

Making Votes-at-16 Work in Wales – Documentation

Project Summary

The 2021 Welsh Parliament elections were the first in which 16- and 17-year-olds in Wales were allowed to vote. This presented a unique opportunity to extend the evidence base on experiences and outcomes of the lowering of the voting age from 18 to 16 years. The 'Making Votes at 16 work in Wales'-project collected and analysed data on how young people aged 16 and 17 experienced their inclusion in the franchise and the first election in which they were allowed to vote in Wales. The research aim was to identify which support young people aged 16 and 17 need to turn out to vote and what works to mobilise and enhance turnout levels among young people. The research was funded by the UK Democracy Fund, a Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd initiative.

Available Data

Three types of data collected between April and August 2021 are included in this dataset:

- **De-identified transcripts from focus group discussions** conducted between April and August 2021 with 86 young people from all over Wales. Young people were aged between 14 and 22 with the majority aged 16 and 17. Participants were recruited through secondary schools, further education colleges as well as through youth groups and youth workers. They joined 60- to 120-minute-long facilitated focus group discussions, conducted virtually, with young people participating via video call and online chat. Some focus groups took place during the school day with the participants present in a room together in school and the facilitators joining virtually via videocall. Some participants joined two focus group discussions - one before and one after the election; some participated in a youth democratic engagement intervention), others did not. The participants discussed their experience of the election and election campaign as well as their interest in and views of political issues, including of the lowering of the voting age, their attitudes to Welsh politics and governance. A full focus group schedule for both pre- and post-election discussions and an overview over the participants are provided.
- **Non-representative pre- and post-election survey data** from focus group participants and further young people in Wales, comprising 111 participants in total. The pre-election survey was open from 21st April to 5th May 2021, the post-election survey from 19th May to 12th August 2021. Participant entries in the pre- and post-election surveys were linked using a unique identifier. Data is available in a combined pre- and post-election dataset with repeated questions using the same question ID and marked with the subscript "pre" and "post". The questionnaire with matching question IDs is provided.
- **Election diaries kept by young people:** Some participants additionally kept election diaries, reacting to prompts from the research team in the leadup to the election and sharing an in-the-moment insight into their election experience. The prompts covered various election-related events, such as leaders debates, and were distributed to focus group participants between 23rd April and 10th May. Participants sent in diary entries via email, text message, messenger service, or in an anonymous online form. Available are documents with prompts sorted by date and young people's de-identified diary entries in response to these prompts.

All research was approved by the Schools of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham Trent University (approval number: 2021/145).

Relevant Outputs

The project outputs include a research report including a methods note, an interactive infographic, and academic publications. They are available at ukvotingage.co.uk.

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