e.g. Putnam, Norris, ), in turn contextualized by theories of individualization in 'late' or 'reflexive' modernity (Beck, Giddens). However, the enfranchisement of 16 and 17 year olds in the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum catalysed remarkably high levels of voter turnout among this youngest group, and was accompanied by apparently ongoing political engagement. We explored this engagement among a strategic sample of young 'Yes' voters, in the immediate aftermath of this exceptional political event. Analysis of qualitative interview data generated an unanticipated finding; that interviewees narrated their political engagement biographically, articulated their referendum participation reflexively, and located their new political ideas, allegiances and actions in the context of their own transitions to 'independent' adulthood. This inspired us to rethink young people's political engagement in relation to youth transitions. Doing so enables a synthesis of divergent strands in the sociology of youth, and offers new insights into the combinations of 'personal' agentic and 'political' structural factors involved in young people's politicization."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ How did Scottish youth experience voting as 16-17 year olds?
- ❖ Research Design
  - 10 "in-depth qualitative, semi-structured interviews" conducted in March-April 2015
    - Participants age 16-20, all first-time voters in 2014, all 'Yes' votes on Scottish Independence Referendum
    - Participants recruited online and through youth organizations
    - Interviews lasted 60-90 minutes, all but one conducted face-to-face
- ❖ Results
  - Participants were uninterested or inactive in politics prior to enfranchisement, but became more so after becoming eligible to vote
    - Political interest and engagement maintained after referendum vote
  - First-time voting gave participants a sense of ideological autonomy, transition to adulthood

**BREEZE ET AL. (2021)**

Breeze, Maddie, et al. "Educational Outcomes of Political Participation? Young First-Time Voters 3 Years after the Scottish Independence Referendum." *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 0, no. 0, Routledge, Sept. 2021, pp. 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2021.1980517>.

**Abstract:** "After the enfranchisement of 16- and 17-year olds in the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, much research continued to prioritise questions of how education influences young people's political engagement. By contrast, this paper advances an original focus on educational outcomes of youth political participation and investigates how political engagement might have educational consequences. Shortly after the referendum, we interviewed a strategic sample of first-time voters aged 16–20, who had voted 'yes' to Scottish independence. We re-interviewed a sub-sample 3 years on, facilitating longitudinal analysis and novel qualitative data. Our analysis demonstrates how, from the perspective of remarkably engaged participants, referendum engagement has three kinds of educational consequences. First, participants describe learning about politics through referendum participation and their subsequent reflection on it. Second, participants understood their political engagements as informing their trajectories into and through post-compulsory education, including subject choices. Third, participants discussed learning about themselves and their career aspirations, 'growing up' and developing 'mature' political attitudes, via ongoing, shifting political engagement. This article contributes significant new insights about youth political engagement and lowering the voting age, by showing how young people understand their political participation as influencing their formal educational pathways and informal learning, about politics and themselves."

**SUMMARY**

- ❖ Repeat of above study, same participants contacted for interview almost 3 years later (late 2017 - early 2018)
  - Only 5 original participants responded for 2nd round of interviews
- ❖ Results
  - 4/5 participants continue to be members of political parties
  - 3/5 participants report voting in all elections eligible
  - Participants described enfranchisement as a catalyst for continued political interest and engagement

## **BRONNER AND IFKOVITS (2019)**

Bronner, Laura, and David Ifkovits. "Voting at 16: Intended and Unintended Consequences of Austria's Electoral Reform." *Electoral Studies*, vol. 61, Oct. 2019, p. 102064. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2019.102064>.

**Abstract:** "Several democracies are currently debating whether to lower their legal voting age to 16, but relatively little is known about the long-term consequences of such reforms. We contribute to this debate by studying electoral habit formation among 16-year-old voters in Austria, where the national-level voting age was decreased in 2007. We employ eligibility-based regression discontinuities to evaluate two consequences of the reform. First, we show that eligible 16-year-olds are more likely to vote in future elections. Second, we demonstrate that the political consequences of this reform were not neutral. Newly eligible young voters are more likely to place themselves towards the extremes of the ideological spectrum. We also simulate the cumulative long-term impact on electoral outcomes and argue that the reform was costly for the centrist government parties that initially adopted it."

### **SUMMARY**

- ❖ How did lowering the voting age in Austria affect youth turnout?
- ❖ Did lowering the voting age lead to more extreme ideological self-placement?
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2013 Austrian National Election Study
    - 300 respondents born between Oct. 1991 - Oct. 1993
    - 150 were eligible to vote in 2008 elections, 150 were not
      - No data on if or how respondents voted in 2008
    - All eligible to vote in 2013 election
    - Measured intention to vote (0-10 scale)
      - Intention (91.1%) outweighed actual (74.9%) turnout in 2013
    - Measured polarization by self-reported closeness to each political party (0-10 scale) and a 0-5 scale of ideological extremism
      - ideological extremism measure calculated by the absolute value of the difference from the midpoint of a 0-10 scale of left-right self-placement
- ❖ Results
  - Higher turnout intention among voters who were eligible in 2008
  - First time voting turnout higher for 16-17 year olds than 18 year olds
  - Some indication that voter habituation effect is stronger for 16-17 year old first time voters than 18 year old first time voters
    - Not enough data on older Austrian voters for clear conclusion
  - Higher self-reported polarization in those who were eligible to vote in 2008
  - Higher affinity for non-centrist political parties in those who were eligible to vote in 2008
    - Those eligible to vote in 2008 reported higher affinity for all parties compared to those who were not eligible, except for the one party formed after the 2008 election
- ❖ Notes:

- Despite not knowing if respondents eligible to vote at 16 in 2008 did so, there appears to be significant enough differences in the results between the two groups (in/eligible to vote in 2008) to suggest that the findings are meaningful.
- The researchers noted that they were unable to determine *why* eligibles were more polarized than ineligibles

## CHAN AND CLAYTON (2006)

Chan, Tak Wing, and Matthew Clayton. "Should the Voting Age Be Lowered to Sixteen? Normative and Empirical Considerations." *Political Studies*, vol. 54, no. 3, Oct. 2006, pp. 533–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2006.00620.x>.

**Abstract:** "This article is an examination of the issue of whether the age of electoral majority should be lowered to sixteen. We consider and reject several arguments raised by both sides of the voting age debate. The key issue, we claim, is the political maturity of young people. Drawing on empirical data collected in nationally representative surveys, we argue that the weight of such evidence suggests that young people are, to a significant degree, politically less mature than older people, and that the voting age should not be lowered to sixteen."

### SUMMARY

- ❖ Are British 16 and 17-year-olds mature enough to vote?
- ❖ Research Design
  - British Household Panel Survey 1991, 2001
    - large, representative samples
    - measured political interest (1-5 scale)
    - partisanship, as supporters or non-supporters of a political party, or non-partisan
  - 1997 British Election Studies (BES)
    - respondents 18y.o. and older
    - measured political knowledge with seven questions
  - 1998 British Social Attitudes Survey, Young People module
    - respondents aged 12-19y.o.
    - measure political knowledge with seven questions
      - three questions were the same as the 1997 BES, one very similar
  - 2001 British Social Attitudes Survey
    - political consistency, by coherence between political opinions
- ❖ Results
  - 16 and 17y.o. political interest consistently lower than 18y.o. and over
  - 16 and 17y.o. are less likely to identify with a political party
    - partisanship interpreted as an indicator of political engagement
  - 16 and 17y.o. less politically knowledgeable than adults
    - lower scores on three of four common questions
    - 18y.o. scored lower on two questions in 1998 than in 1997, authors attribute this to a context effect caused by differences in question order/context
    - 16-20y.o. less politically/ideologically stable than over-20s

## **DOUGLAS (2020)**

Douglas, Joshua A. "The Loch Ness Monster, Haggis, and a Lower Voting Age: What America Can Learn from Scotland." *American University Law Review*, vol. 69, no. 5, 2020, pp. 1433–83, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/aulr69&i=1452>.

**Abstract:** "This Article, prepared for an American University Law Review symposium, explores what the United States can learn from Scotland's experience in lowering the voting age to sixteen. The minimum voting age in American elections seems firmly entrenched at eighteen, based in part on the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, which prohibits states from denying the right to vote to anyone aged eighteen or older. Yet the conversation about lowering the voting age to sixteen, at least for local elections, has gained steam in recent years. The debate in America, however, is nascent compared to the progress in Scotland, which lowered the voting age to sixteen for its Independence Referendum in 2014 and for all Scottish elections in 2015. Using original research from interviews I conducted in Scotland, this Article offers three main takeaways for American jurisdictions considering this reform: the Scottish experience in lowering the voting age has been mostly successful because advocates (1) went into schools to register students to vote and encourage them to participate; (2) offered meaningful civics education, though that instruction was somewhat uneven across the country; and (3) created a bipartisan coalition of policymakers who supported the change. As the debate on the voting age in the United States expands, advocates should draw upon these lessons from Scotland."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Lessons from Scotland's experience
  - Student engagement
    - Almost all 16 and 17-year-olds attend school and are a captive audience
    - In-school registration efforts
      - easier to find and register 16 and 17y.o. than 18+y.o.
    - Independent and partisan organizations provided schools and teachers with toolkits to encourage civic participation
      - No evidence that school education impacted how 16-17s voted, but it did impact whether or not they voted
  - Civic education
    - Scottish 16-17s take Modern Studies, a combination of civics and social studies
    - Modern Studies often featured more timely political discussion than most American high school civics classes
    - Many students were positive on political discussions in the classroom
  - Bipartisan effort
    - Vote16 gained bipartisan support after the Independence Referendum
    - Lowering the voting age did not significantly change partisan outcomes
    - Public support turned positive after the voting age was lowered
    - Conservative party members did not want to be perceived as excluding people from voting
- ❖ Recommendations for the US
  - Expand pre-registration of 16 and 17-year-olds to all states



- Create and teach special curricula to encourage registration and engagement on timely political issues
- Civics education needs to expand beyond rote memorization and include current political events
- Democrats should engage and recruit Republicans to Vote16 advocacy

## DOUGLAS (2020)

Douglas, Joshua A. “Lowering the Voting Age from the Ground Up: The United States’ Experience in Allowing 16-Year Olds to Vote.” Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 211–30, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_11).

**Introduction:** “This chapter first discusses the legal structure of election administration in the United States, explaining why localities in some states can expand suffrage to sixteen- and seventeen-year olds while municipalities in other states do not have that same authority. The chapter then provides a brief history of the voting age in U.S. elections, which borrowed from the British common law practice of setting the age at twenty-one and shifted to eighteen nationwide through a constitutional amendment in 1971. Importantly, nothing in federal law forbids a state or locality from lowering the voting age below eighteen, although state laws can prevent their localities from enacting this reform. Next, the chapter tells the stories of the initial Maryland and California cities that lowered the voting age. These stories show how young people themselves have been at the forefront of the movement, advocating for their own suffrage. The chapter then highlights the ongoing debates in other U.S. cities and states that are considering the reform, with lessons from both the successes and setbacks. Finally, the chapter concludes with some key takeaways about the local focus of the movement, the importance of a sustained, youth-driven campaign, and the partisanship that necessarily accompanies this debate.”

## Summary

- ❖ The Constitution gives states the power over the “time, places, and manner” of elections
  - 26th Amendment prohibits denying the vote to people 18 years or older, it does not set a floor for the voting age
- ❖ States have set the minimum voting age to 18, but some states allow local governments to lower the voting age under “home rule”
  - The legal process for lowering the voting age is dependent on state and local laws, which vary from state-to-state
- ❖ History of Lowering the Voting Age
  - Takoma Park, MD
    - City council took interest in 2013 after Scotland lowered the voting age ahead of the 2014 Independence Referendum
    - Buy-in from voting rights and youth organizations
    - Eight months of debate, two public hearings
      - Common concern against was that young voters would either copy their parents’ vote or intentionally vote opposite their parents
    - Vote passed the city council 6-1 in 2013
    - youth turnout exceeded average turnout in 2013 and 2014 elections
    - Anecdotal reports of increased youth civic engagement
  - Hyattsville, MD
    - Following Takoma Park, lowered the voting age in 2015 with a 7-4 city council vote
      - Council members swayed by youth testimony
      - Votes against wanted a referendum instead of a council vote

- Youth turnout rates in Hyattsville have lagged behind average turnout
        - Possibly because the local high school did not significantly encourage civic participation following the vote, as Takoma Park's did. Many of the students at the Hyattsville school did not live in Hyattsville, so they were not affected by the change
  - Greenbelt, MD
    - Lowered the voting age in 2018, after a failed vote in 2017
    - Public support was initially low, but raised after a youth campaign
  - Glenarden, MD
    - Lowered the voting age in 2016, but reversed in 2017
  - Riverdale, MD
    - Lowered the voting age in 2018
  - Berkeley, CA
    - Lowered the voting age for school board elections in 2016
    - Student-led campaign, buy-in from stakeholders and local electeds
  - San Francisco, CA
    - 2016 vote to lower the voting age for city elections failed 48% to 52%
    - Public support shifted from initial 36% after advocacy campaign
  - Golden, CO
    - Vote failed with 65% "no", after passing the city council unanimously
    - Campaign started only two months prior to election
  - Washington, D.C.
    - Vote stalled in city council, possibly for political reasons
- ❖ Takeaways
- Strategy for lowering the voting age will vary based on state and local laws
  - Youth-led campaigns have been effective in shifting opinion, given time
  - Local political conditions must be taken into account

## **EICHHORN (2018)**

Eichhorn, Jan. "Mobilisation through Early Activation and School Engagement – the Story from Scotland." *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 21, no. 8, Routledge, Sept. 2018, pp. 1095–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2018.1450968>.

**Abstract:** "This paper explores the experience of 16–17 year olds participating in the Scottish independence referendum and discusses whether it can be seen as positive or negative considering civic attitudes and participation. Using data from two comprehensive and representative surveys of 14–17 year olds, it engages empirically with claims about young people's alleged political (dis-)interest and provides qualifications for commonly believed stories of young people as mere recipients of information given to them by parents and teachers. The paper develops a positive view of young people's engagement in the referendum process and suggests that inputs from parents and schools actually have distinguishable effects on young people, who do not simply 'follow the lead' of others uncritically. The analyses suggest that the discussion of political issues in the classroom (rather than the simple delivery of civics-style classes per se) may act as a positive factor in the political socialisation of young people, but suggests that further research is required to examine these effects beyond the specific context of the Scottish independence referendum in particular in relation to questions about whether reducing the voting age to 16 could be expected to generally lead to positive outcomes."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ What are the political attitudes and behaviors of 16-17 year olds?
- ❖ How are these attitudes and behaviors formed and influenced?
- ❖ Research Design
  - Future of the UK and Scotland surveys
    - Surveyed "just over 1000" Scottish 14-17 year olds and their parents
    - First in April-May 2013, repeated in April-May 2014
    - Used questions from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, modified to better fit youth respondents
  - Measured on political interest, perceived understanding of politics, turnout intention, discussion of independence referendum at home, civics education
- ❖ Results
  - No evidence of lower levels of political interest in youth, compared to adults
  - Most youth discussed politics with friends or family
  - Greater political interest in youth who discussed politics at home or in school
  - High turnout intention among potential youth voters
  - 58% of youth surveyed reported having the same position on the referendum as their parents

## **EICHHORN (2014)**

Eichhorn, Jan. "Newly Enfranchised Voters: Political Attitudes of Under 18-Year Olds in the Context of the Referendum on Scotland's Constitutional Future." *Scottish Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 3, Aug. 2014, pp. 342–53. <https://doi.org/10.3366/scot.2014.0033>.

**Abstract:** "This paper summarises results from the only representative and comprehensive survey of Scots under the age of 18 who will be enfranchised to vote in the referendum in September 2014 following the lowering of the voting age to 16. Many claims have been made about young people and their alleged disengagement from politics. This paper challenges such assertions and suggests that political interest amongst young people is similar to that of adults, however there is an observed distance to existing institutionalised actors such as political parties. In addition, the paper explores how young people form their attitudes on the issue. In doing so it criticises those who claimed that young people would be easily biased to vote in a particular way by their parents or teachers as no such negative effects can be observed."

### **SUMMARY:**

- ❖ Were Scottish youth ready to vote prior to the 2014 Independence Referendum?
  - Concerns: political interest/engagement, household bias, school bias, bias toward extreme positions
- ❖ Research Design
  - Survey of 14-17 year old Scots, April and May 2013
  - Random digit dialing
  - 1018 respondents, approx. 125 in each of with Scottish Parliament electoral regions, 37% response rate
  - Consent and information on background and voting intention obtained from parent(s)
  - Results were weighted to account for an overrepresentation of households with at least one parent with a higher education degree
- ❖ Results
  - Scottish youth expressed similar levels of political interest as adults
  - Youth were less likely to express a party affinity than adults
  - No significant indication of bias received from school or home
    - 44% of youth intended to vote differently from parents, 56% intended to vote the same as at least one parent
    - Youth who talked about the referendum in school were more likely to feel knowledgeable enough to make a decision
    - Youth who had only discussed the referendum with their parents did not feel knowledgeable, but had higher rates of voting intention than youth who did not discuss it at home

## EICHHORN (2018)

Eichhorn, Jan. "Votes At 16: New Insights from Scotland on Enfranchisement." *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Apr. 2018, pp. 365–91. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx037>.

**Abstract:** "This article presents new evidence on the experience of 16-year olds voting after the reduction of the voting age in Scotland following the 2014 independence referendum. Using survey data from 2015 it compares 16- to 17-year-old Scottish respondents with their peers in the rest of the UK to see whether we can observe differences in their political attitudes and behaviour ahead of the 2015 General Election. The analyses show potentially significant positive effects following the reduced voting age but distinguish different domains and show that distinctive effects for the youngest age group seem to be most pronounced in relation to political behaviour (both electoral and non-electoral forms), but to a lesser extent in terms of evaluations of politics more generally. The findings also highlight the important interplay between enfranchisement and different socialising agents for young people, in particular parents and civic education in schools."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Did lowering the voting age in Scotland change the political attitudes and behaviours of young people?
  - Voting age lowered to 16 in Scotland prior to 2014 Independence referendum
  - 16-17 year olds can vote in all Scottish elections, but not UK elections
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2015 U.K. Survey of 7400 adults and 810 16-17 year olds, the latter split evenly between Scotland and rest of UK
  - Tested for differences between 16-17 year olds in Scotland and the rest of UK in:
    - Political participation (intended or actual)
    - Political confidence and knowledge
    - Perception of political institutions
  - Controls for whether respondents had recently taken a civics class or discussed politics in the classroom
- ❖ Results
  - Enfranchised youth more likely than non-enfranchised peers to:
    - Express desire to vote in upcoming elections
    - Engage in other forms of political activity
    - Engage in more sources of political information
    - Desire wider enfranchisement
  - Increased Scottish youth political interest and motivation affected, but not totally explained, by increased political discussion and engagement in schools and communities

2014 Independence referendum also had a significant effect

## **EICHHORN AND BERGH (2021)**

Eichhorn, Jan, and Johannes Bergh. "Lowering the Voting Age to 16 in Practice: Processes and Outcomes Compared." *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 3, July 2021, pp. 507–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsab019>.

**Abstract:** "Research into the possible consequences of lowering the voting age to 16 used to be rather speculative in nature, as there were few countries that had implemented earlier enfranchisement. This has changed over the past decade. We now have a range of countries in different locations, mostly in Europe and South America, where 16- and 17-year-olds can vote in some or all elections. In many of those places empirical research has given us insights into the experiences of young people and the impact of those changes on political discussions. However, so far these studies have largely been conducted individually in each country, which makes comparisons difficult. This article summarises the key insights from empirical research across countries with lower voting ages. It identifies common patterns, but also highlights differences. Overall, the impact appears to not be negative and often positive in terms of political engagement and civic attitudes. However, the comprehensiveness of effects varies. The article offers some possible frameworks to understand differences, in particular by reflecting on the processes that led to voting franchise changes, but also indicates where gaps in knowledge remain, and what sort of research would be required to produce systematically comparable results."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ A comparative analysis of lowering the voting age in various countries in Latin America and Europe
- ❖ Findings
  - Turnout: positive effects, no negative effects found
  - Young voters tend to vote for center-left or green parties
  - High levels of political trust, political interests, and support for democracy among young voters
    - Stronger effect in countries with full youth enfranchisement
  - Public support of youth enfranchisement increases after lower the voting age or campaigns to do so

## FRANKLIN (2020)

Franklin, Mark N. "Consequences of Lowering the Voting Age to 16: Lessons from Comparative Research." Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 13–41. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_2).

**Introduction:** "The most frequent argument given in support of lowering the age at which young adults can vote is that this would increase their political engagement, improve their satisfaction with the political process and perhaps even increase their lifelong turnout rate. The most frequent reason given in opposition to the same reform is that by the age of 16 young adults have not yet acquired the knowledge and maturity required for electoral decision-making. In this chapter, we address these two opposing views on the basis of survey data along with the public record of election outcomes for countries that reduced the voting age to 16 for all otherwise qualified citizens at national legislative elections. Four of these countries are in South America (Argentina starting in 2013, Brazil 1990, Ecuador 2009, and Nicaragua 1981) and one is in Europe (Austria starting in 2008)."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Does lowering the voting age increase political engagement and long-term turnout?
- ❖ Do 16 year olds possess the knowledge and maturity to cast good votes?
- ❖ Research Design
  - Studied five Votes at 16 countries, four in South America and Austria
  - Restricted to seven elections/election years for each country
  - Austrian National Election Survey (AUTNES) 2013, 2017
  - LatinoBarometer
    - South American survey
    - Questions on hypothetical election held "next Sunday"
      - Survey results restricted to election years
    - Data available for 1995-2017
    - Included 11 countries, four of which allow voting at 16 years old
- ❖ Results
  - Higher medium-term turnout for Votes at 16 countries
    - effect is significant for 17 years, but weakens over time
    - Confidence interval for Votes at 16 includes possibility that the effect does not weaken, but holds or possible trends upwards
  - Political inconsistency between elections for young voters does not appear to be significant



## **GREENWOOD-HAU AND GUTTING (2021)**

Greenwood-Hau, Joe, and Raynee S. Gutting. "Public Support for Votes at 16 in the UK: The Effects of Framing on Rights and Policy Change." *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 3, July 2021, pp. 542–62. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsab018>.

**Abstract:** "With votes at 16 implemented for local and devolved assembly elections in Scotland and Wales, the debate on the issue continues amongst politicians in England and Northern Ireland. Testing arguments that are often made in that debate, we analyse two survey experiments and show that framing on extending rights prompts higher support, whilst framing on policy change depresses support. These effects hold when priming on consistency of legal ages and are particularly strong amongst the very right-wing. A majority of the public remains opposed to votes at 16, but our results indicate the malleability of public opinion on the issue."

### **SUMMARY:**

- ❖ What shapes public opinion on lowering the voting age in the U.K.?
- ❖ Hypotheses
  - 1: Framing lowering the voting age as a rights and democratic values issue will increase public support
  - 2: Framing lowering age as a policy change to the status quo will not increase public support, or increase it less than the above framing
  - 3: Priming respondents on legal consistency, by reminding them of other legal age limits, will lead to reduced support for lowering the voting age
  - 4: A respondent's political ideology will be a determinant in how different framings produce different responses
    - 4a: Respondents on the political left will be more responsive to a rights framing, which will increase support
    - 4b: Respondents on the political right will be more impacted by a policy framing, which will decrease support
    - political ideology measured by self-placement on a 7-point(0-6) scale
- ❖ Research Design
  - Two survey experiments with representative samples of the U.K. population, from YouGov's online panel
  - First survey, 7-9 Nov. 2017
    - 3619 respondents
    - Each asked one of four questions: "To what extent, if at all, do you support or oppose..."
      - "giving 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote?" (rights)
      - "reducing the voting age from 18 to 16?" (policy)
      - "giving 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote, which would mean reducing the voting age?" (rights-then-policy)
      - "reducing the voting age, so that 16 and 17 year olds have the right to vote?" (policy-then-rights)
  - Second survey, 20-23 Nov. 2017
    - 3314 respondents
    - Same four questions as first survey

- Respondents were primed with prior questions on lowering the age required to purchase alcohol and get married without parental consent
      - Alcohol and marriage questions matched the framing of their respective voting age questions
- Each experiment was part of separate omnibus surveys, so preceding questions were different
  - possible incidental priming on second experiment by questions on animal welfare and sexual harassment, but only for half of the sample

#### ❖ Results

- Roughly half of all respondents opposed lowering the voting age and about 3/10 were supportive across both experiments
  - indicates that priming had a limited effect
- Highest support from the rights frame, followed by rights-then-policy, policy-then-rights, and policy frames, in descending order of support
  - Differences between rights and policy frame responses were significant, but modest
  - Supports Hypotheses 1 and 2, the rights frame garners more support than the policy frame
- Priming reduced significance of differences between rights-then-policy and policy-then-rights frames
  - raised support from rights-then-policy frame
  - did not affect the differences between rights and policy frames
  - overall, results did not support Hypothesis 3
- Left-wingers were generally more supportive of lowering the voting age than right-wingers
  - Right-wingers were more responsive to the rights frame than left-wingers
  - Far-right-wing support reduced by every frame except rights
  - Priming did not produce any significant differences along ideological lines

## **HART AND ATKINS (2011)**

Hart, Daniel, and Robert Atkins. "American Sixteen- and Seventeen-Year-Olds Are Ready to Vote." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 633, no. 1, SAGE Publications Inc, Jan. 2011, pp. 201–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716210382395>.

**Abstract:** "American 16- and 17-year-olds ought to be allowed to vote in state and national elections. This claim rests upon a line of argument that begins with an exegesis of legal and philosophical notions of citizenship that identify core qualities of citizenship: membership, concern for rights, and participation in society. Each of these qualities is present in rudimentary form in childhood and adolescence. Analyses of national survey data demonstrate that by 16 years of age—but not before— American adolescents manifest levels of development in each quality of citizenship that are approximately the same as those apparent in young American adults who are allowed to vote. The lack of relevant differences in capacities for citizenship between 16- and 17-year-olds and those legally enfranchised makes current laws arbitrary, denying those younger than age 18 the right to vote. Awarding voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds is important, given the changing age demographics in the country, which have resulted in the growing block of older voters displacing the interests of younger Americans in the political arena. Finally, the authors critically examine claims that adolescents are neither neurologically nor socially mature enough to vote responsibly and conclude that empirical evidence and fairness suggest that 16- and 17-year-olds ought to be awarded the vote."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Are 16 year olds ready to vote?
- ❖ Research Design
  - National Household Educational Survey of 1996
    - Adult sample: 2,250 participants
    - Youth sample: 4,217 participants aged 14-18
    - Same questions for both samples on civic knowledge and political skill, efficacy, and interest
- ❖ Results
  - Little significant difference in civic knowledge and political knowledge, efficacy, and interest between 16 year olds and 18-23 year olds

## **HART, ET AL. (2020)**

Hart, Daniel, et al. "Stability and Change in Partisan Political Identification: Implications for Lowering the Voting Age." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, vol. 71, Nov. 2020, p. 101210. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2020.101210>.

**Abstract:** "Around the globe, governments are experimenting with lowering the voting age to 16-years-old as a way to turn around recent declines in civic participation. However, one concern is that younger voters will be more susceptible to parental and community influence. We used voter records from two U.S. states to explore stability and change in partisan identifications as a function of age in order to assess the likelihood that younger voters are more susceptible to social influences. In general, little evidence was found to suggest that teenagers' partisan identifications are substantially more influenced by families, communities, and historical events than older adults. In a final set of analyses, we examined partisan identification from voter records in Takoma Park, Maryland after it lowered the voting age to 16. To test for an effect of lowered voting age, we compared household voting patterns over time in Takoma Park to those in Maryland and Pennsylvania. A time series analysis did not show any difference between patterns in Takoma Park and patterns in Maryland and Pennsylvania, suggesting that lowering the voting age had no discernable impact on partisan identifications. The paper contributes to the expanding research base indicating that lowering the voting age has no apparent ill effects on young people or their communities and will increase the political representation of an age cohort that can vote responsibly."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ How do social contexts (home, community) affect partisan identification in young voters?
  - Partisan identification is a social identity, but with only modest sensitivity to social influence among adults
  - Parental influence on teen partisan identity has been observed, but it is not clear if the influence is direct/intentional or environmental
  - Community influence on youth partisan ID also observed
- ❖ Research Design
  - Takoma Park
    - Lowered voting age to 16 for municipal elections in 2013
    - By 2015, first time youth voters in municipal elections had also voted in state elections
    - used 2019 MD state voter file
      - 14,533 registered voters in Takoma Park
      - included partisan ID, registration date, address, municipality
  - Pennsylvania voter registration data used as a control
    - drawn in November 2018, April 2020, and August 2020
    - included partisan ID, date of birth
  - Tracked change in registered party affiliation in identifiable youth voters living with parents
- ❖ Results
  - Youth voters (18-20) in general

- Partisan ID of youth voters is not more or less stable than that of older voters
- Household partisan homogeneity decreases with youth voters in both states
- Parental influence on youth voters is not any more significant than other older adults
- Community partisan homogeneity has little influence on new voter partisan ID
- Little effect from historical events (pandemic, George Floyd protests)
- Takoma Park
  - Lowered voting age had no effect on partisan homogeneity in two person households
  - Small decrease in homogeneity in three person households
  - Not enough data for four person households, limited data overall

## **HERNÆS (2019)**

Hernæs, Øystein M. “Young Adults and the (Non-)Formation of Voting Habits – Evidence from Norwegian First-time Eligible Citizens.” *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, Wiley-Blackwell, June 2019, pp. 151–64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12139>.

**Abstract:** “This article exploits variation in age among first-time eligible citizens in Norwegian elections that arises through voting eligibility rules and two-year election cycles to investigate voting habits. I find that obtaining the right to vote at a lower age is associated with substantially higher turnout among first-time eligible citizens, however, this difference in political participation does not persist for subsequent elections. Building on the established literature on the habitual nature of voting, the results show that getting young citizens to vote once is not sufficient to create a habit of voting, and suggest that how the voting decision is made matter for the habit formation process.”

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ How does first-time voting age affect the formation of voting habits?
- ❖ Research Design
  - Norway
    - 2 year election cycles
    - Eligibility is determined by age at the end of the voting year
  - Statistics Norway survey conducted after every election
    - Sample of approx. 8000, aged 17-80
    - Data on turnout, age, and gender collected
    - Data available from parliamentary election surveys from 1997-2009, local election surveys from 1995, 1997-2003
    - Maximum sample age of 49 due to change in eligibility rules in 1978
  - Compares voting habits between 18 year old and 19 year old first-time voters
- ❖ Results
  - 18 year old turnout was significantly higher than 19 year old turnout
    - Significantly impacted by living with parents
    - Not significantly impacted by being in school
  - No significant difference in long-term turnout between 18 and 19 year old first-time voters
    - No significant difference between first-time voters in local or parliamentary election cycles
    - Possibly due to lack of parental influence after age 18

## HOOGHE AND STIERS (2020)

Hooghe, Marc, and Dieter Stiers. "Political Discussion Begins at Home. Household Dynamics Following the Enfranchisement of Adolescent Children." *Applied Developmental Science*, Jan. 2020, pp. 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2020.1712207>.

**Abstract:** "Most studies on lowering the voting age to 16 exclusively focus on the effects on the adolescents concerned. In this paper we investigate the family dynamics of this extension of voting rights, by including the parents of adolescents in the study. The Ghent Study is based on a quasi-experiment of the city of Ghent (Belgium), where adolescents of 16 and 17 years old were invited by the local city government to take part in an election. The results of a regression discontinuity analysis indeed show that, in families that were targeted by the experiment, both parents and adolescents report more intensive political discussion. Our assumption therefore is that at this age, children still turn to their parents to discuss political matters. More discussions, however, did not lead to more political congruence within the family and it can be observed that ideological congruence is quite high in all families involved."

### SUMMARY

- ❖ How did (mock) youth enfranchisement affect political discussion at home?
- ❖ Hypotheses
  - There will be more political discussion and a higher level of political interest in families where children received the mobilization message to go out and vote
  - Parents and children will be more congruent with regard to key political attitudes in families where the children received the mobilization message
- ❖ Research Design
  - Ghent mock election and survey
    - Mock election design:
      - 16-17 year olds received official letter informing them of mock vote
      - Vote conducted via unique code on mobile device, mock ballot identical to official
      - Majority of city schools promoted election and civic education
      - Parents were not targeted by outreach; 14.9% indicated having heard of it through media
    - the "Ghent Survey"
      - Mailed to every 15-20 year old in Ghent in Autumn 2018
      - 21.62% response rate
      - 2360 respondents aged 15-19
  - Compared groups of parent-child dyads (one parent, one child)
    - Parents with a 15 year old; could not vote in either election
    - Parents with a 16 or 17 year old; could vote in mock election
    - Parents with a 18-20 year old; compulsory vote
    - 1590 dyads total; 1103 unique dyads (parent only occurs once in study)
- ❖ Results

- More political discussion in 16-17 dyads than 15 dyads; less in 18 dyads than 16-17 dyads
- 2/3 of all dyads vote for the same political party
- Political congruence is unaffected by the mock enfranchisement



## **HUEBNER (2021)**

Huebner, Christine. "How Young People in Scotland Experience the Right to Vote at 16: Evidence on 'Votes-at-16' in Scotland from Qualitative Work with Young People." *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 3, July 2021, pp. 563–80. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsab017>.

**Abstract:** "Within the UK, Scotland offers a unique case study of 'Votes-at-16' in practice. Research provided evidence on the immediate effects of voting age reform on young people's engagement with politics, but little is known about how young people experienced being allowed to vote from the age of 16 years. This article analyses qualitative evidence about young people's experiences with the right to vote at 16 since the voting age reform in Scotland. Drawing on data from interviews with young people, we find that 'Votes-at-16' brought about a mix of experiences. In combination with the experience of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum it marked a uniquely mobilising life event that boosted confidence in youth voice and led to a perceived increase in political efficacy. It also raised frustrations with young people, however, about their lack of voting rights in other elections and about a perceived gap between expectations and reality regarding the role of schools. By examining young people's experiences with 'Votes-at-16' in Scotland, this article contributes to debates about the implications of voting age reform in the Scotland and beyond."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ How did young people experience enfranchisement in Scotland?
- ❖ Research Design
  - In-depth interviews of 20 15-18 year olds, conducted in 2017-2018
  - "Interviews with a purpose", lasted 35min - 1 hour and 45 minutes
  - Some interviews were repeated several weeks or months later
- ❖ Results
  - Youth enfranchisement reported to be a broadly positive experience
  - Increased feelings of political efficacy and confidence after voting
  - Several participants felt voting was an important step in transitioning to adulthood
  - Enfranchisement and independence referendum acted as political mobilizing events for youth
    - Less of a mobilizing effect for subsequent local elections
  - Frustration in not being able to vote in upcoming UK elections

## HUEBNER AND EICHHORN (2020)

Huebner, Christine, and Jan Eichhorn. "Votes at 16 in Scotland: Political Experiences Beyond the Vote Itself." Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 121–42. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_7).

**Introduction:** "This chapter presents and discusses what happened in Scotland in the period from the initial lowering of the voting age for the Scottish independence referendum until today. It describes the process of constitutional changes that were necessary to allow 16- and 17-year olds to vote and looks at the impact this had on young people and the Scottish society as a whole. We use quantitative and qualitative evidence to evaluate the outcomes of the lowering of the voting age in Scotland and discuss the experiences of those young Scots who are newly enfranchised. There is a lot that can be learnt from the Scottish case about the impact of Votes at 16 on young people, the circumstances in which young people can benefit from a lower voting age, and what early enfranchisement may mean for their future political engagement. At the same time, the experiences from Scotland highlight a number of issues that remain unresolved to date and warrant further research."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ The Path to Vote16 in Scotland
  - 2011: pro-Scottish Independence politicians advocate for lowering the voting age
  - 2013: Scottish Parliament votes to lower the voting age only for the Independence Referendum
    - Broad political support, except for the conservative party
  - 2014: Referendum fails
    - Over 100k 16 and 17-year-olds (2.6% of electorate) registered to vote in Referendum, 75% turnout
      - Turnout for 18 to 24-year-olds: 54%; overall turnout: 85%
    - Smith Commission established to consider "devolution of further powers to Scotland"
      - Commission recommends the power to lower the voting age move from UK parliament to to Scottish parliament
  - 2015: power to lower the voting age is transferred to the Scottish parliament
    - Scottish parliament lowers voting age to 16-years-old for all local and Scottish elections
      - broad political support, including the conservative party
      - Voting age for U.K.-wide elections remained 18-years-old
  - Public Opinion Shifts
    - Vote16 opposed by over 2/3 of Scots in 2011
    - After 2014 Referendum: 50% oppose/support
    - 2015: 60% support
    - U.K. opinion did not change
- ❖ How did Vote16 affect Scottish 16 and 17-year-olds?
- ❖ Research Design
  - Two surveys of potential 16 and 17-year-old Referendum voters

- April-May 2013: random digit telephone survey
      - 1018 14 to 17-year-old respondents, about 125 in each of Scotland's 8 parliamentary electoral regions
    - May 2014 survey
  - Qualitative interviews conducted by Breeze, et al
- ❖ Results
  - Youth voters reported levels of political interest similar to adults
    - Political interest persisted after the Referendum election
    - Political interest remained higher than U.K. 16 and 17-year-olds
  - Youth voters informed their political views using a variety of sources
    - 40% of youth voters held views different from their parents
  - 57% of Scottish 16 and 17-year-olds reported engaging in political activity other than voting
    - Youth political engagement is even across socioeconomic classes
      - Socioeconomically disadvantaged youth in the U.K. engage in political activity at rates lower than other classes. This class effect is not present in post-Vote16 Scottish youth
  - Political self-efficacy rose in Scottish youth post-Vote16
    - Appears to have been boosted by classroom discussion

## **HUEBNER ET AL. (2021)**

Huebner, Christine, et al. Making Votes-at-16 Work in Wales: Lessons for the Future.

Nottingham Trent University, Nov. 2021,

[https://www.ntu.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0039/1559829/Huebner-et-al\\_2021\\_Making-Votes-at-16-work-in-Wales.pdf](https://www.ntu.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0039/1559829/Huebner-et-al_2021_Making-Votes-at-16-work-in-Wales.pdf).

**Abstract:** “The 2021 Senedd election was the first election in which young people aged 16 and 17 were enfranchised to vote in Wales. The election came with a range of unique challenges, not the least because of the coronavirus pandemic. Given these challenges, how did young people experience the election and what worked to mobilise 16- and 17-year-olds to vote? Based on large-scale qualitative research with 16- and 17- year-olds across Wales and with stakeholders involved in youth work and youth democratic engagement, this report provides a comprehensive look into how the pioneering generation enfranchised to vote at age 16 in Wales experienced the 2021 Senedd election and analyses what can be learnt for young people’s engagement in future elections and youth political engagement in Wales.”

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Wales: 16-17 year olds enfranchised for 2021 Senedd (Welsh Parliament) elections
  - 66,000 16-17 year olds in Wales
  - Previous turnout for Senedd elections never more than 50%
  - 16-17 year olds had turnout similar to other young voters
- ❖ Research Design
  - Focus group discussions between April and August 2021
    - 86 young people, aged 14-18, most 16-17
    - Small group discussions on election experiences and Welsh politics/governance
    - Two discussions, before and after election
      - Some participants in both, some only in one
  - Interviews with 34 Welsh “stakeholders of youth voter engagement”
- ❖ Results
  - Most 16-17 year olds were not very aware of the election
    - Peer-led social media campaigns, especially those targeting ethnic minorities, were effective at raising awareness
  - Confusion over voter registration deadlines and procedure
  - Some 16-17 year olds registered, but did not vote due to lack of confidence in political knowledge/self-efficacy or difficulty getting to voting location
  - Connection between discussing politics at home and voting

## LARSEN ET AL. (2016)

Larsen, Erik, et al. "Democracy for the Youth? The Impact of Mock Elections on Voting Age Attitudes." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, May 2016, pp. 1–17.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2016.1186031>.

**Abstract:** "Should 16-year-olds be entitled to participate in elections? We theorize that mock elections for adolescents, who are not eligible to vote, affect the short-term support among the general public for lowering the voting age. To test our theoretical expectation, we utilize variation among municipalities in the organization of mock elections during the Danish local elections in 2009. Difference-in-difference estimates with data from the subsequent local elections in 2013 demonstrate that citizens in municipalities with mock elections for adolescents were more supportive of lowering the voting age and that their support was strongly rooted in ideological differences."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ How do youth mock elections affect public opinion on lowering the voting age?
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2009 Denmark municipal elections
    - significant elections, municipal budgets account for half of all public expenditures
    - 31/98 municipalities held mock elections for 16-17 year olds
      - over 50,000 participants
  - 2009 and 2013 national surveys
    - conducted after municipal elections
    - 2009: 3336 respondents; 2013: 4528 respondents
    - identical measures and sampling methods
- ❖ Results
  - Respondents in mock election municipalities (MEM) more positive than non-MEM on lowering the voting age in 2009
    - no difference in 2013
    - effect weaker for right-wing and over-50 respondents

## LEININGER AND FAAS (2020)

Leininger, Arndt, and Thorsten Faas. "Votes at 16 in Germany: Examining Subnational Variation." Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 143–66. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_8).

**Introduction:** "A decline of and increasing social imbalances in voter turnout have sparked a debate over electoral reform in many countries. One of the most prominent ideas in Germany, as in other countries, is the proposal to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 years. Here, the voting age has already been lowered in some states as Germany's 16 federal states have the jurisdiction to set the voting age for state and municipal elections, respectively. Currently, four states have lowered the voting age to 16 for both state and municipal elections, and seven states have lowered the voting age to 16 for municipal elections only. In this chapter, we describe the German case and summarize what we can learn from it that can inform the academic as well as public debate in Germany and beyond."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Germany: 4/16 states allow 16 year olds to vote in state and local elections, 7/16 states allow in local elections
- ❖ What has been the effect of lowering the voting age in some states in Germany?
- ❖ Research Design
  - Representative electoral statistics (collected by each state)
    - Calculated by state returning officer using a stratified random sample of voting precincts
    - Voter age is recorded as a range (e.g. 18-21, 16-20) that is not standardized between the states
  - Survey of over 3000 15-18 year olds following the 2017 election in Schleswig-Holstein
- ❖ Results
  - Representative Electoral Statistics
    - Under 21 turnout is higher than approx. 21-28 turnout
    - 16-17 year old turnout is slightly higher or same as mid-to-late 30s
  - Survey
    - Political interest: no significant difference between 15-18 year olds
    - Political knowledge: significantly lower for 15 year olds than 16-18s
      - stable across 16-18s
    - One third of first-time voters indicated that they would vote in the upcoming national election, for which they were not eligible

## **MAHÉO AND BÉLANGER (2020)**

Mahéo, Valérie-Anne, and Éric Bélanger. "Lowering the Voting Age to 16? A Comparative Study on the Political Competence and Engagement of Underage and Adult Youth." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, vol. 53, no. 3, Cambridge University Press, Sept. 2020, pp. 596–617. Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423920000232>.

**Abstract:** "One reform considered for increasing voter turnout rates is to lower the voting age to 16 years old. Advocates of such a reform argue that young people would vote for the first time while they are still in school and living with their parents, which would provide a social context that is supportive of their electoral participation. However, opponents argue that 16- and 17-year-olds are not mature enough to take part in elections. Using data from a 2018 Quebec election survey that included a subsample of individuals aged 16 and 17, this study provides mixed evidence for both arguments."

### **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Are there differences in political motivation or abilities between 16-17 year olds and 18-20 year olds?
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2018 survey after Quebec provincial elections
    - 16-17 year olds cannot vote
  - 3,072 total respondents
    - 251 respondents aged 16-17
    - 212 respondents aged 18-20
  - Tested on voting intention and political knowledge, self-efficacy, interest, and consistency
- ❖ Results
  - Voting intention slightly higher among 16-17 year olds
  - Significantly higher self-efficacy among 18-20 year olds
  - No significant differences in political interest, knowledge, consistency

## **MCLAVERTY ET AL. (2015)**

McLaverty, P., et al. "New Radicals: Digital Political Engagement in Post-Referendum Scotland. Final Report." Working Papers of the Communities & Culture Network+, vol. 3, 2015.

**Executive Summary:** "The Scottish independence referendum in September 2014 had a turnout of 85 per cent. In this referendum, 16 and 17 year olds were given the vote for the first time in a British political election. It is estimated that 75 per cent of eligible 16 and 17 year olds voted in the referendum. These turnout figures represent a substantial improvement on recent voting figures for UK general elections and Scottish Parliament elections. In the light of the referendum turnout among young first time voters, our research set out to investigate the ways in which young people had engaged with politics during the referendum campaign and developments in their activism since the referendum. In particular, we focussed on young people's use of social media and specifically their use of Twitter for political purposes. We conducted an analysis of Twitter feeds by young people; carried out a survey of first-time voters; interviewed young first-time voters; and interviewed representatives of political parties and campaign groups.

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ How did Scottish youth engage with politics after enfranchisement?
- ❖ Research Design
  - Twitter analysis of first-time voters and youth organizations
  - Survey of 250 first-time voters, publicized by youth organizations
  - Interviews of 21 survey respondents, aged 16-19 years old
    - Conducted weeks prior to 2015 general election
  - Interviews with 10 campaign groups and political parties
- ❖ Results
  - Referendum increased youth political interest
  - Increased youth political participation during and after referendum
  - High future turnout intention among youth voters



## **MILNER (2020)**

Milner, Henry. "Political Knowledge, Civic Education and Voting at 16." Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 65–79, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_4).

**Introduction:** "To justify reducing eligibility to vote from 18 to 16 is thus to show how it serves not as an end in itself but rather a means to an end, an end that can be provisionally termed enhanced democratic political engagement. This is the starting point here. Moreover, it is not a simple matter: As we shall see, the question that emerges is under what, if any, circumstances does reducing the voting age enhance political engagement."

### **Summary:**

- ❖ The effects of lowering the voting age vary
  - Austria: vote quality of under-18s no worse than older voters, increased political interest in under-18s
  - Norway: under-18s scored lower on political maturity than 18-19s, but voted at higher rates
  - Sweden: 18s showed similar political knowledge/interest as 16s, interpreted as coming-of-age does not lead to increased political knowledge/interest
    - this interpretation is contradicted by Leininger and Faas (2020), who found significant differences between 15s and 16s in Germany
  - Scotland: high levels of political interest/engagement in 16-17s enfranchised prior to Independence Referendum
- ❖ These differences could be attributed to varying levels and quality of civic education in each country

## MYCOCK ET AL. (2020)

Mycock, Andrew, et al. "Understanding the Policy Drivers and Effects of Voting Age Reform." Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 43–63, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_3).

**Introduction:** "There has though been an absence of analytical research which might explain the policy drivers for voting age reform or to historically substantiate its potential effects. The following chapter provides the first such attempt to fill this gap in the literature, establishing and then applying a thematic analytical framework to explain the drivers of voting age reform. It argues that there are at least four thematic models that we can apply to enhance our understanding of the policy origins, justifications, and impacts associated with reforming the age of enfranchisement. The chapter will apply these models to understand policy drivers informing voting age reform in the UK over the past 50 years or so. The chapter concludes that voting age reform in the late 1960s and early 21st century draws on the same policy drivers but they differ in their context and importance."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Drivers of Voting Age Reform
  - Political Socialization
    - Earlier realization of voting rights increases potential for life-long political and civic engagement
  - Social Capital
    - Reform is necessary to enhance the cohesion and inclusivity of the electorate
    - youth are now understood to be mature/knowledgeable enough to vote
    - Some rights are given to 16-year-olds (driving, working, giving medical consent, etc.), while others are realized at 18-years-old (military service, end of compulsory education, etc.)
  - Valence Politics
    - Political actors view lowering the voting age as a way to garner more support
    - Youth have different policy priorities than young people, are more likely to support youth-oriented policies and politicians
  - Political Incentivization
    - Increased personal and collective political power vis a vis older voters encourages youth political participation
- ❖ Political Socialization appears to be the primary driver of Voter16
- ❖ Social capital is influential, but its effect as a driver is inconclusive

## ØDEGÅRD ET AL. (2020)

Ødegård, Guro, et al. “Why Did Young Norwegians Mobilize: External Events or Early Enfranchisement?” Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 189–210, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_10).

**Introduction:** “In the Norwegian context of 2011 two different types of situational shocks—or circumstances—might have increased young Norwegian’s willingness to vote in local elections and to support political youth parties. The first shock was a terrorist attack that struck the Norwegian political and societal life less than two months before the election day in 2011. Secondly, the Norwegian local elections of 2011 were the testing ground for a trial where the voting age was lowered from 18 to 16 in 20 selected municipalities. Turnout was surprisingly high in this pilot, with 58% of the (9400) eligible 16- and 17-year olds taking part in the election. The trial was repeated in the next local elections in 2015, again with 20 municipalities: 10 of the same municipalities and 10 new ones. Voter turnout among trial voters remained high in 2015 when 57% voted. In 2017, the government decided that the voting age should remain 18, and the trials were discontinued. The purpose of this article is to analyze and discuss the political mobilization of young people in Norway in the last decade in light of these two events.”

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Norwegian Municipal Voting Trials
  - Norwegian municipalities lowered the voting age to 16-years-old
    - 20 municipalities in 2011, 20 in 2015 (10 from 2011 trial, 10 new municipalities)
  - Government held the voting age at 18-years-old in 2017 and ended the trials
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2011 youth voting case studies
    - Interviewed 20 young people from 5 voting-trial municipalities
    - Participants reported increased political interest and engagement
      - Widely attributed to 2011 terror attack, which occurred several months prior to the election
        - ◆ Attack was aimed at young people with the intention of disrupting the democratic process
  - Norwegian National Election Studies 2009, 2013, 2017
    - Conducted after each election
    - Surveyed 3000-3200 Norwegians aged 18-80
      - Half of each sample had participated in the prior survey
  - Voter Turnout
    - Turnout patterns match previous life-cycle research
      - 18-year-olds matches general population, dips from 19 to 24-years olds
    - 16 and 17-year-old turnout 58% in 2011, 57% in 2015
      - Lower than general population, higher than other young voters

## OOSTERHOFF ET AL. (2021)

Oosterhoff, Benjamin, et al. "Adolescents Provide More Complex Reasons for Lowering the Voting Age than Adults." PsyArXiv, 30 Aug. 2021. OSF Preprints, <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/274f3>.

**Abstract:** "Debates about lowering the voting age often center on whether 16 and 17-year-olds possess sufficient cognitive capacity and political knowledge to participate in politics. Little empirical research has examined age differences in adolescents' and adults' complexity of reasoning about political issues. We surveyed N = 778 adults (Mage = 38.5, SD = 12.5) and N = 397 16 and 17-year-olds concerning judgements and justifications about whether the US should change the minimum voting age. Justifications for changing the voting age were coded for integrative (i.e., integrating multiple perspectives to form a judgment about changing the voting age), elaborative (i.e., providing multiple reasons to support the same judgement about changing the voting age), and dialectic (i.e., recognizing multiple differing perspectives on changing the voting age) complexity of reasoning. Bayesian regressions indicated that adolescents provided greater integrative and elaborative complexity in their reasoning to change the voting age than adults. Adolescents and adults did not meaningfully differ in their dialectic complexity. Findings are consistent with past research indicating that adolescents possess the cognitive capacity and political knowledge to vote in US elections."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Cognitive capacity for voting can be measured by the complexity of political arguments
  - Integrative complexity: how someone combine multiple perspectives to make a judgment
    - Dialectic complexity: recognition of multiple differing perspectives
    - Elaborative complexity: providing multiple reasons to support the same judgment
- ❖ Research Design
  - 2019 survey: 397 16 and 17-year-olds; 778 adults
  - Participants ask "Should 16 and 17-year-olds be able to vote?" (yes, no, maybe) and "why/why not?"
    - Participants provided written answers
    - Responses were coded according to integrative, elaborative, or dialectic complexity
- ❖ Results
  - Should 16 and 17-year-olds be able to vote?
    - Youth: 34% yes, 33% maybe, 33% no
    - Adults: 16% yes, 18% maybe, 67% no
    - Arguments against: youth lack political knowledge, cognitive capacity, independence, or sufficient life experience, or are not interested or aware enough to vote
    - Arguments for: youth possess enough political knowledge, it is necessary to uphold the social contract, youth are developmental mature, or it will benefit democracy
  - Youth responses were generally longer than adult responses

- Answering 'maybe' and identifying more strongly as liberal were associated with longer responses
- Youth responses were coded higher or similarly than adult responses on all three categories

## **SILBAUGH (2020)**

Silbaugh, Katharine. "Developmental Justice and the Voting Age." *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, vol. 47, no. 2, Feb. 2020, p. 253, [https://scholarship.law.bu.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/840](https://scholarship.law.bu.edu/faculty_scholarship/840).

**Abstract:** "Several municipalities have lowered the voting age to 16, with similar bills pending in state legislatures and one considered by Congress. Meanwhile, advocates for youth are trying to raise the ages of majority across an array of areas of law, including ages for diverting criminal conduct into the juvenile justice system (18 to 21); buying tobacco (18 to 21); driving (16 to 18); and obtaining support from the foster care system (18 to 21). Child welfare advocates are fighting the harms of Adulthoodification, meaning the projection of adult capacities, responsibilities, and consequences onto minors. In legal and social history, seeing 16- and 17-year-olds as possessing adult capacities has connected with holding them responsible for adult decision-making, particularly in the criminal justice system, but also in disciplinary mechanisms at school. This effect is dramatically worse for children of color. These two movements are in tension; child welfare advocates are fighting Adulthoodification while democracy advocates are fighting for younger entry into the adult political sphere. But the age of majority is not a technicality. It is a thick fabric of public and private laws formed for the protection of children and adolescents, an interwoven safety net, whose efficacy depends on the strength of the weave. Indeed, the age of majority plays a protective role in our 18-year-old voting age; the 16-year-old franchise exposes youth to constitutionally protected campaigning, inviting commercial and political interests to target teenagers with "political speech." Currently, public law shields teenagers from this contact for fear they will be exploited, and private law enables parents to constrict campaign interactions with teenagers. Countless similar underappreciated harms of Adulthoodification can carelessly deprive children of educational, housing, employment, and civic futures. The minor extant intrusions on the age of majority, such as the driving age, pale in comparison to the civic meaning of lowering the age of the franchise. When the voting age dropped from 21 to 18, states lowered their legal age of majority from 21 to 18 in response, influencing policies such as aging out of foster care and entitlement to child support beyond 18. As a core marker of citizenship, voting has had a powerful anchoring effect on ideas about civic maturity. Lowering the benchmark for civic maturity threatens to anchor a lower age for civic protection, as occurred when the 26th Amendment passed. This Article contends that 16- to 18-year-olds are entitled to their childhoods, as Greta Thunberg contends, with our protection and support, not to the burdens of adult hopes, adult expectations, adult uses, and adult consequences. It makes a claim for developmental justice grounded in participatory democracy. Lowering the voting age works at cross-purposes to the essential task of protecting youth from premature engagement with the criminal justice system, and with the long-term disenfranchisement that can come with that entanglement. With Adulthoodification risking criminalization and criminalization risking disenfranchisement, current thinking about youth voting exposes disparities in public ambition for the future political participation of youth arising from the disparities in their childhood experiences."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Youth should be disenfranchised in order to ensure equal development and protect them from an early onset of adulthood
- ❖ Lowering the voting age may lower the Age of Majority, the age at which a person becomes a legal adult

- When the 26th amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, other legal age limits were also lowered
- The movement to lower the voting age to 18 was kickstarted when the minimum age for military service was lowered to 18
- ❖ Arguments on lowering the voting age
  - Benchmarking argument
    - Benchmarking, or arguing to lower the voting age to 16 because other rights and privileges are granted at 16, is not a good argument because more rights and privileges are granted at 18 or older
    - Many of the rights and privileges granted at 16, such as driving, should be granted at a later age, but aren't because of societal pressures (poor transit infrastructure, car-dependent society, etc.)
  - The Stakeholder argument, that children have a stake in the political process and should therefore be able to vote, is valid
  - Youth engagement in political activism indicates that they are ready to vote
    - There is a racial disparity in that calls for lowering the voting age are coming from predominantly white activism and not movements like Black Lives Matter
  - Cognitive Development
    - “Domain-specific competence” - cognitive development is uneven, so 16 and 17-year-olds possess the cognitive capacity to vote
    - Much of the research into cognitive development in regard to voting has been “decontextualized” from other political and social considerations
  - Voter participation
    - Lowering the voting age improves turnout because 16 or 17-years-old is a better age to start the voting habit than 18-years-old
    - But, Black and Latinx youth are arrested at higher rates than white youth, which could result in long-term disenfranchisement
      - Lowering the voting age could result in increased “adultification” of youth, which would result in more youth interacting with the criminal justice system
      - “If lowering the voting age to 16 plays any role, no matter how inadvertent, in the further Adultification of children most likely to fall under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system, that harm cannot be justified by a theory of overall enhanced democratic participation, unevenly distributed.”
- ❖ Protection from campaigning
  - The parents of enfranchised 16 and 17-year-olds may restrict their children from learning about politicians or political campaigns, preventing them from being fully informed
  - Ensuring that 16 and 17-year-olds have access to political information may require a total withdrawal of parental rights over 16 and 17-year-olds
- ❖ Allowing youth voting while some youth are disenfranchised by the criminal justice system exacerbates unequal development

## **SILBAUGH (2020)**

Silbaugh, Katharine. "More than the Vote: 16-Year-Old Voting and the Risks of Legal Adulthood." *Boston University Law Review*, vol. 100, Oct. 2020, p. 39.

[https://scholarship.law.bu.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/1026/](https://scholarship.law.bu.edu/faculty_scholarship/1026/).

**Abstract:** "Advocates of 16-year-old voting have not grappled with two significant risks to adolescents of their agenda. First, a right to vote entails a corresponding accessibility to campaigns. Campaign speech is highly protected, and 16-year-old voting invites more unfettered access to minors by commercial, government, and political interests than current law tolerates. Opening 16-year-olds to campaign access undermines a considered legal system of managing the potential exploitation of adolescents, which sometimes includes direct regulation of entities and also gives parents authority in both law and culture to prohibit, manage, or supervise contacts with every kind of person interested in communicating with their minor child through the age of 18. Second, voting is the most significant civil right. The history of other campaigns to earn the vote, including Woman's Suffrage and 18-year-old voting, suggests that lowering the voting age will lead to a more far-reaching civil equality, meaning a lower age of majority, regardless of the current protestations of the Vote16 advocates. Lowering the voting age will therefore undermine the protective commitments we make to youth in school, in the justice system, and in the child welfare system. The neuropsychological development framework for evaluating 16-year-old voting needs to operate alongside a missing institutional analysis of the age of majority. Vote16 advocates cannot continue to avoid filling out the broader case for a 16-year-old age of majority and reckoning its inconsistency with current protective family and child welfare law. The Vote16 movement repeatedly justifies its case with evidence that lifelong voter turnout can be improved by starting younger. Conceding this point, this Article argues that lifelong voter turnout should not be improved at the cost of our ongoing commitment to a youth-protective legal posture. Because the agenda of Vote16 is to improve lifelong voter turnout rather than to address the status of adolescents, the movement has not grappled with situating its claim within the legal identity of adolescents broadly. Until Vote16 addresses these issues, state legislatures and local governments should pause their consideration of Vote16 proposals."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Lowering the voting age will harm 16 and 17-year-olds by granting them full civic and political equality
  - While some rights are granted at the "age of license" (16), such as driving or working, most are granted at the "age of majority" (18), such as entering contracts or serving on a jury
    - Historically, lowering the voting age also lowered the age of majority
  - Lowering the voting age exposes youth to political exploitation
    - There would be a conflict between the parental right to control what information reaches their child and the right to political speech
  - The campaign to lower the voting age is at odds with the campaigns to raise the age of majority within the criminal justice and foster care systems



## STIERS ET AL. (2021)

Stiers, Dieter, et al. "Voting at 16: Does Lowering the Voting Age Lead to More Political Engagement? Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment in the City of Ghent (Belgium)." *Political Science Research and Methods*, vol. 9, no. 4, Cambridge University Press, Oct. 2021, pp. 849–56. Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2020.8>.

**Abstract:** "While youth suffrage is widely debated, the causal effects of being eligible to vote on adolescents' political attitudes are less well known. To gain insights into this question, we leverage data from a real-life quasi-experiment of voting at 16 in the city of Ghent (Belgium). We compare the attitudes of adolescents that were entitled to vote with their peers that just fell below the age cut-off. We also examine the effects of the enfranchisement at 18-years-old. While we find an effect of youth enfranchisement on attention to politics, there is no evidence for an effect of enfranchisement on political engagement overall."

## SUMMARY

- ❖ Does lowering the voting age increase political engagement?
  - City of Ghent, Belgium
    - population: 260,000
  - 16-17 year olds allowed to participate in mock election corresponding with 2018 local election
  - Compulsory voting for 18+ in Belgium
- ❖ Research Design
  - Mock election design:
    - 16-17 year olds received official letter informing them of mock vote
    - Vote conducted via unique code on mobile device, mock ballot identical to official
    - Majority of city schools promoted election and civic education
  - the "Ghent Survey"
    - Mailed to every 15-20 year old in Ghent in Autumn 2018
    - 21.62% response rate
    - 2360 respondents aged 15-19
- ❖ Results
  - Eligible 16 year olds reported paying greater attention to politics than 18 year olds
  - Political self-efficacy lower for 16 year olds than 18 year olds
  - No significant effect on other measures of political engagement
  - Authors' notes:
    - 16-17 year olds were aware that their mock vote would not affect election results
    - Survey respondents possibly not representative of total population

## **TOOTS AND IDNURM (2020)**

Toots, Anu, and Tõnu Idnurm. "Modernizing Voting in a Post-Transition Country: The Estonian Experience of Lowering the Voting Age." Lowering the Voting Age to 16, edited by Jan Eichhorn and Johannes Bergh, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 167–87, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32541-1_9).

**Introduction:** "Thus, in general the political climate in Estonia for lowering the voting age was rather favorable. In the next sections, we will study the process more closely and look at the preliminary effects of the lowered voting age. First, we provide an overview of parliamentary proceedings and highlight major criticism and expectations toward the extension of voting rights. We proceed by analyzing political attitudes and engagement with future voters based on survey data. Then we look at schools as key institutional players in the process of preparing young people to undertake their role as voters. Finally, we address the question whether there was an effect on the political landscape. The chapter concludes by discussing lessons learned and further perspectives for research and practice."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Path to youth voting in Estonia
  - Idea introduced and advocated for by an umbrella youth organization
  - Formally introduced politically in 2011, debated from 2012-2014
    - public debate concerned with political interest and vote quality of 16 and 17-year-olds
  - Lowering the voting age required a constitutional amendment and an amendment to the Municipal Council Elections Act
    - Constitutional amendment passed, legislative amendment failed
    - A new bill was drafted and passed to replace (instead of amend) previous legislation
    - Vote16 became legal in Estonia in 2016
- ❖ Results
  - 59% turnout rate for 16 and 17-year-olds, 6% higher than overall turnout
    - turnout rates are from two different data sources
  - 16 and 17-year-olds voted on the Internet at lower rates than national average
  - Lower the voting age did not significantly affect parliament composition
    - that is, young people did not significantly shift the political landscape
    - Civic education in school remained political neutral after lowering the voting age

## WAGNER ET AL. (2012)

Wagner, Markus, et al. "Voting at 16: Turnout and the Quality of Vote Choice." *Electoral Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, June 2012, pp. 372–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2012.01.007>.

**Abstract:** "Critics of giving citizens under 18 the right to vote argue that such teenagers lack the ability and motivation to participate effectively in elections. If this argument is true, lowering the voting age would have negative consequences for the quality of democracy. We test the argument using survey data from Austria, the only European country with a voting age of 16 in nation-wide elections. While the turnout levels of young people under 18 are relatively low, their failure to vote cannot be explained by a lower ability or motivation to participate. In addition, the quality of these citizens' choices is similar to that of older voters, so they do cast votes in ways that enable their interests to be represented equally well. These results are encouraging for supporters of a lower voting age."

### SUMMARY

- ❖ Do 16-17 year olds have the ability and motivation to participate in the political process and cast meaningful votes?
- ❖ Hypotheses (null):
  - Citizens under 18 lack the ability and motivation to participate in politics, compared to older voters
  - Low under-18 turnout is explained by a lack of ability and motivation
  - Vote quality is lower for under-18 voters than older voters
    - Votes do not represent their interests/ideals
- ❖ Research Design
  - Austria
  - Pre-election survey before 2009 European Parliamentary election
    - 805 respondents
    - Over-sampled voters age 16-25
      - 263 respondents
  - Test for political knowledge, interest, and turnout intention
- ❖ Results
  - Ability and motivation to participate
    - Political interest is not significantly different for under-18s
      - Motivation to participate is on par with other age groups
      - Trust and satisfaction in institutions is higher than overall average
    - Lower political knowledge for under-18s
      - Just one knowledge question asked
      - Only significantly lower compared to 22-25 year olds
  - Turnout decisions
    - Lower turnout intention for young people compared to older people
      - Minimal differences between under-18s and 18-21 year olds
      - Lack of motivation or ability to participate does not explain low turnout intention for 16-17 year olds, but does for 18-21 year olds
  - Quality of vote
    - No difference in vote quality between under-18s and other age groups

## **WRAY-LAKE ET AL. (2020)**

Wray-Lake, Laura, et al. "Reconsidering the Voting Age in Los Angeles and California." California Policy Options: 2020, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, 2020. ResearchGate, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340720534\\_Reconsidering\\_the\\_Voting\\_Age\\_in\\_Los\\_Angeles\\_and\\_California](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340720534_Reconsidering_the_Voting_Age_in_Los_Angeles_and_California).

**Introduction:** "The purpose of this chapter is to chart the voting age policy landscape in California and Los Angeles. First, we review the history of policy regarding changing the minimum US voting age, highlighting past endeavors to expand the voting age nationally and internationally and then focusing on California and Los Angeles. California policymakers have a long history of legislative attempts to change the minimum voting age, some of which are currently active. After documenting perspectives on implementation and organizing efforts, we provide novel data on public opinion of voting age policy from youth and adults in Los Angeles. In concluding, we summarize implications and policy recommendations for voting age change in Los Angeles and the State of California. Our analysis of what efforts to lower the voting age look like and how the public feels about the issue can inform policymakers, the public, and campaigns for and against the issue as voting age policies continue to gain national attention."

## **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Research Design: Los Angeles Public Opinion Survey
  - online survey of 16 and 17-year-olds and adults
  - 538 respondents
    - not representative
      - 54.2% female
      - 34.2% 16-17s, 23.2% 18-30s, 24.3% 31-92
      - 28.6% white, 25.2% latinx, 24.5% asian, 5.3% Black, 7.9% other
      - 50% liberal, 10% conservative, 13.4% moderate, 25.7% unreported
  - questioned on opinions of lowering the voting age to 16 for school board, city, state, and national elections, respectively, and asked to provide justifications
    - 1-5 scale
- ❖ Results
  - Support was strongest for school board elections and was successively lower for each wider election
    - neutral responses accounted for 20% or less for each election type
  - 55.8% expressed consistent opinions on voting age policies
    - 27.7% supported lowering the voting age in all election types
    - 23.8% opposed lowering the voting in any election type
    - 4.3% were neutral across all election types
  - Of respondents who supported policy change in only one election type, 86% supported changing school board elections
  - Of respondents who opposed policy change in only one election type, 81.4% opposed changing national elections
  - Results by age:
    - 16-30s showed stronger support for lowering the voting age in local and state elections than over 30s

- 16-17s showed more support for lowering the voting age in national elections than adults
    - Women expressed more support for lowering the voting age in school board and local elections than men, but there were no gender differences in support for change to state and national elections
    - Results by race:
      - For school board elections, Asian and latinx respondents were more supportive than white respondents
      - For city/local elections, Latinx respondents were more supportive than white respondents
      - Black and Native Americans respondents were underrepresented in the sample, so their results were not used considered in analysis by race
    - Liberals are more supportive than moderates and conservatives of lowering the voting age overall
      - Moderates are more supportive of lowering the voting age for school board elections than conservatives, but the two groups do not differ substantially on other election types
    - Justifications for opposition to lowering the voting age, the youth:
      - are too easily influenced by others to think for themselves
      - are too impulsive to make good decisions
      - do not understand the consequences of their actions
      - are too inexperienced to to address social problems
      - are not mature enough to have informed opinions
    - Justifications for support for lowering the voting age, the youth:
      - should have a say in policies affecting them
      - will then have a reason to become more informed about politics
      - are capable of understanding politics
    - Least common justifications:
      - opposition: it would weaken democracy, and youth who cannot drink or smoke should not vote
      - support: there is not much difference between 16s and 18s
- ❖ Efforts to lower the voting age in California and related policies
  - Voter registration forms available at every high school since 2003
  - 16-years and older can pre-register to vote since 2016
    - this clears an administrative barrier of implementing a lower voting age
  - Automatic voter registration at DMV since 2018
  - 16 and 17-year-olds can vote for school board elections since 2016
  - San Francisco: 2016 vote to lower the voting age failed 47.9%/52.1%
    - Arguments against: voting is ‘privilege of adulthood’, could create legal precedent to charge youth as adults for crimes
    - Note: 2020 effort also failed 49.21%/50.79%
- ❖ Legal context
  - California Constitution sets the minimum voting age at 18, would require an amendment to lower the voting age at the state level

- An amendment must pass with 2/3 majority in state assembly and senate, and pass a popular vote
    - 11 bills were been introduced to lower the state-wide voting age from 1995-2019, none made it to a popular vote
  - California cities are either charter cities or general law cities
    - general law cities are governed by state law at the municipal level
    - charter cities may pass laws superseding state law for municipal issues, including municipal elections
- ❖ Arguments made in California legislature for lowering the voting
  - Democratic arguments
    - Youth voting would boost short and long term turnout
    - Youth deserve to have a voice in their representation
  - Education-focused arguments
    - Voting in high school could amplify civic education curricula
  - Arguments of precedent
    - Other localities have already lowered the voting age
  - Developmental arguments
    - Youth are capable and mature enough to vote
  - Democratic, education, and precedent arguments have frequently been used in legislative arguments, but developmental arguments have only been used once (at time of writing)
- ❖ Arguments made against lowering the voting age in California legislature
  - Undue influence from parents or teachers
  - Expanding rights some rights to minors is arbitrary and could be a slippery slope
  - Contradiction between lowering the voting age and raising the minimum age to be tried as an adult
  - In school board elections:
    - unfairness to school board candidates who would answer to a different electorate than other electeds
    - administrative complications with issuing different ballots
    - establishment of two classes of voters
- ❖ Los Angeles
  - Context
    - LA is a charter city
      - Lowering the voting age would need approval of the city council and a popular vote
    - As of 2020, LA uses a voter center model for elections
      - eligible voters can cast ballots at any voter center in the city during an 11-day voting period
      - voting centers have a process in place to provide personalized electronic ballots to voters, reducing the administrative barrier of having to provide different ballots to different voter classes
  - Efforts
    - Idea of lowering the voting age for school board elections introduced by the 2018-19 student member of the Los Angeles Unified School Board

- student member was inspired by discussions with a counterpart in Berkeley, CA, which previously lowered the voting age for school board elections
- in 2019 the student member and two adult co-sponsors introduced a proposal for the LAUSD to research the feasibility and implementation of lowering the voting age for school board elections
  - the resolution passed and a taskforce of stakeholders was established
  - report was ongoing at time of writing
- Implementation challenges
  - lowering the voting age for school board elections only requires creating a second set of ballots in 13 languages
  - additional voter education and message will be necessary to ensure youth voters know which elections they are and are not eligible for
  - the threshold for appearing on the school board ballot and recalling an elected school board member would be higher than other elected offices
    - the threshold is determined by the number of registered eligible voters

## ZEGLOVITS AND AICHHOLZER (2014)

Zeglovits, Eva, and Julian Aichholzer. "Are people more inclined to vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the first-time voting boost among 16-to 25-year-olds in Austria." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 24, no. 3 (2014): 351-361.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2013.872652>.

**Abstract:** "Potential consequences of lowering voting age to 16 have been discussed in recent scientific and public debates. This article examines turnout of young voters aged 16 to 17 in Austria, the first European country that lowered the general voting age to 16. For this purpose we use unique data taken from electoral lists of two recent Austrian regional elections. The results support the idea that the so-called "first-time voting boost" is even stronger among the youngest voters as turnout was (a) higher compared to 18- to 20-year-old first-time voters and (b) not substantially lower than the average turnout rate. We conclude that our findings are encouraging for the idea of lowering voting age as a means to establish higher turnout rates in the future."

### SUMMARY

- ❖ Reasons for low youth turnout
  - Preoccupied with other things
  - Social context
  - Mobility
- ❖ "First-time voter boost"
  - For many, age at first election they are eligible for is 20 or 21
  - Predict higher turnout if voting age is lowered
    - Life is more simple before age 18
    - Institutions (family, schools, wider community) provide structure and information
    - Can have long run impact given habitual nature of voting
- ❖ Arguments against lowering voting age to 16
  - Uninformed votes due to
    - Immaturity
    - Lack of interest
    - Lack of knowledge
- ❖ Research Design
  - Austria
    - Known for high turnout rates
    - Lowered voting age to 16 for all elections in 2007
    - Implemented information campaign at first adoption
  - Used voter lists in two places
  - Second order elections
  - Not the first cycle after lowering voting age
  - Focus on 16-25 year olds
- ❖ Results
  - As age increases from 16 to 20, turnout decreases



- Turnout among 16-17 year olds newly eligible is 8 to 10 points higher than 18-20 year olds newly eligible

## **ZEGLOVITS AND ZANDONELLA (2013)**

Zeglovits, Eva, and Martina Zandonella. "Political interest of adolescents before and after lowering the voting age: the case of Austria." *Journal of Youth Studies* 16, no. 8 (2013): 1084-1104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.793785>.

**Abstract:** “Young people are said to be uninterested in politics. This lack of political interest among adolescents has been used as an argument against lowering the voting age. But why should someone be interested in politics if he or she is not eligible to vote? In this paper, we examine the differences in political interest of 16- and 17-year-old Austrians before and after lowering the voting age to 16, using cross-sectional survey data. Doing so, we capture a broad concept of political interest, including situational and individual interest. We observe that political interest of 16- and 17-year-olds was higher after lowering the voting age. In addition, the patterns concerning the determinants of political interest changed as well: study findings indicate that parents were of utmost importance in influencing political interest of young people who were not yet enfranchised. The impact of schools on political interest among young people emerged after the voting age had been lowered. In the specific societal and situational context of Austria, the development of political interest among young people seems to be associated with the ‘life event’ of enfranchisement.”

### **SUMMARY**

- ❖ Are 16-17 year olds less interested in politics?
- ❖ Does the answer change when the voting age is lowered to 16?
- ❖ Key hypotheses
  - Life cycle hypothesis: interest is driven by age, so law on voting age should not influence interest
  - Life-event hypothesis: events can shape interest, so law on voting age should make newly enfranchised more interested
- ❖ Research Design
  - Austria
  - Cross-sectional surveys before and after lowering voting age to 16
- ❖ Results
  - Interest higher among 16-17 year olds after lowering voting age relative to 16-17 year olds before lowering voting age