

28/05/2024

Ms Kate Thwaites
Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament of Australia

Via email: em@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Thwaites,

ACYP welcomes the opportunity to provide brief comments in relation to the inquiry into civics education, engagement, and participation in Australia.

Established under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*, the Advocate for Children and Young People (**ACYP**) is an independent statutory appointment overseen by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People. ACYP advocates for and promotes the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people aged 0-24 years and promotes their participation in decisions that affect their lives. The Act requires ACYP to 'give priority to the interests and needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people' and to 'focus on systemic issues affecting children and young people'. Further information about ACYP's work can be found at: www.acyp.nsw.gov.au.

At the outset, ACYP wishes to emphasise the importance of civics education and ensuring children and young people have the skills and opportunity to engage and participate in the Australian democracy.

As part of Youth Week each year, ACYP commissions SecNewgate Research to undertake a representative quantitative survey of approximately 1,000 children and young people across the State on a range of issues.

In 2022, ACYP asked a series of questions to better understand children and young people's political literacy. The survey engaged with 1,000 children and young people aged 10-24 years.

The vast majority of young people are aware the minimum voting age is 18, and most felt this age is appropriate. Those who felt the voting age should be different were evenly split between a younger (around 16) or older (around 21) alternative age.

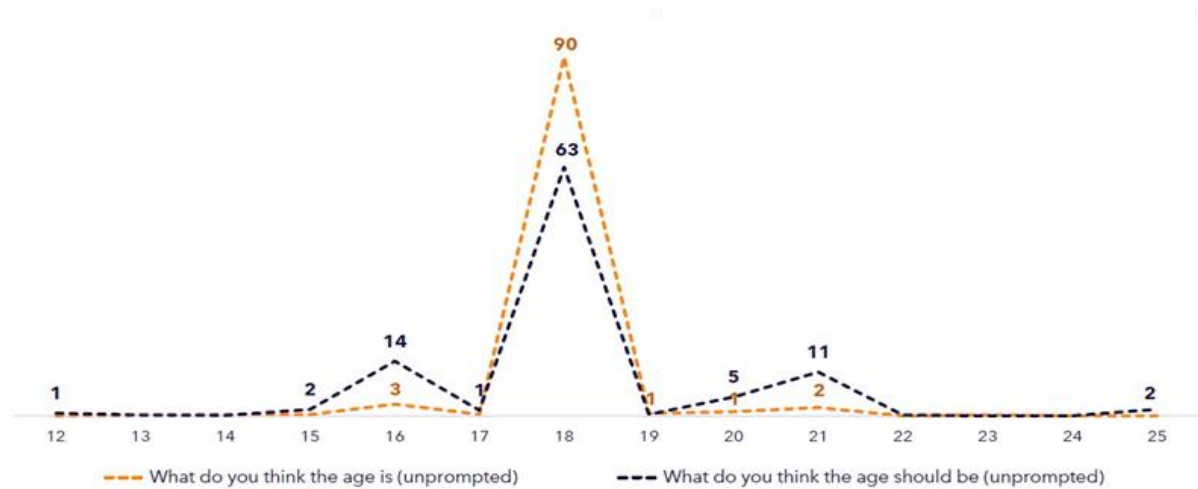


Figure 1: Q16. What do you think is the minimum age that you have to be to vote in an election in NSW (i.e. State or Federal election)? If you are unsure, your best estimate is fine. Q17. What do you think the minimum age should be to vote in an election in NSW?

Young people, particularly those not yet of voting age, were enthusiastic to begin voting at an earlier age. Close to three in five (57%) young people aged 17 years and younger said they were either ‘very’ or ‘somewhat interested in voting before they turn 18. Females aged 14-17 years and those who live in Greater Sydney were the most enthusiastic.

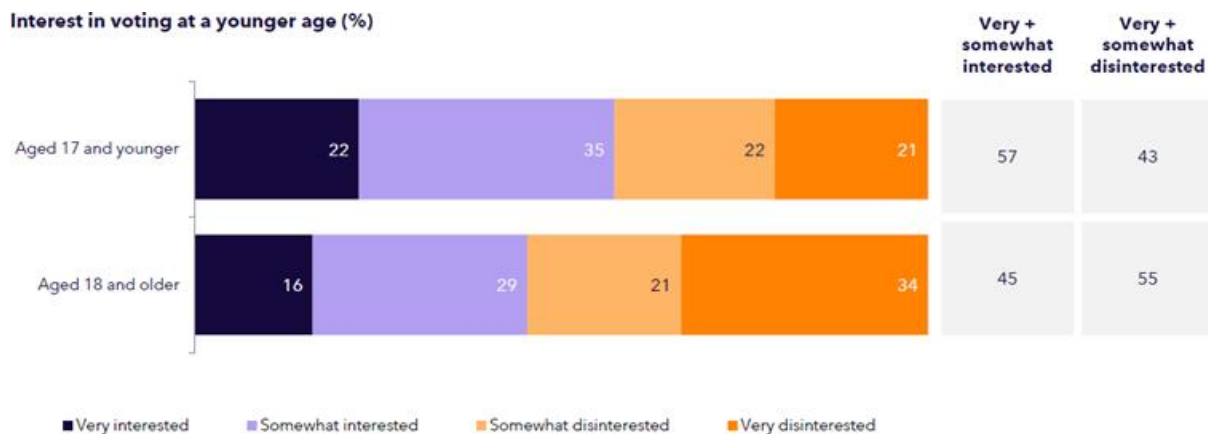
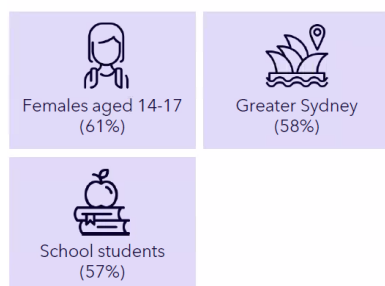


Figure 2: Q18. [if <18] Currently the voting age is 18 years in NSW. If someone your age was allowed to vote, would you be interested? [if 18+] Currently the voting age is 18 years in NSW. In retrospect, would you have been interested in voting at a younger age?

This level of interest was significantly lower amongst those aged 18 years and older (45%) when considering, in retrospect, the idea of voting at a younger age, perhaps indicating that the political system does not foster engagement amongst young people once they are in the system.

Young people who are more likely to be interested...



Young people who are more likely to be disinterested...

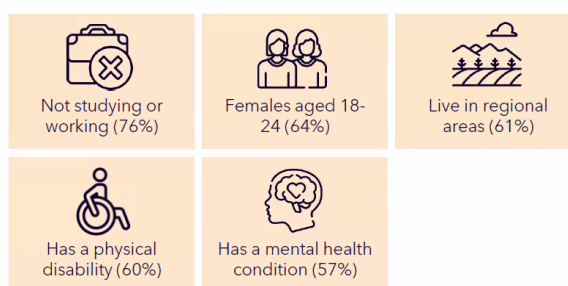


Figure 3: Q18. [if <18] Currently the voting age is 18 years in NSW. If someone your age was allowed to vote, would you be interested? [if 18+] Currently the voting age is 18 years in NSW. In retrospect, would you have been interested in voting at a younger age?

Most young people were confident in engaging with and understanding political processes, particularly understanding why it is important to vote (71%) and how to vote (61%). Many could benefit from information and guidance on deciding who to vote for, what to do if they are unable to vote on election day and contacting their local MP.

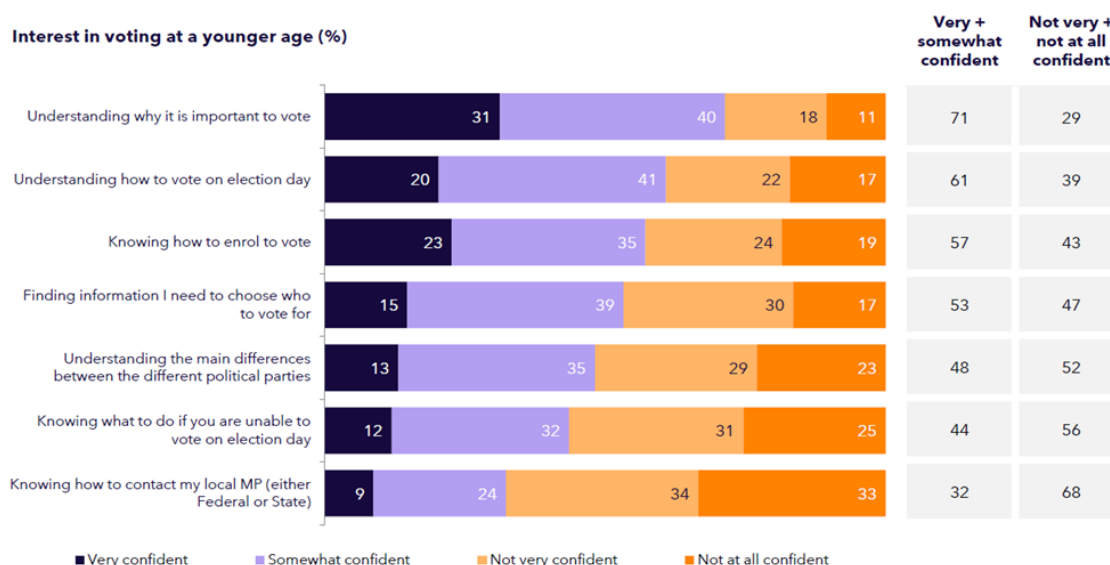


Figure 4: Q. How confident do you feel about the following things? Base: all participants (n=1,000)

Only one in five reported they were aware of who their Federal member of Parliament is (20%), and even fewer than this aware of who their State member is (16%). Tertiary students were more likely to report awareness for both members, while those aged 10-13 year had lower awareness.

Stated level of awareness of Federal and State Members of Parliament (%)

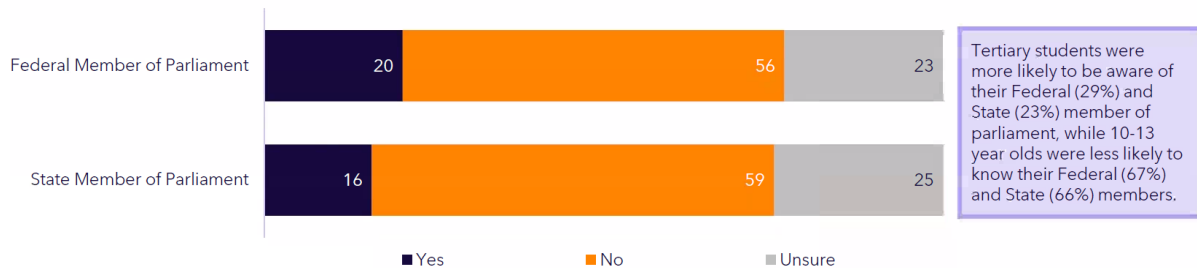
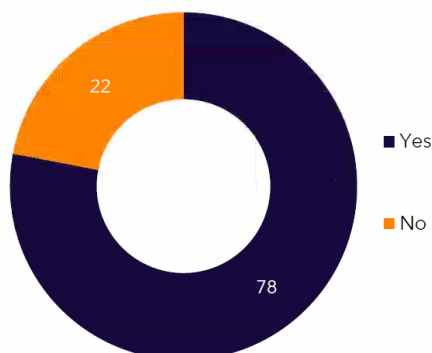


Figure 5: Q14. Do you know who your Federal Member of Parliament is?, Q15. Do you know who your State Member of Parliament is? // Base: all participants

Young people were most likely to choose the party or candidate whose policies most closely aligned with their own personal views (42%) or would do the best job for the community (38%). Parents also had a significant degree of influence over who they would vote for (26%), especially amongst young females (32%). Only a minority (11%) reported to vote the same way as their friends.

Has voted in a State, Federal or local council election (%)



How young people decided on who to vote for (%)

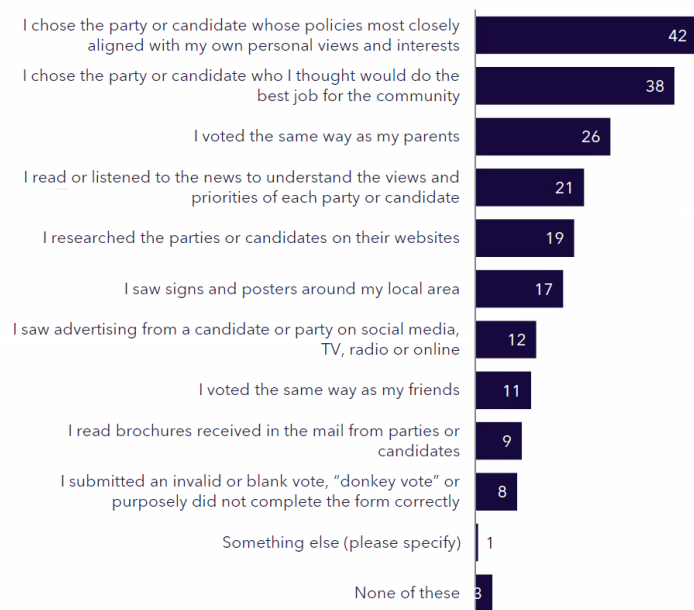


Figure 6: Q20. Have you voted in a State, Federal or local council election before? // Base: all those aged 18 or older (n=503), Q21. When you voted in the

Like many domains in life, children and young people access a range of information sources to better understand politics and civics more broadly.

As part of their 2021 Youth Week Survey, ACYP commissioned Newgate Research to undertake a representative survey of 972 young people aged between 12-24 years across a number of topics. One of these topics was types of information sources used, communications needs and preferred communication channels used by young people.

While traditional media still plays a role as source of general news, young people predominantly use online sources – including a range of social media platforms – for most of their information needs. Friends and parents also provide a sounding board on most issues, including topics around political engagement.

Information sources used for national or international news (%)

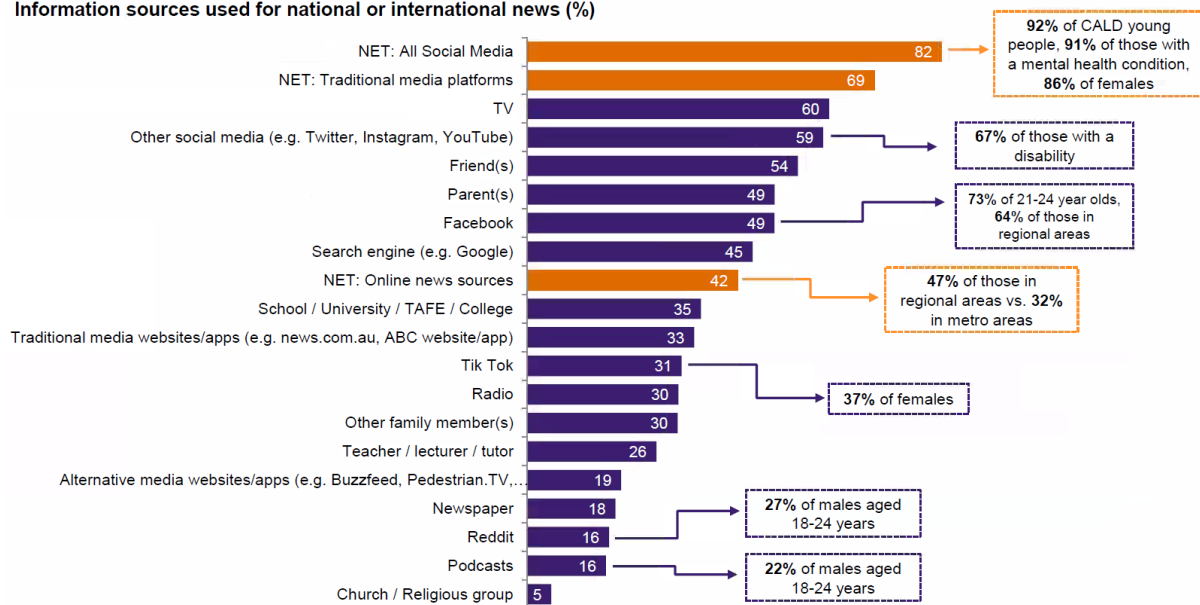


Figure 7: Q2 Where do you get news about what is happening in Australia / the world // Base: all participants (n=972).

Young people exhibit high levels of confidence in their ability to validate information they receive.

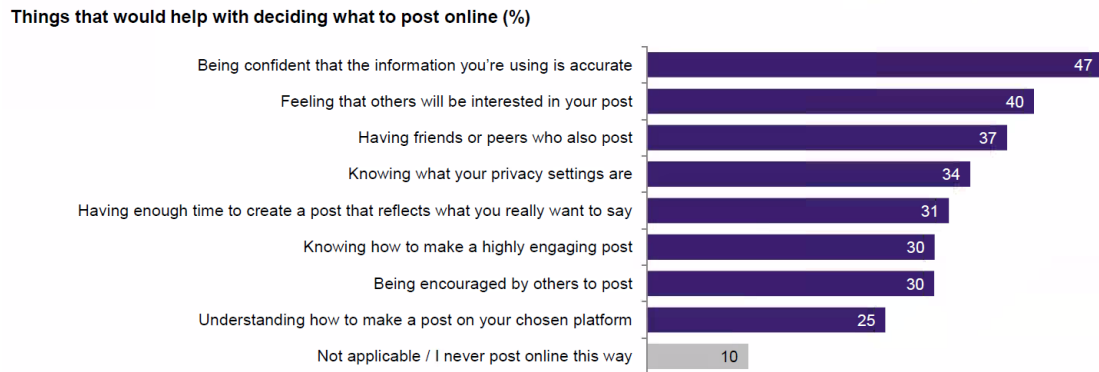
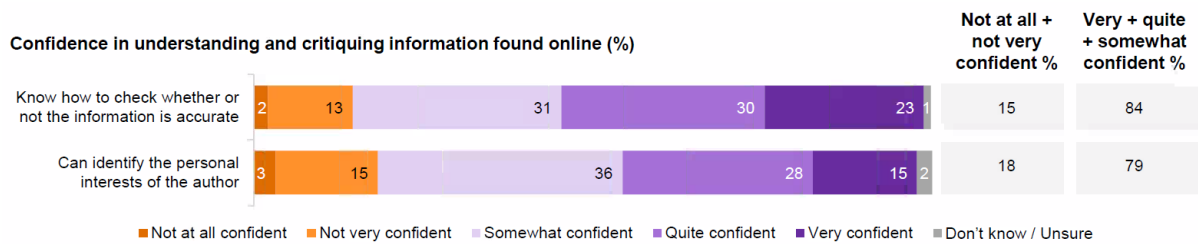


Figure 8: Q9 When reading information ... how confident are you that you..., Q10 When it comes to posting online, which of the following would

Thank-you once again for the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to the inquiry into civics education, engagement, and participation in Australia. I trust this information has been of some assistance to the inquiry. Should you wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact my office via: acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au or ph: (02) 9248 0970.

Yours Sincerely,

Zoë Robinson

Advocate for Children and Young People

Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People