

All Canadian citizens 18 years and older have the right to vote in federal elections. However, recent studies show that fewer young citizens vote compared to older citizens.



This is true not only in Canada, but also in many other democratic countries in the world.

This is a serious concern, because democracy depends on the participation of all citizens in the election process so that elected leaders truly represent all the people.



A study by Elections Canada found that only 22.4 percent of 18 to 20 year olds voted in the 2000 federal election.

However, more than 80 percent of citizens over 58 years of age voted.

The study also showed that voter participation among young people has been falling since 1968.

Many reasons have been suggested for this low voter participation among young people. Here are some of the reasons that have been suggested:

- Young people just do not care as much about politics, because they feel powerless to change things.
- Young people do not have enough awareness or knowledge about politics and government.

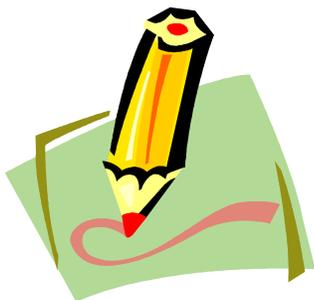


- Political parties are all too similar to one another so young people can not see any differences between candidates.
- Young people have less of a sense of duty toward their country.
- Young people are not given enough detailed information about how and where to vote.
- Candidates and political parties do not try to reach out to this group, and do not communicate with youth to find out what issues concern them.

Source:

Elections Canada; Youth Activities; *Youth Electoral Participation - Survey and Analysis of Canadian Trends*: <<http://www.elections.ca/>>.

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Take a few minutes to think about this information, and write down your thoughts about young people and voting.

Then, with a partner, discuss:

- *What do you think are the reasons why so many young people do not vote?*
- *What can be done to encourage young people in Canada to exercise their citizenship right — the right to vote?*
- *Will you vote when you turn 18? Why or why not?*