

European Parliament Elections:

Why do the youth not vote?

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Abstract

The European Parliament (EP) elections are among the most critical events in the EU political cycle. By casting a ballot in the EU elections, you may exercise your democratic right. Nevertheless, in the Netherlands, only 42% of the population participated in the recent EP elections, and only 35% were between 18 and 24. Therefore, it is crucial to study the underlying issues affecting the voting turnout of young citizens between 18-24 in the Netherlands. Previous studies have demonstrated that the concept of "second-order" elections, which holds that voters behave differently in EP elections, influences political engagement in EP elections. The idea of "habitus" contends that people perceive and respond to the social environment they inhabit through their routines, skills, and personality qualities, which also impact young people's political activity. The young people in this situation are growing up at a time when they are notably underrepresented in elections, which reduces the likelihood that they will form the habit of voting. Based on previous research, the causes of low participation in the EP elections among the younger generation are categorized into three main groups: hostility towards politics, lack of information, and voting has no consequences. Several hypotheses are developed based on these groupings to respond to the research question. A survey and semi-structured interviews are conducted to see which hypotheses are valid. As a result, it appears that the reasons for the low rate of youth participation in the EP elections in the Netherlands are primarily attributable to a lack of confidence in or dissatisfaction with European politics, a lack of knowledge about the date of the EP elections, and a sense of disconnection from the operation of the European political system. Solving these three problems may increase voter turnout, which is a crucial and essential step if the Europe of the future is to reflect the ideals and desires of the generation of today.

Keywords: European Parliament elections, voter turnout, low political engagement, younger generations

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European Parliament Elections: The Causes for Low Participation

Four hundred twenty-seven million members of the European Union's populace had the chance to cast ballots for the European Parliament (EP) in May 2019. For the ninth time, EU voters had the opportunity to directly elect the policy- and decision-makers who would represent them in EU affairs and shape the character of the continent. Therefore, European elections are among the most significant occasions in the EU political cycle (Mattila, 2003). Every five years, beginning in 1979, more than forty years ago, the member nations of the European Union have elections to choose representatives to the EP (Somer-Topcu & Zar, 2014). In other words, the elections are intended to legitimize the exercise of power by holding governments accountable and expressing voters' interests (Franklin, 2002). The individuals selected to serve in the EP create and pass new legislation, vote on new trade agreements, assess how the taxes you pay are spent by EU institutions, and investigate specific issues (European Parliament, n.d.). Consequently, it is essential that elected politicians fairly represent the broader public. Alternatively, it is imperative that as many people as possible cast ballots in the European elections.

Voting in EU elections allows you to exercise your democratic right to have a say in decisions that will shape the continent's future and gives the Parliament the legitimacy it needs to carry out its duties (European Parliament, n.d.). The overall turnout for the most recent election for the EP was 50.6%. This is the most remarkable turnout since the elections in 1994, and it represents a significant improvement over 2014 when it was 42.6% (Rainsard, 2022). The government's nonpartisan informational campaign to promote voting was primarily responsible for this (Demographic change and political participation – The European elections, 2019). Despite the rise, significant gaps in voter turnout still exist between various social groups, particularly regarding age (Rainsard, 2022). This issue is also present in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, only 42% of the population participated in the recent EP elections, and only 35% of that population was between the ages of 18 and 24 (Statista, 2022; European Parliament, 2019a). As a result, studying the underlying issues affecting this particular demographic's voting turnout is an intriguing case to investigate.

In well-established democracies, young people vote significantly less frequently than older people (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012b). Political engagement has long been a contentious issue among young people. Voting is the most frequent and significant action people conduct in a democracy, making it one of the most crucial actions for academics of democratic politics to comprehend. However, it still needs to be fully understood why the youngest generations' participation in the EP elections is so much lower (Plutzer, 2002). It can be seen that older voters predominate in the EP elections, which means that a significant fraction of young people do not participate in the polls (Demographic change and political participation – The European elections, 2019). Therefore, it may be argued that older people have more voting power and collective weight at the polls than younger people. This can be viewed as an issue of intergenerational justice and the root of participatory inequality (Demographic change and political participation – The European elections, 2019; Gallego, 2009). Therefore, looking at the reasons behind young people's low voting rates is critical, especially considering the EU's need for more diverse representation.

Furthermore, it is crucial to comprehend why young people choose not to vote because doing so has substantial habituating effects, and failing to engage young people could potentially have long-term effects on political involvement (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012b). Moreover, pinpointing the causes of the low turnout helps test competing hypotheses. The factors that prevent one group, such as the younger generation, from voting may differ from those that prevent another group from doing so (Gallego, 2009). Finally, to find a solution to boost young people's electoral involvement, it is vital to understand the underlying issues that contribute to the younger generation's lack of voting. In light of the above, I pose the following research question: Why does voter turnout in EP elections tend to be relatively low among younger generations (18-24 yo) in the Netherlands, and how can the electoral participation of younger generations in EP elections be increased?

To answer this research question, I contrast numerous hypotheses on youth voter participation with academic literature findings and conduct a survey and semi-structured interviews with a cohort of young people aged 18 to 24 who are eligible to vote in EP elections. These hypotheses are based on

theories regarding the political participation of younger generations. These theories translate into the following hypotheses. The causes of low participation in the EP elections among the younger generations can be categorized into three main groups. The first group concerns those who show hostility towards politics, including those who do not trust or are dissatisfied with politics, do not care about politics, or vote infrequently or never. The second group of responses includes those who state having a lack of knowledge regarding the EU, the EP, or the elections for the EP. People who believe that "voting is useless" or their vote has no bearing on anything fall into a third category.

Table 1: Hypothesis of each category

Hypotheses	Category 1: Hostility towards politics	Category 2: Lack of knowledge	Category 3: "Voting is useless"
H1	Younger generations in the Netherlands do not vote in the European Parliament elections because they lack trust in or are dissatisfied with European politics (Franklin, 2002; Rainsard, 2022).		
H2	Younger generations in the Netherlands do not vote in the European Parliament elections		

	<p>because they lack interest in them (Franklin, 2002; Fieldhouse & Cutts, 2012; Rainsard, 2022).</p>		
H3	<p>Younger generations in the Netherlands do not vote in the European Parliament elections because they rarely or never vote (Rainsard, 2022).</p>		
H4		<p>Younger generations in the Netherlands do not vote in the European Parliament elections because they are not aware of the European Parliament elections (Franklin, 2002; Lefevere & Van Aelst, 2014; Rainsard, 2022).</p>	

H5			Younger generations in the Netherlands do not vote in the European Parliament elections because they believe that their vote has no consequences or does not change anything (Rainsard, 2022).
H6			Younger generations in the Netherlands do not vote in the European Parliament elections because they feel distanced or disconnected from the operations of the European political system (Franklin, 2002; Rainsard, 2022).

In this thesis, we first provide a background of the EP and its elections, followed by a second section detailing the literature review, which focuses on the general voter turnout in EP elections, youth voter turnout in national elections, youth voter turnout in EP elections, and the underlying issues that account for the low turnout of the younger generation in EP elections. I then explore the methodology in

the third section. The results will be presented in the fourth part, and a discussion will be provided in which the results will be interpreted and their implications discussed. Finally, the fifth part will show the conclusions.

Background

The most significant international elections in the world, the EP elections, are held in Europe every five years and have been since the first direct elections took place in 1979. The most recent elections were held from May 23 to May 26, 2019 (European Parliament, 2019b). Many people believed that establishing direct elections for the EP would provide a direct connection between ordinary citizens and decision-making at the European level. Elections were intended to offer a public forum where Europeans could take more direct control over their collective future, legitimize policy through the usual election processes, and help establish a shared identity among the citizens of Europe (Marsh & Mikhaylov, 2010). Thus, the European elections allow voters to choose their representatives in the EP and influence Europe's direction (European Parliament, 2023). Therefore, choosing whom the public wants to represent and defend their interests in the EP is the purpose of the European Elections (Citizens Information, 2021). By casting a vote in the EU elections, citizens can exercise their democratic right to participate in deciding the future of Europe while also providing the Parliament with the legitimacy it needs to carry out its tasks (European Parliament, 2023).

One of the EU's seven institutions and its legislative arm is the EP. It has 705 members (MEPs) who are directly elected and represent all 28 EU member states (European Parliament, 2023). The Parliament is a co-legislator; it has the authority to enact and amend laws and shares decision-making authority regarding the annual EU budget. It collaborates with the national Parliaments of EU countries to get their feedback and oversees the work of the Commission and other EU bodies (European Parliament, n.d.(a)).

Members of the EP (MEPs) are appointed using national electoral systems and traditions. However, these must adhere to specific requirements imposed by EU legislation and outlined in the

Electoral Act of 1976, such as ensuring gender equality and a secret ballot (Citizens Information, 2021; European Parliament, n.d.(b)). Overall, the European Union's member states adhere to similar laws relating to the European elections; however, some details may vary by nation, such as whether voting by mail or abroad is permitted (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, 2023). Elections for the EP are held across the European Union for four days, typically in June (Citizens Information, 2021). Also, election days are distinct; typically, elections begin on a Thursday, the day the Netherlands generally holds elections, and conclude on a Sunday, the day most other nations hold elections (European Parliament, 2023). If you are a citizen of an EU member state, you can vote for the EP (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023). Except for Greece (17 years), Austria (16 years), and Malta (16 years), you must be above 18 to vote in the EP elections (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023; European Parliament, n.d. (c)). Each member state must send a set number of MEPs to the EP; the numbers range from six for the smallest members, including Malta, Luxembourg, and Cyprus, to ninety-six for Germany, the most prominent member state. 751 MEPs were elected in May 2019, but after a post-Brexit shuffle in February 2020, this number was cut to 705 MEPs (European Parliament, n.d. (d)). The EU treaties specify seat distribution. This policy ensures that seats are allocated in an impartial, equitable, long-lasting, and transparent way. Larger populated countries are given more seats than smaller ones. However, according to the "degressive proportionality" principle, smaller populated member states are given more seats per capita than larger ones (European Parliament, n.d. (e)). The elected representatives of the EU are known as MEPs, representing both the interests of their hometowns or regions and those of the EU as a whole (European Parliament, n.d. (f)). Moreover, MEPs are organized according to political affinity rather than nationality (European Parliament, 2023). Being legislators of the EU, they have the authority to examine the Council of Ministers and the Commission. The primary concerns of our time, such as climate change, migration, international human rights, and how our financial systems are regulated, are all vital issues in which MEPs play a significant role (European Parliament, n.d. (f)). At the beginning of each legislative term, the Conference of Presidents, composed of the leaders of the political groups and the President of

Parliament, decides the distribution of seats in the chamber among political groups, non-attached MEPs, and representatives of EU institutions (European Parliament, n.d. (g)).

The most recent election, held in May 2019, showed a considerable increase in turnout, which increased to an EU average of over 50% (European Parliament, 2023). Nevertheless, young people's voter turnout was significantly lower than that of the older age group (Demographic Change and Political Participation – the European Elections 2019, 2019). Even though there was a sizable increase in young people's turnout compared to the 2014 European elections and the difference in participation rates between older and younger age groups had narrowed, it is still evident that young people's turnout is still lower than that of older people, as shown in Table 2 (Demographic Change and Political Participation – the European Elections 2019, 2019). Moreover, it can be seen that 70% of all people voting in the 2019 elections were 40 years old or older, as shown in Table 3 (*Demographic Change and Political Participation – the European Elections 2019, 2019*).

Table 2. Turnout percentages in EP elections 2014 and 2019 per age group

Age	Voted 2014	Voted 2019
16/18-24	28%	42%
24-39	35%	47%
40-54	45%	52%
55+	51%	54%

Table 3. Turnout percentages in EP elections 2014 and 2019 per age group in context

Age	Percentage of all people voting in 2014	Percentage of all people voting in 2019
16/18-24	8%	9%
24-39	21%	21%
40-54	28%	27%
55+	43%	43%

Figure 1 (see Appendix A) illustrates the voter turnout for March 23, 2019, European elections in the Netherlands, broken down by age. The poll results also indicate that older voters were more likely to cast ballots. In the elections held on May 23, more than 50% of voters aged 65 or over cast ballots. In 2019, the share of voters under 24 years old was somewhat higher, at 35%, while the turnout among voters aged 35 to 49 was lowest, at just over 30%.

Literature Review

General voter turnout in the European Parliament elections

A significant increase in the number of people voting across the EU in 2019 has been sparked by growing concerns about the future of Europe. Voter turnout rose from 42.6% in 2014 to 50.7% in 2019, making it the highest turnout in the past 20 years and the first time when overall participation in EP elections did not decline but climbed (Braun & Schäfer, 2021). The fact that there was a greater sense of Europeanness and a higher level of policing of EP elections may be utilized to explain why more Europeans cast ballots to determine the future course of the EU (Braun & Schäfer, 2021). Despite

increased voter turnout across the continent, participation in the European elections can still be described as disappointing (Van Der Eijk, Franklin & Marsh, 1996). The turnout in European elections is typically low, far lower than in national elections, also known as first-order national elections, and in most member nations, even lower than in local or regional elections (Blondel et al., 1997). Since the first of these elections for the EP, it has been clear that they are distinct, regarding voter turnout, from elections for national parliaments in EU member nations. Low voter turnout, often poor performance by big parties relative to their results in nearby national elections, and frequently more robust performance by small parties than in national elections characterize the EP elections (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996). The idea that there is "less at risk" in EP elections than in national first-order elections is frequently to blame for low turnout (Braun & Schäfer, 2021). Additionally, it explains why the results of European elections are anticipated to reflect the relative strength of the various political forces operating nationally (Franklin, 2002). As a result, European elections are often considered "second-order" national elections, offering voters little impetus outside of the context of their usual national party (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996).

The second-order elections theory, which was first put forth by scholars Reif and Schmitt (1997), contends that voters behave differently in national and European elections since the latter's outcomes do not have much of an impact on the electorate, making the problem of executive power irrelevant (Mattila, 2003). The European elections have no bearing on the political makeup of the European Commission, much less that of the national governments whose representatives sit on the EU Council of Ministers (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996). For instance, MEPs do not choose the income tax rate or the caliber and accessibility of public hospitals or schools. Voters know this and give national parliamentary elections more weight than the EP elections. As a result, fewer people participate in voting (Mattila, 2003). Therefore, it might be argued that even if European elections impacted the composition of the European Commission, those elections would still be considered secondary as long as voters' primary concerns were still national political ones. Because of this, some people see the EP elections as an opportunity to cast an honest vote, switching from the significant, centrist party they backed in the most recent general election to a more minor, less-competitive party with which they connect more closely. Some act strategically,

voting against the party they typically support to express their displeasure with how that party performed during the previous national election (Mattila, 2003).

As we have observed, fewer people vote in European elections than in national ones. Voter turnout in European parliamentary elections is frequently much lower than in comparable second-order national elections, such as the “Waterschapsverkiezingen” in the Netherlands. Many factors can be used to account for the low turnout in European elections. First, it can be explained by the fact that the EP elections have attracted little public interest. Due to the low importance of matters under EU jurisdiction, citizens may ignore EP elections since they do not see EU politics as having any bearing on their lives (Mattila, 2003). Second, predicting how the elections will affect EC/EU policy-making is difficult (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996). Individuals may question the EP's legitimacy as an influential and representative institution. Such uncertainties are more likely to account for poor turnout in nations with active political institutions and robust national legislatures. Hence, losing confidence in the EP could impact the decision to abstain. Also, Europeans might stay home during EP elections because they do not believe the EP represents their interests in EU decision-making (Mattila, 2003).

Also evident is how strongly the environment in which elections are conducted affects voter turnout. The impact of mandatory voting is by far the greatest, and it also interacts with other institutional elements, such as the proportionality of the electoral system and the opening of the polls on Sunday rather than Thursday (Franklin, 2002). Only in cases where voting is not mandated are those final two institutional variables truly significant (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996). Another variable that influences the variations in the national political environment in which elections are held is whether national and European elections are held on the same day (Mattila, 2003). The time left until the next national election is another factor influencing turnout at European elections; turnout increases as national elections get closer. Voter turnout can also be significantly affected by whether this was the nation's first EP election ever conducted (Franklin, 2002). Finally, a social environment impact was discovered to be significant: societies with sharp social divisions between groups associated with certain parties are more likely to see

high turnout than cultures where the fall of cleavage politics has diminished the significance of these relationships (Van Der Eijk et al., 1996).

Youth voter turnout in national elections

Election turnout is often seen as a critical sign of how well a democracy is doing; a high turnout is good for democracy, and a low turnout is negative (Lefevere & Van Aelst, 2014). If we examine the general relationships between age and turnout in national elections, we may observe that early adult participation is relatively low, with steadily increasing voter turnout among middle-aged voters and a gradual reduction with advancing age (Bhatti et al., 2012). The voting expenses are increased for young people in their first election since they have never registered to vote, may not know where their polling station is, and may not yet be familiar with the major parties and topics. In addition, the majority of their peer group are also nonvoters. Many resources that can encourage engagement are also lacking for young people (Plutzer, 2002). They are not desirable targets for parties looking for campaign contributions or interest groups running direct mail campaigns because they have little disposable income. Few possess a college degree, are property owners, or are involved in local politics. Resulting in relatively few young people being registered to vote, and their turnout is low (Plutzer, 2002).

Numerous studies have shown that young people vote less frequently than older people do in practically all democracies (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012b). Significant drops in the number of young people voting have been observed in several countries. Recently, a generational movement away from electoral politics has been presented. Younger generations have abandoned political parties and elections in favor of issue-based forms of engagement, including signing petitions, taking part in consumer boycotts, and attending demonstrations. Since the start of the new millennium, new technologies have allowed young people to participate in an even wider variety of online, non-institutionalized activities. For instance, joining a pressure group, taking consumer action, or participating in a demonstration may make pursuing concerns such as climate change, global poverty, or free higher education easier than long-term membership in traditional political organizations (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012b).

In light of the increasing diversity of young people's political participation, such as demonstrating and making petitions, a trend towards disillusionment and disengagement with political parties and politicians has been unmistakable even though the level of the drop in younger generations' voting involvement differs significantly across Europe and North America (Sloam & Henn, 2019). In presidential elections in the United States, the participation of voters aged 18 to 24 decreased from 51% in the 1960s to an average of 40% during the 1980s. In the UK, young participation peaked in the early 1990s at about 65% on average, but engagement fell precipitously after that. Europe has similar patterns (Sloam & Henn, 2019).

When we examine the time frame in which today's young voters develop their formative attitudes and voting behaviors, we can observe that they mature during a low total turnout, meaning they only know a society with low political participation. The turnout rate for these young voters is lower than predicted if the association between age and election participation were just a life cycle phenomenon (Phelps, 2005). This is because they are less likely to consider that failing to vote constitutes a grave breach of their civic responsibility. In the Netherlands, it is also evident that recent generations of young voters have reached voting age during a period of hegemonic politics in which one party, the VVD, has consistently dominated the electoral landscape. Since the same party continues to hold the majority, research has shown that many young people do not vote because they do not believe their votes would make a difference (Phelps, 2005).

However, young people are different from other citizens in more ways than just their proportion of voting involvement. A sizable body of research suggests that young people have much lower levels of political awareness and a marked lack of interest in parliamentary and electoral politics when compared to older adults (Phelps, 2005). They also have weaker loyalties to political parties and are less likely to be members of political organizations. They also seem less content with democracy, more critical of politicians, less likely to be politically active, and less likely to be politically engaged (Sloam & Henn, 2019). In other words, young people nowadays have different political views. They are distinctive because no earlier generation has displayed the participation traits they do (Phelps, 2005).

Youth voter turnout in European Parliament elections

Voter turnout was at its highest (50.7%) in more than 20 years during the most recent elections for the EP. However, the turnout was not uniform between nations and across different population groups, as a sizable portion of the youth did not vote in the most recent elections for the EP (Rainsard, 2022). Although all demographic groups showed an increase in turnout, as seen in the table below, socio-demographic analysis reveals that some groups have had higher turnout than others. In other words, the age distribution resembles that of 2014. Despite the rise in youth voting, elderly voters continue to make up a sizable portion of the electorate, with 43% of voters being 55 or older (Rainsard, 2022).

Table 4: Turnout percentages in EP elections 2014 and 2019 per age group

Age	Voted 2014	Voted 2019
16/18-24	28%	42%
24-39	35%	47%
40-54	45%	52%
55+	51%	54%

Turnout rates among various generations may vary. According to the sociology of generations, people born simultaneously may have experienced the same socio-historical occurrences that influenced their political socialization (Lefevere & Van Aelst, 2014). It is widely known that people are more receptive to outside influences in their formative years, late adolescence, and early adulthood. These socializing activities may occasionally be universal across numerous nations or regionally specific. A generation's early socialization experiences can have a lasting effect if activated throughout their

formative years. As a result, a generational or cohort effect is frequently perceived as something that persists over the life course (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012a). This is consistent with Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) habitus theory. According to Bourdieu, habitus is how individuals perceive and react to the social environment they inhabit through their routines, abilities, and character traits. Particularly during the critical period of adolescence, the outside world heavily influences the habitus (Lizardo, 2004). The voting habits of adolescents are greatly influenced by the outside environment, which in this case, results in poor voting behavior. In other words, compared to earlier generations, today's youth are maturing when they are significantly underrepresented in elections, making it less likely that they will develop the habit of voting. (Phelps, 2005). This, coupled with the second-order theory, which contends that voters perceive some elections as having less at stake, will influence their political socialization, making it less likely that they will think that failing to vote is a significant breach of their civic duty (Lefevere & Van Aelst, 2014). Due to this, present youth have a low involvement rate, particularly in the EP elections.

Underlying issues

The decrease in voter turnout in most advanced industrial democracies can be attributed to several factors. Key variables of voting behavior from earlier studies can be classified according to whether they alter starting levels, the speed of transition, or whether their primary function is to upset established patterns (Plutzer, 2002). According to cultural and electoral competitiveness theories, younger voters will turn out less frequently. Cultural justifications strongly emphasize the role of evolving views brought on by society and economic modernity. Rising living and educational levels produce citizens who value individual options more highly than traditional conformist norms are produced by rising living and educational levels (Gallego, 2009). Young people are more independent and suspicious than older individuals who are steadfastly devoted to a political party and support the government without question. The younger generations are generally less likely to trust traditional actors and political institutions (Gallego, 2009). They are more critical and well-informed citizens who are growing more upset with the shortcomings of modern representative politics, particularly the poor performance of prominent

politicians (Sloam & Henn, 2019). They do not hold the civic obligation of voting in such high regard and instead see it as one of many rights in the context of shifting ideas of responsible citizenship (Gallego, 2009). In part, because politicians place less emphasis on the policy concerns of young people, formal politics has failed to draw succeeding youth cohorts. Furthermore, young people have had minimal opportunity to influence the political parties' policy platforms, which has aggravated the gap between young people and democratic politics (Sloam & Henn, 2019).

More academics recognize that participating in politics is fundamentally a social act. The leading social network that the person participates in significantly impacts their development. Throughout the political lifespan, the dominant social network changes. During the political lifecycle, adolescence is when social ties undergo one of the most significant shifts. The young adult's departure from the family home causes a disruption in social ties and the emergence of new social networks. The restructuring of social ties has an impact on participation. The types of groups someone is part of influence their political activity. Various societal factors are at work at different points in the political lifecycle and influence varied political behavior. Leaving the nest frequently entails being influenced by a new social network, whose members vote at a lower rate than the parents (Bhatti & Hansen, 2012b). This gradual separation from the social influence of parents and the growing influence of classmates and partners impacts turnout. Young people are still engaged in politics; however, when it comes to impacting the political process, it is clear from their involvement in elections and party-based politics that they feel impotent. Additionally, they believe that the political parties and professionals charged with representing them in politics are a distant, cynical, and self-serving elite who give little thought to the issues and agendas of modern youth and find the practice of, and outcomes from, formal electorally-oriented politics to be deeply unsatisfactory (Sloam & Henn, 2019).

Methodology

Data analysis

The empirical analysis, including the background and literature review sections, is used to give the reader more information about EP elections as well as to describe the various factors that may explain the low turnout in the EP elections among the younger generation in general and the Netherlands. Based on these factors, several hypotheses are defined, which may explain the low turnout in the European elections among the younger generation in the Netherlands. The primary rationale for this emphasis point is that the Netherlands only ranks 65th in Parliamentary election voter turnout worldwide and 11th in Europe. It is hence, by European standards, in the middle (Voter Turnout Trends around the World, z.d.). Moreover, it can be seen that only 42% of the whole Dutch population voted in the recent EP elections, and only 35% were between the ages of 18 and 24 (Statista, 2022; Turnout | 2019 European election results | European Parliament, 2019). Thus, making the Dutch younger generation a compelling case to research the underlying factors that influence the voter turnout of this particular group.

For this research, the hypotheses must be measured and tested to see which hypotheses are true or false. There are two ways to analyze the hypotheses; one can use data from the individual level (surveys and interviews) or aggregated system-level data (constituency or country-level turnout rates) (Mattila, 2003). The empirical analysis in this study is based on individual-level data. There are two reasons for this; one is that this research focuses on a specific research group – people between the ages of 18 and 24. The research could solely include this specific group by conducting surveys and interviews. The second reason is that this research also wanted to focus on the opinions and experiences of the younger generation regarding EP elections, which was facilitated by conducting surveys and interviews. When the analysis concentrates on explaining turnout in the EP elections among the younger generations in the Netherlands in particular, some of the theoretical propositions are related to voting behaviour in general, and some are more directly related to the EP elections. One feature included in the interviews and survey to study the hypotheses was to focus the analysis on how the turnout in EP elections differs from

participation in national parliamentary elections in the same country. The survey and the semi-structured interviews included questions about electoral participation in EP elections, hostility towards politics, and knowledge of the EU, the EP, and its elections.

Data collection

The research can be described as a mixed-methods study using qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to analyze the various hypotheses that explain the low turnout in the EP elections among the younger generation in the Netherlands, a survey and several semi-structured interviews were conducted. By including both qualitative and quantitative data, this study was able to collect and analyze non-numerical data to understand the opinions and experiences of the younger generation regarding EP elections as well as to collect numerical data in order to depict the several factors that may explain the low turnout in EP elections among the younger generation in the Netherlands in graphs and tables.

For the analysis of the background and literature review section, the research focused on directed database research. For this, Smartcat and Google Scholar were used to look for pre-existing theories and concepts on European politics, national politics, voting behavior in general and among the youth, underlying problems in voting behavior, and (youth) voter turnout.

Participants Survey

Given the academic gap in the literature regarding the underlying reasons for the low turnout numbers in the recent EP election among the younger generation in the Netherlands, the study's objective is to determine what factors influence the low turnout. The study will thus focus on Dutch individuals between the ages of 18 and 24. The participants for this study were asked to fill out the survey voluntarily in the University WhatsApp group and on the Instagram page of the researcher. The survey was made in Google Drive with the instrument Google Forms (*Bachelor scriptie - Europees Parlement verkiezingen*, z.d.). The survey consisted of 30 open-ended and multiple-choice questions filled in anonymously. The survey included questions regarding themes such as interest in politics, hostility towards politics, knowledge of national and European politics, participation in EP elections, opinion about EU institutions,

and recommendations. With the help of these questions, what factors played a role in the low turnout in EP elections among the younger generation in the Netherlands was measured. The survey participants included males and females between 18 and 24. The participants have an education level of either MBO, HBO, or WO; unfortunately, no participants who still attended high school completed the survey. Participants around the country could fill in the survey, resulting in people from the provinces of Friesland, Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland, Utrecht, Drenthe, Groningen, and Overijssel filling out the survey. Table 5 showcases the demographics of the participants that filled out the survey. Outliers can be seen when looking at the gender, age, educational level, and political scale of the participants. The largest group consists of female participants, participants of the age of twenty-one, participants with the educational level of WO, and participants on the left side of the political scale. To ensure the participation sample is representative of a larger population, people were asked to send the survey to their friends between 18 and 24 all around the country; in other words, word-of-mouth tactics were being used (Etikan et al., 2015). A total of 30 responses were achieved, which, by the metrics provided above on age, education, and location, provide a nuanced and detailed demographic picture of youth voters in the Netherlands.

Table 5: Demographic of the participants

Participants profile	Percentages
Gender	
Female	73,3%
Male	26,7%
Age	
19	3,3%
20	33,3%
21	40%
22	13,3%

23	3,3%
24	6,7%
Educational level	
WO	60%
HBO	36,7%
MBO	3,3%
Province	
Drenthe	3,3%
Friesland	46,7%
Groningen	26,7%
Noord-Holland	10%
Overijssel	3,3%
Utrecht	3,3%
Zuid-Holland	6,7%
Left-right political scaled	
Left	60%
Centre	23,3%
Right	16,7%

Participants Interviews

The participants for the interviews were identified by the researcher based on their age and education level. Six participants were contacted, out of which six agreed to participate. The researcher established contact based on personal connections with the participants. The 15-minute in-depth interviews were designed to be semi-structured so that specific questions were posed to all participants to ensure the comparability of results. The study also ensured that the interviews were directed at the

research question while leaving room for further input and elaboration from the interviewees. A consent form was sent to every participant before the interviews. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in Dutch, making it more comfortable for participants to answer the questions and ensuring that all vital information and details were kept in translation. The interview participants were male and female between the ages of 19 and 24. Unfortunately, no participants of the age of 18 were able to participate. The participants had an education level of either MBO, HBO, or WO, with two of each educational background participating in the interview. Unfortunately, no participants who still attended secondary school filled in the survey. The interview participants were either from the province of Friesland, Groningen, or Noord-Holland. Six interviews were conducted for this research. Once finalized, All the interviews were transcribed and later coded and analyzed with the research question in mind.

Materials

Few additional materials were needed to conduct this study. For the desk research, resources accessible online were used. When doing interviews, recording devices, in the form of an integrated recording app on cell phones and laptops, to document the interviews were used. For transcribing interviews, the transcribing platform Cockatoo was used. Under Appendix B - Interview Questions, an outline of the interview guide in Dutch can be found. For the quantitative part of the study, the survey, Google Forms on Google Drive, was used to make and distribute the survey. Under Appendix B - Survey Questions is an outline of the survey in Dutch and English.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research, professionalism, respectfulness, and ethical behavior were highly significant since the researcher was in direct contact with young participants who needed to stay anonymous. The research was ethically approved by the board of ethics. In order to adhere to the ethical standards of all parties involved, a consent form was sent before every interview, as well as an explanation given on what the interview would include. All data gathered and used from the interviews

and survey was kept confidential and anonymous. After the research is finalized, all recordings shall be deleted. The disclosed information will be treated objectively and will be carefully sorted.

Results and Discussion

The results section highlights the findings of the survey and interviews that answer the research question and show which hypotheses can be validated. The results section can be divided into three themes: a general opinion about voting and voting in the EP elections, reasons for abstention, and the perception of young people of possible solutions to the problem. The reasons for not voting in the EP elections can be grouped into three main categories based on the survey and interviews, these are hostility toward politics, lack of information, and voting has no consequences. Each of these themes shows several interesting variations in the reasons the younger generations gave for not voting in the EP elections.

Voting in General in the EP Elections

The attitudes of young people towards general and EP election voting are highlighted in this section. The results of this section shed important light on participants' attitudes and voting-related behaviors. The majority of participants emphasized their sense of obligation to take part in the democratic process by describing voting as a responsibility (Survey Question 7: How do you describe voting: A responsibility: 50%, A right: 36,7%, A duty: 10%, A choice: 3,3, Appendix A: Graph 1). This result is consistent with the idea that voting is frequently seen as a civic duty, where people feel required to contribute to society through political participation. However, this does not align with the findings of Lefevere & Van Aelst (2014), who stated that young people do not feel required to contribute to society, and when they fail to vote, they do not see this as a significant breach of their civic duty. The participants also emphasized that they always cast a ballot if given the chance and permitted to do so. As one respondent stated: "I have voted on all the elections where I was allowed to vote" (Respondent 1, Interview May 2023). This does not align with H3, which states that younger generations in the Netherlands do not vote in the EP elections because they rarely or never vote.

Importantly, contrary to what Gallego (2009) said, who stated that young people do not hold the civic obligation of voting in such high regard, a large majority of participants said that voting is essential to them, demonstrating a high belief in the importance of their votes (Survey Question 6: How important is voting to you: Very important: 63,3%, somewhat important: 33,3%, unimportant 3,3%, Appendix A: Graph 2). Voting, in their eyes, is a way of taking charge of one's future and that of others around them. This observation demonstrates that participants value their potential to affect democratic processes through their involvement and believe voting can impact political outcomes. This contradicts H5, which claims that younger Dutch citizens abstain from voting in EP elections because they believe their vote has no consequences or does not change anything. Participants also emphasized the value of voting with knowledge, indicating that they appreciate the necessity to conduct research and comprehend political topics before making decisions. As one respondent stated: “Before an election, I conduct research because I want to cast a well-informed vote” (Respondent 2, Interview May 2023). This result emphasizes the participants' desire to be informed and engaged citizens. This aligns with Sloam & Henn (2019), who stated that young people are more critical and well-informed citizens. However, it does not align with H2, which asserts that younger Dutch generations abstain from voting in EP elections due to their lack of interest.

Interestingly, some participants felt that their votes did not significantly affect or influence the outcome of elections, citing the wide range of results compared to their preferences and those of their friends. As one respondent stated: “ I live in a bubble, where everybody around me votes for something similar, but every time I see that, it is a different outcome compared to where I voted for and where my friends voted for”. This corresponds with H5 and supports Phelps' (2005) assertion that younger generations have different political beliefs than most of society.

Additionally, a sizable portion of participants claimed to have little knowledge of the dates and circumstances surrounding EP elections, with the majority being ignorant of both recent and prospective elections (Survey Question 8: Did you know when the last EP elections were held and when the next European Elections will take place: No, for both: 70%, Only when the last EP elections were held: 13,3%,

Yes, for both: 10%, Only when the next EP elections will take place: 6,7%, Appendix A: Graph 3). This does support H4, which claims that younger Dutch generations do not participate in the EP elections because they are unaware of the dates on which they are held. Participants also said that they felt the EP elections were more distant and less significant than national elections, which may have further decreased their engagement (add quote). This supports H6, which claims that younger generations in the Netherlands do not participate in the EP elections because they feel distanced from the operations of the European political system.

In this study, the idea of "second-order elections" was investigated, and participants were asked if they viewed the EP elections in that way. Most participants did not consider the EP elections secondary elections (Survey Question 13: Do you see the European elections as second-order elections: No: 56,7%, Yes: 43,3%, Appendix A: Graph 4). This result refutes the second-order election theory's assertion that EP elections are less significant than national elections. Contrary to Mattila (2003), who claimed that voters give national elections more weight than the EP elections, it emphasizes the participants' awareness of them and shows that their main interests are not solely centered on national politics.

Reasons for abstention

Hostility towards politics

The results of the empirical research show that participants' interest in and engagement with Dutch and European politics varies. The majority of participants demonstrated a high degree of interest in Dutch politics, highlighting the significance of national politics and their active participation in remaining informed (Survey Question 16: How would you rate your interest in Dutch politics: Strong: 53,3%, Medium: 33,3%, Low: 10%, not at all: 3,3%, Appendix A: Graph 5). They emphasized researching and keeping up with the news, especially around election time. As one respondent stated: "I do keep myself busy with politics in the sense that I watch the news, and around election time, I do more research" (Respondent 1, Interview May 2023). A subset of people who had minimal interest and engagement in national politics, indicating their lack of drive to actively seek political knowledge or join political parties,

support Sloam & Henn's (2019) finding that young people have lower levels of political awareness and a marked lack of interest in politics.

When it comes to European politics, the majority of participants showed a lower level of interest compared to national politics (Survey Question 17: How would you rate your interest in European politics: Low: 46,7%, Medium: 36,7%, Strong: 10%, not at all: 6,7%, Appendix A: Graph 6). This result does match H2. They also admitted to having limited knowledge about the structure and institutions of the European Union (EU), feeling less connected to European politics, and perceiving European politics as more distant from their lives. As one respondent stated: “I know very little about the structure, and it does not really get to me, maybe because it stands far from you” (Respondent 4, Interview May 2023). These findings align with H6.

Participants stated having a perceived separation between their everyday lives and European decision-making processes. As one respondent stated: “The EU is a lot bigger, and it is less close to us. It feels like it does not have that much effect on my life” (Respondent 5, Interview May 2023). They also felt cut off from the immediate repercussions of EU decisions, which is consistent with H6 and Mattila (2003), who claimed people do not see EU politics as having any bearing on their own lives.

In terms of representation, participants generally disagreed with the idea that the EP represents their opinions, needs, and issues (Survey Question 25: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: you believe that the EP represents you and cares about your views, your needs, and your issues: Disagree: 33,3%, Agree: 26,7%, Do not know: 40%, Appendix A: Graph 7). They voiced skepticism about the ability of the EP to handle their issues adequately. This result supports Mattila's (2003) assertion that people do not believe the EP represents their interests. It also aligns with H1, which claims that younger generations in the Netherlands do not participate in the EP elections because they lack confidence in or dissatisfaction with European politics.

Most participants indicated support for the EU and a sense of connection to the EU. However, they felt less a part of particular EU political parties due to not knowing about them. Participant's inability

to connect with the parties due to ignorance of their existence is consistent with H6. However, participants indicated they would be open to conducting additional research on parties during election seasons.

Lack of information

The findings of this section provide insights into the participants' awareness of messages encouraging people to vote in the EP elections and their perception of the diffusion of information about the EU parliament and its elections. Most of the participants communicated dissatisfaction with the information provided on the EU parliament and its elections, stating that it is not diffused correctly for them to be informed of the upcoming elections and the parties running in them (Survey Question 24: Do you feel that information regarding the EU parliament and its election is sufficiently diffused for you to be aware of upcoming elections and the parties involved: No, not really: 53,3%, No, not at all: 26,7%, Yes definitely: 13,3%, Do not know: 3,3%, Yes to some extent: 3,3%, Appendix A: Graph 8). This finding highlights a need for improvement to reach the younger generation and aligns with H1.

These findings will significantly impact the EU and connected institutions' communication and outreach initiatives. The need for more effective communication efforts aimed at the general public is highlighted by the dissatisfaction with the dissemination of information, especially in the context of elections for the EP. Alternative channels and approaches should be investigated in order to reach younger generations.

Vote has no consequences

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the participants' perceptions of the importance and impact of their vote in the EP elections. Most of the participants agreed that their voice counts in the EU, indicating that they believe their vote holds value (Survey Question 26: Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement: my voice counts in the EU: Agree: 63,3%, Total disagree: 13,3%, Do not know: 23,3%, Appendix A: Graph 9). They recognized that even though their vote is one among many, it contributes to the overall democratic process and helps shape the policies that impact their daily lives. These findings do not align with H5, which states that younger generations in the

Netherlands do not vote in the EP elections because they believe their vote has no consequences or does not change anything.

When assessing participants' level of engagement and interest in voting, the majority reported feeling engaged and interested in participating in the EP elections. However, the other participants, which is a significant portion, expressed disconnection and disinterest (Survey Question 27: Do you feel engaged and interested in voting in the EP elections or do you feel disconnected and uninterested in voting: Engaged and interested: 63,3%, Disconnected and uninterested: 36,7%, Appendix A: Graph 10). These findings highlight a potential gap in engagement among the participants, indicating that a substantial number of individuals may not be sufficiently motivated or interested in the electoral process, which does not align with H2.

Nevertheless, when participants were asked about the usefulness of voting in the EP elections, the majority considered it to be useful (Survey Question 28: Do you feel that voting in the EP elections is useful: Yes: 83,3%: No: 16,7%, Appendix A: Graph 11). Participants noted that the rules and policies enacted in the EP significantly impact their daily lives, and voting was seen as a means to shape those policies and express their opinions, which does not align with H5.

However, some participants expressed skepticism regarding the usefulness of voting in the EP elections. They felt that the EP's influence within the EU was limited, and their votes had minimal impact given the large number of voters involved, thus making them feel disconnected and sometimes uninterested in voting. As one respondent stated: “ I think it has little impact because, in an extensive group of millions of people, you are one vote within the election” (Respondent 5, Interview May 2023). This aligns with H5. Some participants also mentioned the perceived distance between themselves and the EP, which further contributed to their skepticism about the usefulness of voting, which aligns with H6.

Recommendations

This section highlights the perception of young people about possible solutions to the problem of younger generations not voting in EP elections. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into

the factors that can increase participants' interest in European politics and motivate them to vote in the EP elections. Most participants wanted more accessible and transparent information about the EP and its elections. As one respondent stated: "I will get more interested in the EP elections if I get more accessible and clear information" (Respondent 3, Interview May 2023). Participants emphasized the need for educational efforts that explain how the EP functions, the kind of influence it holds, the decisions it makes, and its impact on their daily lives. They also highlighted the importance of understanding why their voice counts and voting in the EP elections is significant. This indicates a potential gap in knowledge and awareness that could be addressed through targeted information campaigns.

Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of advertising and marketing efforts to increase awareness and interest in the EP and its elections. They suggested using various media platforms, such as posters, television, radio, and social media, to promote information about the EP and its elections. Trust in the influence of the EP and its responsiveness to participants' needs was another factor mentioned by participants, which also aligns with Mattila (2003), who claimed that young people believe that political parties and politicians pay little regard to the concerns and agendas of the youth. The participants expressed a desire for greater confidence that the EP listens to their concerns rather than being driven solely by financial interests. This suggests that building trust and enhancing transparency in the decision-making processes of the EP could play a role in motivating individuals to vote.

The majority of the participants also expressed a belief that mandatory voting in the Netherlands for the EP elections would be beneficial (Survey Question 31: Do you believe that mandatory voting in the Netherlands would be beneficial for the EP elections: Yes: 50%, No: 26,7, Do not Know: 23,3%, Appendix A: Graph 12). Future research could explore the potential impacts of mandatory voting on voter turnout and engagement in EP elections.

Limitations

This section details the study paper's limitations. Although the study's methodology was successful, it is important to remember that its flaws could affect the results. To start, even though the

survey and interviews were valuable instruments for gathering data for this study, they did have some limitations. The most frequent flaws include respondents filling out surveys inaccurately because they do not understand the questions or over-reporting their answers during interviews; both issues significantly impact the results (Fraga & Holbein, 2020). Additionally, this study underrepresents individuals with lower levels of education, in this case, those with an education level of MBO. Furthermore, individuals still in secondary school were not included in this study because no one from this category participated in the surveys and interviews. These groups' absences or underrepresentation could have resulted in aggregated or overstated results. In surveys, younger age groups are also frequently underrepresented, which may hide some fascinating findings about the sentiments of the youngest voters (Herzog & Rodgers, 1988). It should be noted that neither the survey nor the interviews in this study included any participants under 18. The same holds for people above 24, which may hide some intriguing facts about the perspectives of people of these ages. The fact that a sizable portion of participants indicated that age limits were the main reason they did not vote in the previous EP elections was another problem this study ran across. As a result, we currently have less information about the variables that influenced voter turnout in the most recent EP elections. The study may speak with older individuals qualified to vote in the most recent elections for the EP to address this issue.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study clarifies several issues regarding younger generations' perspectives, awareness, and voting patterns during the EP elections. Three key factors—hostility toward politics, a lack of knowledge, and the belief that voting has no repercussions—can be attributed to the low participation rate among this demographic group. These results offer intriguing new information about the underlying causes of the lower involvement of younger generations in the EP elections.

The research supports the hypothesis (H1) because it shows that younger generations lack confidence in the EP's ability to address their concerns adequately and because most participants voiced dissatisfaction with how information about the EU parliament and its elections has been disseminated.

However, the study's findings contradict hypothesis (H2), as they indicate that although the younger generation is interested in a lesser extent in European politics compared to national politics, they are still informed and engaged citizens. Furthermore, contrary to hypothesis (H3), the data shows that younger generations are motivated to vote if given the chance. However, their insufficient understanding of the dates and circumstances surrounding EP elections supports the hypothesis (H4), emphasizing the need for more information and instruction. The study also demonstrates that while the majority of younger generations believe in the power of voting to influence political outcomes and democratic processes, a proportion of the participants have the perception that the EP has limited influence within the EU. This variation in the results calls into question hypothesis (H5) into question and points to the need for additional study to support it. The results also support the hypothesis (H6) since they show that younger generations feel less connected to European politics and regard the EP elections as distant and less relevant. As a result, it appears that the low rate of youth participation in the EP elections in the Netherlands is primarily attributable to a lack of confidence in or dissatisfaction with European politics, a lack of knowledge about the date of the EP election, and a sense of disconnection from the workings of the European political system.

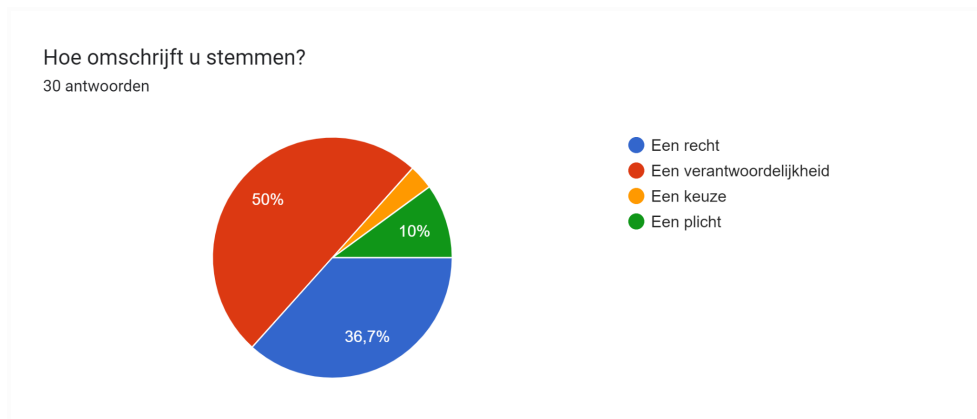
Efforts to address the problem of low turnout should concentrate on increasing awareness and educating about the EP elections and their impact on daily life. Building trust and confidence in the EP can be facilitated by improving transparency, responsiveness, and representation within the body. Customized campaigns that use various media outlets, convey accurate information, and highlight the importance of the EP to younger generations can help increase voter turnout and involvement. Future studies can examine the efficacy of measures designed to address these issues and their bearing on voter turnout in EP elections.

In sum, three factors primarily contribute to the low voter turnout among the younger generation in the Netherlands in EP elections. Voter turnout may be raised by putting some of the suggestions mentioned above into practice, which is a crucial and essential step if the Europe of the future is to reflect the ideals and desires of the generation of today.

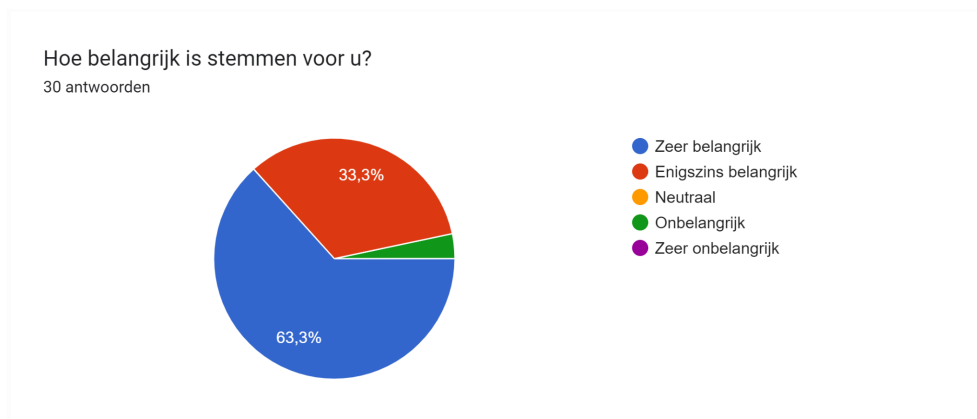
Appendix

Appendix A - Graphs and Figures

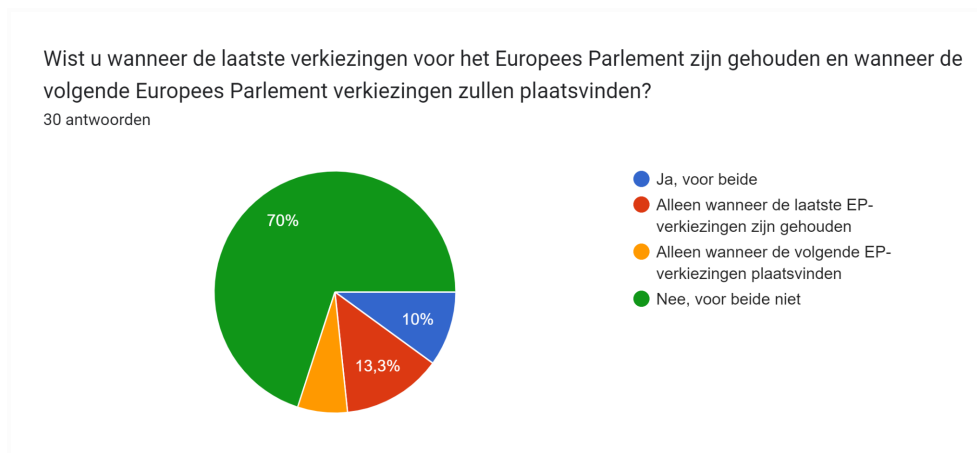
Graph 1



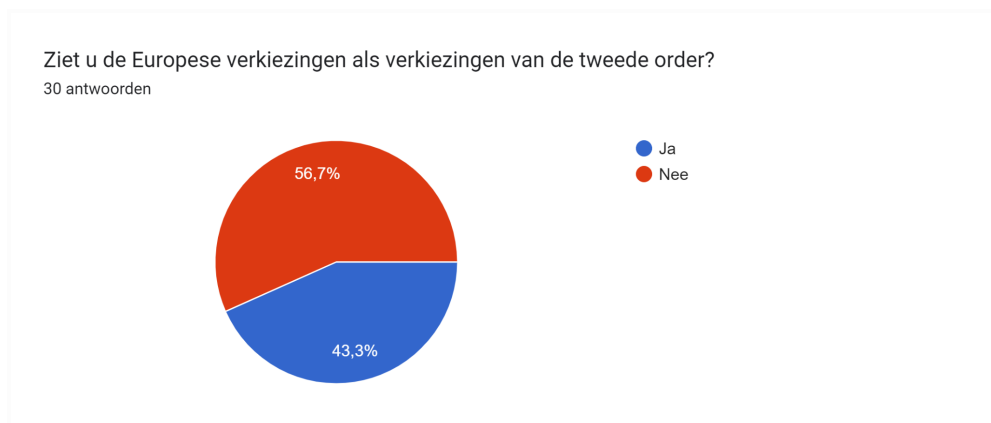
Graph 2



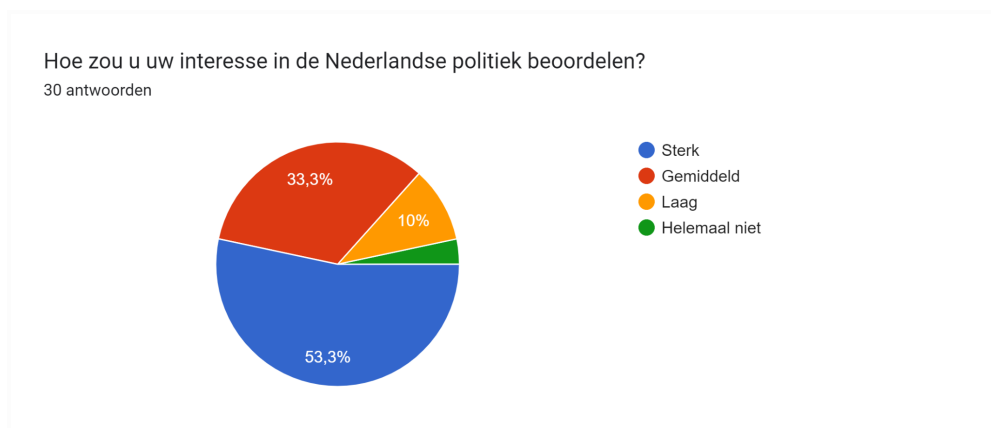
Graph 3



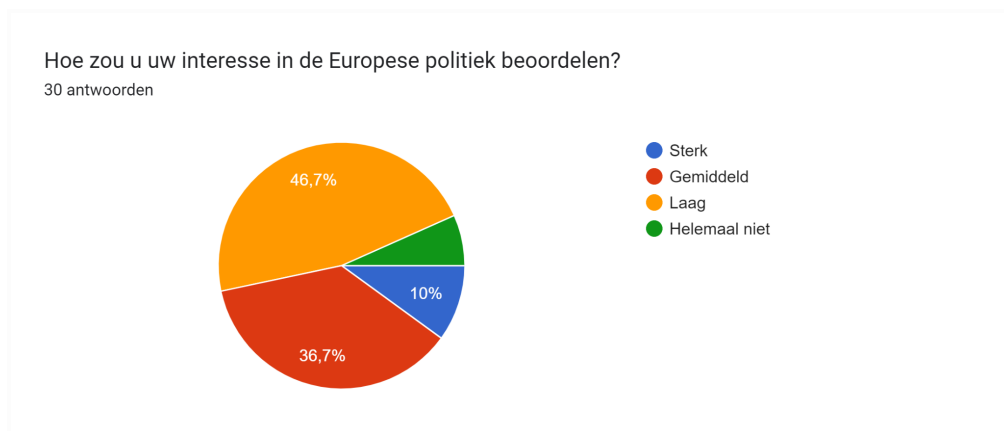
Graph 4



Graph 5



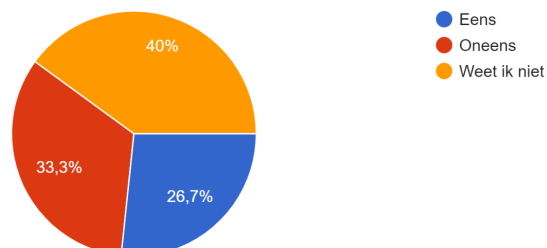
Graph 6



Graph 7

Bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stelling: u gelooft dat het Europees Parlement u vertegenwoordigt en geeft om uw standpunten, uw behoeften en uw problemen.

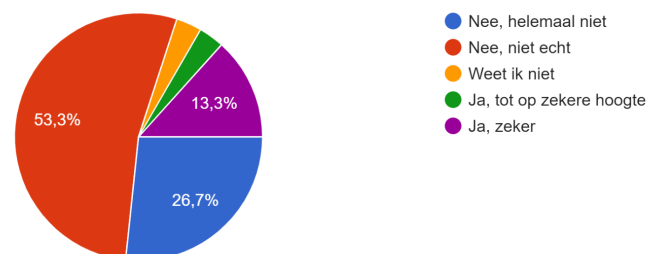
30 antwoorden



Graph 8

Vindt u dat de informatie over het EU-parlement en zijn verkiezing voldoende verspreid is om op de hoogte te zijn van aanstaande verkiezingen en de betrokken partijen?

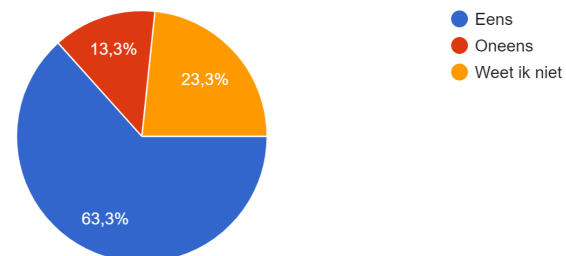
30 antwoorden



Graph 9

Bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stelling: mijn stem telt in de EU.

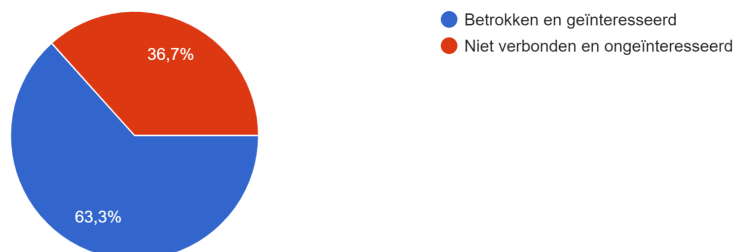
30 antwoorden



Graph 10

Voelt u zich betrokken en geïnteresseerd in het stemmen bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement of voelt u zich niet verbonden en niet geïnteresseerd in stemmen?

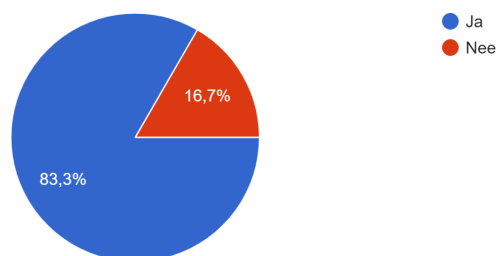
30 antwoorden



Graph 11

Vindt u dat stemmen bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement nuttig is?

30 antwoorden



Graph 12

Denkt u dat stemplicht in Nederland gunstig zou zijn voor de verkiezingen van het Europees Parlement?

30 antwoorden

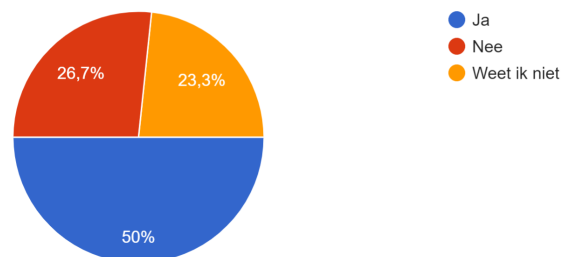
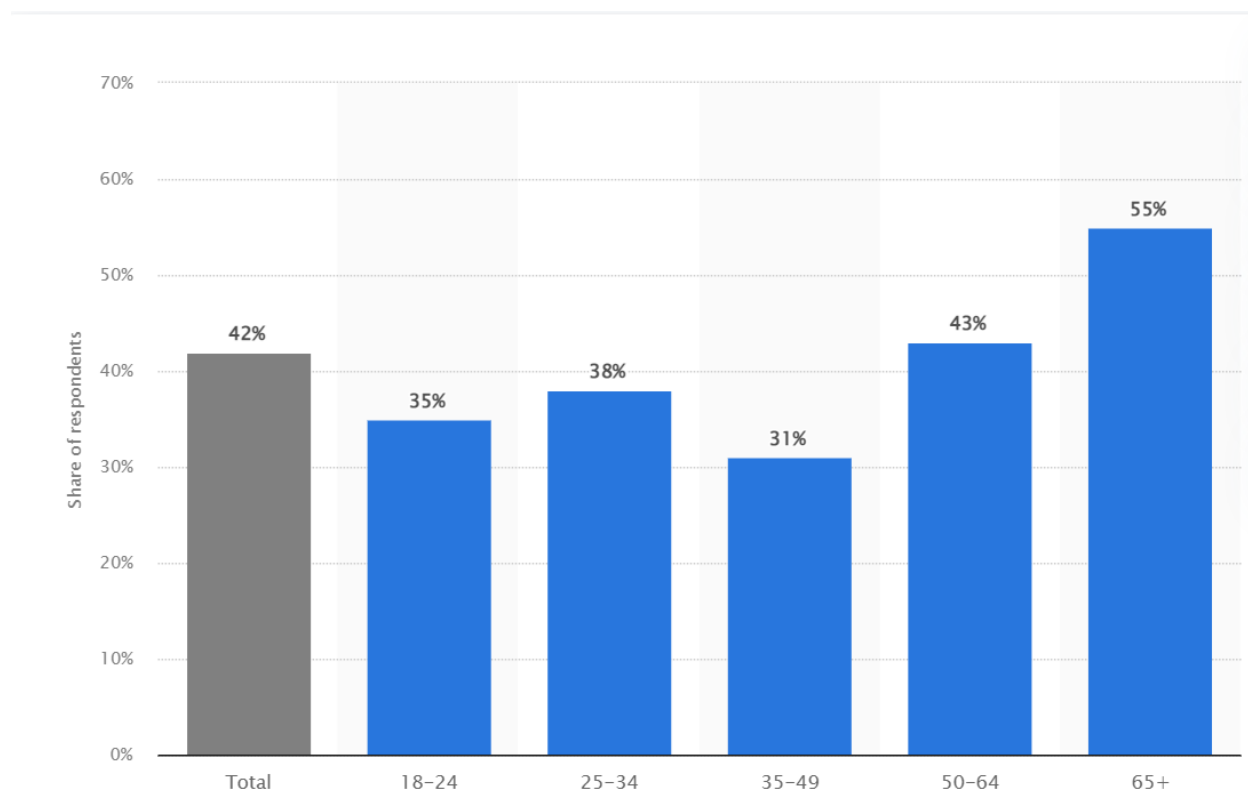


Figure 1: European elections voter turnout in the Netherlands 2019, by age (Statista, 2022)



Appendix B - Survey and Interview Questions

Survey Questions

Survey Questions: English

Personal questions

1. What is your gender (male/female/non-binary/prefer not to answer)
2. What is your age (open question)
3. What is your education level (high school/MBO/HBO/WO)
4. In which province do you live? (open question)
5. Are you left, center, or right-wing on the political scale (left/center/right/no preference/prefer not to answer)

Questions about the European Union and voting

1. How important is voting to you? (extremely, very, somewhat, a little, not at all)
2. How do you describe voting (a right, a responsibility, a choice, a duty)
3. Did you know when the last European Parliament elections were held and when the next European Elections will take place? (yes, for both, only when the last EP elections were held/only when the next EP elections will take place/no, for both)
4. Did you vote in the last European elections? (yes/no)
5. Did you vote in the last national elections? (yes/no)
6. When did you decide NOT to vote in the recent European Parliament elections? (you never vote, you decided a few months before the elections, you decided a few weeks before the elections, you decided a few days before the elections, you decided on the day of the elections, I don't know/voted)
7. Why did you vote in the national elections but not in the European Parliament elections (open question) → (leave blank if you voted for both/did not vote in any of the elections/only voted in the European elections)
8. Do you see the European elections as second-order elections? (yes/no)
9. What are the main reasons why you did NOT vote in the recent European Parliament elections? (open question)
10. What are the main reasons why you would decide to vote in the recent European Parliament elections? (max. 3 answers) (this is your duty as citizens/you always vote/you are in favor of the EU/to support the political party you feel close to/you can make things change in voting in the European Parliament elections/to express your disagreement/you feel European or citizens of the EU/to support the Dutch government/to express disapproval of the Dutch government/to influence the choice of the president of the European Commission/the EU plays an important role in your everyday life/to express disapproval of the EU/you are very interested in European

politics/affairs/the information you received during the campaign convinced you to vote/because voting is compulsory/other/don't know/didn't vote) (please explain)

Underlying problems

Category 1 – hostility towards politics

1. How would you rate your interest in Dutch politics? (strong/medium/low/not at all)
2. How would you rate your interest in European politics? (strong/medium/low/not at all)
3. What is your opinion about the Netherlands' membership in the EU? (a good thing/a bad thing/neither a good thing nor a bad thing/I don't know)
4. Do you view the EU in a positive or negative manner? (yes/no/I don't know/no preference)
5. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: you believe that the European Parliament represents you and cares about your views, your needs, and your issues (agree/disagree)
6. Does the European Parliament's politics and elections address the needs of young people? (yes, definitely/ yes, somewhat/neutral/no, not really/ no, not at all/ don't know)

Category 2 – lack of information

1. Personally, do you remember having seen on TV, on the internet/social media, on posters, read in newspapers, or heard on the radio messages encouraging people to vote in the European Parliament elections? (yes/no)
2. Do you feel that information regarding the EU parliament and its election is sufficiently diffused for you to be aware of upcoming elections and the parties involved? (no, not at all/no, not really/don't know/yes to some extent/yes definitely)

Category 3 – vote has no consequences

1. Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: my voice counts in the EU (total agree, total disagree, don't know)
2. Do you feel engaged and interested in voting in the European Parliament elections or do you feel disconnected and uninterested in voting (engaged and interested/disconnected and uninterested)
3. Do you feel that voting in the European parliament elections is useful? (yes/no: please explain your response)

Recommendations

1. What could be done to increase your interest in European Politics? (open question)
2. Do you believe that mandatory voting in the Netherlands would be beneficial for the European Parliament elections? (yes/no/don't know)
3. What would motivate you to vote in the European Parliament elections (open question)

Survey questions - Dutch translation

Personelijke vragen

1. Wat is uw geslacht? (man/vrouw/wil ik niet zeggen/anders, namelijk)
2. Wat is uw leeftijd? (open vraag)
3. Wat is uw opleidingsniveau? (Middelbare school/MBO/HBO/WO)
4. In welke provincie bent u woonachtig? (open vraag)
5. Identificeer uw meer als links, rechts of in het midden op de politieke schaal?
(links/rechts/midden/wil ik niet zeggen)

Vragen over de Europese Parlement en stemmen

1. Hoe belangrijk is stemmen voor u? (zeer belangrijk, enigszins belangrijk/neutraal/onbelangrijk/zeer onbelangrijk)
2. Hoe omschrijft u stemmen (een recht/een verantwoordelijkheid, een keuze, een plicht)

3. Wist u wanneer de laatste verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement zijn gehouden en wanneer de volgende Europese Parlement verkiezingen zullen plaatsvinden? (ja, voor beide/alleen wanneer de laatste EP-verkiezingen zijn gehouden/alleen wanneer de volgende EP-verkiezingen plaatsvinden/nee, voor beide niet)
4. Heeft u gestemd bij de laatste Europese Parlement verkiezingen? (ja/nee)
5. Heeft u gestemd bij de laatste landelijke verkiezingen? (ja/nee)
6. Wanneer besloot u NIET te stemmen bij de recente verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement? (u stemt nooit/u besloot een paar maanden voor de verkiezingen/u besloot een paar weken voor de verkiezingen/u besloot een paar dagen voor de verkiezingen/u besloot op de dag van de verkiezingen/u weet het niet/u stemde in de verkiezingen)
7. Waarom heeft u gestemd bij de nationale verkiezingen maar niet bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement (open vraag) → blanco laten als u voor beide heeft gestemd/niet heeft gestemd bij beide verkiezingen/alleen heeft gestemd bij de Europese verkiezingen)
8. Ziet u de Europese verkiezingen als verkiezingen van de tweede order? (ja/nee)
9. Wat zijn de belangrijkste redenen waarom u NIET heeft gestemd bij de recente verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement? (open vraag)
10. Wat zijn de belangrijkste redenen waarom u zou besluiten te gaan stemmen bij de opkomende verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement? (max. 3 antwoorden) (Stemmen is een plicht als burger/u stemt altijd/u bent voor de EU/om de politieke partij te steunen waarmee u zich verbonden voelt/u kunt dingen veranderen door te stemmen bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement/om uw onvrede kenbaar te maken/u voelt zich Europeaan of burger van de EU/de Nederlandse regering steunen/de Nederlandse regering afkeuren/de keuze van de voorzitter van de Europese Commissie beïnvloeden/de EU speelt een belangrijke rol in uw dagelijks leven/om afkeuring uit te spreken over de EU/u bent zeer geïnteresseerd in Europese politiek/de informatie die u tijdens de campagne heeft gekregen heeft u ervan overtuigd om te gaan stemmen/anders, namelijk/ weet ik niet)

Onderliggende problemen

Categorie 1 - vijandigheid tegenover de politiek

1. Hoe zou u uw interesse in de Nederlandse politiek beoordelen? (sterk/gemiddeld/laag/helemaal niet)
2. Hoe zou u uw interesse in de Europese politiek beoordelen? (sterk/gemiddeld/laag/helemaal niet)
3. Wat is uw mening over het lidmaatschap van Nederland in de EU? (een goede zaak/een slechte zaak/noch een goede noch een slechte zaak/ik weet het niet)
4. Kijkt u positief of negatief naar de EU? (positief/negatief/ik weet het niet/geen voorkeur) + extra vraag: verklaar u antwoord
5. Bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stelling: u gelooft dat het Europees Parlement u vertegenwoordigt en geeft om uw standpunten, uw behoeften en uw problemen (eens/oneens/weet ik niet)
6. Volgens u, komen de politiek en de verkiezingen van het Europees Parlement tegemoet aan de behoeften van jongeren? (ja, zeker/ ja, enigszins/ neutraal/ nee, niet echt/ nee, helemaal niet/weet ik niet) + extra vraag: verklaar u antwoord.

Categorie 2 - gebrek aan informatie

1. Kunt u zich persoonlijk herinneren dat u op tv, op internet/sociale media, op posters, in kranten of op de radio berichten hebt gezien die mensen aanmoedigen om te stemmen bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement? (Ja/nee)
2. Vindt u dat de informatie over het EU-parlement en zijn verkiezing voldoende verspreid is om op de hoogte te zijn van aanstaande verkiezingen en de betrokken partijen? (nee, helemaal niet/nee, niet echt/weet niet/ja tot op zekere hoogte/ja zeker)

Categorie 3 - stemmen heeft geen gevolgen

1. Bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stelling: mijn stem telt in de EU (eens/oneens/weet ik niet)

2. Voelt u zich betrokken en geïnteresseerd in het stemmen bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement of voelt u zich niet verbonden en niet geïnteresseerd in stemmen (betrokken en geïnteresseerd/niet verbonden en ongeïnteresseerd)
3. Vindt u dat stemmen bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement nuttig is? (ja/nee: licht uw antwoord toe)

Aanbevelingen

1. Wat zou er kunnen worden gedaan om uw interesse in Europese politiek te vergroten? (open vraag)
2. Denkt u dat stemplicht in Nederland gunstig zou zijn voor de verkiezingen van het Europees Parlement? (ja/nee/weet ik niet)
3. Wat zou u motiveren om te gaan stemmen bij de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement (open vraag)

Interview Questions - Dutch translation

Interesse in politiek

1. Kunt u me vertellen over u interesse in de politiek, hoe belangrijk is bijvoorbeeld stemmen en verkiezingen voor u?
 - Bent u ook even geïnteresseerd in de Europese politiek?
 - Wat is voor u het verschil tussen de Europese Parlement verkiezingen en de landelijke verkiezingen?
 - Is er een reden dat u niet bij beide verkiezingen heeft gestemd?
2. Als de geïnterviewde niet heeft gestemd bij de laatste Europese Parlement verkiezingen
 - Zijn er specifieke redenen waarom u NIET heeft gestemd bij de recente verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement?
3. Wat zou voor u de reden zijn om te gaan stemmen bij de volgende Europese Parlement verkiezingen?

Reden om niet te stemmen

4. Wat denkt u dat de meest voorkomende redenen is dat mensen niet gaan stemmen in de Europese verkiezingen

Categorie 1 - vijandigheid tegenover de politiek

5. Hoe kijkt u naar de Europese Unie en het Europees Parlement? Wat is u mening over deze twee instanties?
6. Voelt u zich verbonden met de Europese Unie en de partijen die hierbij horen? Waarom wel waarom niet?
7. Wat is u mening over de Europese Politiek en de verkiezingen van het Europees Parlement als het aankomt op hun tegemoetkoming van de behoeften van jongeren?

Categorie 2 - gebrek aan informatie

8. Wat is u mening over de verspreiding van informatie over het EU-parlement en zijn verkiezing?

Categorie 3 - stemmen heeft geen gevolgen

9. Wat is u mening over de impact die u stem heeft bij de Europese Parlementsverkiezingen?

Aanbevelingen

10. Wat zou er voor u moeten worden gedaan om uw interesse in Europese politiek te vergroten?

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