



NYCI BRIEFING PAPER 1

VOTER PARTICIPATION

KEY DATA FROM REDC/NYCI NATIONAL SURVEY ON YOUNG PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION:

The National Youth Council of Ireland commissioned Red C to conduct a national survey of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 to ascertain their attitudes, aspirations, and concerns about a range of issues in 2014.

The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of their lives as it currently stands as well as their behaviours and attitudes. As well as highlighting the key data, it also sets out our position that the current voter registration system is outdated and failing and must be overhauled.

This briefing paper on voter participation and voting intentions is the first in a series which will be published over the coming months on a range of themes including housing, health insurance and employment support.

CONTENT

NYCI has campaigned for many years on issues related to the participation of young people in the political and electoral system. We have consistently called for the voter registration and electoral system to be reformed to make it more accessible for young people. We believe the current system is flawed, and have run a number of campaigns to encourage young people to vote. In advance of the 2014 European elections we ran the “Promote the Vote” campaign which included a young voter registration drive and three candidate hustings around the country in partnership with USI and Spunout.ie in April and May 2014.

We do not believe this is a one sided relationship and we also have called on all political parties and independents to engage with young people and address youth issues if they want to encourage young people to vote for them.

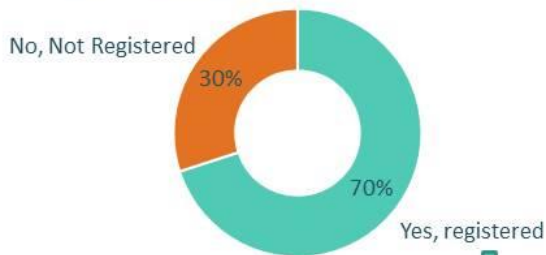
VOTER PARTICIPATION:

MAIN FINDINGS

- 70% of young people aged 18-25 were registered to vote.
- 57% of young people between 18-21 years of age were registered to vote.
- Voter registration highest in Connacht/Ulster (73%) and lowest in Dublin (65%)
- Of those registered to vote in the Local and European elections 54% voted and 46% did not vote.
- Voter turnout among young people was higher in the ABC1 category (59%) and in Connacht Ulster (68%)
- 52% of those who didn't vote indicated that circumstances on the day prevented them from voting (busy, work commitments, out of country, not registered in county where I live, forgot to vote, etc)
- 28% of non-voters stated they had no interest in politics and 15% had lost trust in politics

Registered To Vote

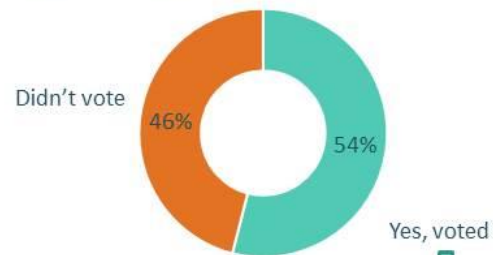
(Base: All Aged 18-25 – 412)



Male	67%
Female	72%
18-21	57%
22-25	81%
ABC1	72%
C2DE	66%
Dublin	65%
ROL	71%
Munster	71%
Conn./Ulster	73%

Voted In Euro & Local Elections May 2014

(Base: All Registered To Vote – 286)



Male	54%
Female	54%
18-21	48%
22-25	58%
ABC1	59%
C2DE	46%
Dublin	53%
ROL	54%
Munster	47%
Conn./Ulster	68%

VOTER INTENTIONS:

All the participants in the survey who had voted were then asked to indicate which party/candidates they had voted for in the recent local and European elections.

MAIN FINDINGS –EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

- In the European elections 29% of young people voted for Independent candidates with 26% voting for Sinn Féin and 23% for Fianna Fáil.
- Fine Gael got 11% of the youth vote with Labour receiving 6%.
- Independents (+9%) and Sinn Féin (+6%) did significantly better among young voters compared to the elections results based on voters of all ages with Fianna Fáil (+1%) and Labour (+1%) doing marginally better among young voters
- Fine Gael youth vote of 11% was half the vote from total electorate of 22%.
- Independents did better among young women (35%) and among the ABC1 (35%)
- Sinn Féin polled higher among young men (34%) and among C2DE voters (38%), they received 21% of the vote from young women and the ABC1 voter cohort.
- Fianna Fáil did best in Munster (29%) and in rural areas (32%) but recorded a vote of 9% in Dublin.
- Fine Gael did best among young women (14% and best in Munster (18%) and in rural areas (16%) but lower at 6% in Dublin.
- Labour did better among young men (11%) and in Dublin (16%) but received only 2% from ABC1 voters.

1st Preference Vote In Euro Elections – Excluding Refused

(Base: All 18-25 Who Voted Excluding Refused – 140)

Actual result for total population ■ 18-25 year old vote ■



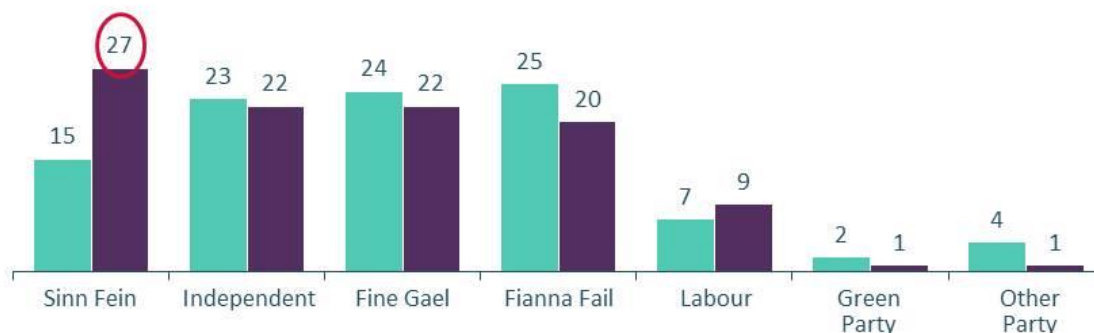
MAIN FINDINGS –LOCAL ELECTIONS

- In the local elections 27% of young people voted for Sinn Fein, both Independent candidates and Fine Gael recorded a vote of 22% with 20% voting for Fianna Fail and with Labour, Green Party and others receiving 9%, 1% and 1% respectively.
- Sinn Féin did significantly better among young voters at 27% compared to the 15% they received in the election results based on voters of all ages.
- Fine Gael got 22% of the youth vote in the local elections, twice what their European candidates received.
- Independents, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil all recorded a lower vote from young voters of minus 1%, 2% and 5% compared to the elections results based on voters of all ages with Labour doing slightly better (+2%).
- As in the vote recorded for the European elections, Sinn Fein’s vote was stronger among young men (32%) and from C2DE voters (40%), otherwise being consistent across all regions.
- Independent local candidates did best among ABC1 voters (28%) and among young women (26%).
- Fine Gael did best among young women (26%), 22-25 year olds (24%) and in the rest of Leinster (28%).
- Fianna Fáil did best among 18-21 year olds, (25%) and in Connacht/Ulster (29%).
- Labour did better among young men (14%), among C2DE voters (12%) and in Dublin (20%).

1st Preference Vote In Local Elections – Excluding Refused

(Base: All 18-25 Who Voted Excluding Refused –148)

Actual result for voting population  18-25 year old vote 



ANALYSIS:

This survey finds that 30% of young people aged 18-25 were not registered. The problem is most acute among the 18-21 age group with up to 43% of this cohort not registered. NYCI are concerned that the number of young people registered has actually decreased from 2009 when our report *The Truth About Youth*¹ found that 26% of young people aged 18-25 and 36% aged 18-21 years were not registered to vote. NYCI believes that these findings continue to demonstrate that the current voter registration system is outdated and failing and must be overhauled. This survey confirms anecdotal evidence that many young people who want to vote are prevented from doing so because they are not registered in time to do so. We welcome the commitment in the recent Statement of Government Priorities 2012-2014 to establish an Electoral Commission by 2015. However such a body has been promised by successive Governments since 2007 and action is now long overdue. Setting up the Electoral Commission is only the first step, such a body must review and reform the electoral registration system to bring it into the 21st century. We believe that young people should be automatically registered when they reach voting age.

In relation to the voting intentions of young people it is clear this research provides a useful insight into how young people vote in Ireland. As a non-party political organization we have no comment on the results, we believe they speak for themselves. However with the next General Election about 18 months away we would call on all candidates, politicians and parties to engage with and address issues impacting on young people today.

METHODOLOGY

Red C conducted 412 face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of young people aged 18-25 throughout Ireland from the 17th June to 6th July 2014. Of these 51% were female and 49% were male. 50% were classified as being from the ABC1 social demographic group, 48% were classed as belonging to the C2DE social demographic group and 2% in the F category. In terms of nationality 93% of the participants in the survey identified themselves as Irish. The margin of error in the results is +/- 4.9%.

¹ http://youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/The_Truth_About_Youth%2009.pdf (Page 16)