

In Canada, all citizens aged 18 years and up have the right to vote in federal elections. However, recent studies have shown that young people vote at a far lower rate than older citizens. This is true not only in Canada, but also in many other democratic systems in the world. This is a serious concern, because democracy depends on the participation of as many citizens as possible in order to truly represent the people.

A study carried out by Elections Canada found that voter turnout in the 2000 federal election was only **22.4%** among 18 to 20 year olds, while more than **80%** of citizens over 58 years of age voted.

In fact, the study revealed that voter participation among young people has been steadily declining 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 cannot 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 don't communicate with youth to find out what issues concern them.

For further information:

Elections Canada, National Forum on Youth Voting

www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=med&dir=eveyou/forum&document=index&lang=e&textonly=false

Elections Canada, Young Voters:

www.elections.ca/content_youth.asp?section=yth&document=index&lang=e&textonly=false

Visit the websites listed above and develop your own survey questions to find out why young people in your community do not vote.

