




Maintaining interest in elections will require innovation

The number of young people voting in General and local elections has been declining for some time but has picked up since 2015. Many young people want to participate, care about what happens in the political arena, and plan to participate. But they find doing so too difficult to actually follow through on their good intentions.

According to research carried out by Webroots Democracy, a UK campaigning organisation, the introduction of an online voting option in the UK could yield the following benefits:

-  Boost turnout in a General Election by up to 9 million, increasing it to 79%.
-  Boost the young voter turnout in a General Election by up to 1.8 million, increasing total turnout to 70%.
-  Reduce the cost per vote by a third and provide long-term savings of £12.8 million.

In the US, a group of tech leaders suggested new ways to encourage voting, including creating politicians' scorecards; enabling voting from a mobile device; using blockchain to restore trust and build efficiency; improving security of the voting process; a traceable voting system to link people with devices and simplified on-line registration.

Meanwhile moves to lower the voting age in the UK continue. Votes at 16 and 17 came into force on in June last year, as part of the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020. The 2021 Senedd elections will be the first in which 16 and 17 year olds and legally resident foreign nationals are allowed to vote in Wales, in a major expansion of the franchise. Around 65,000 16 and 17 year olds are expected to benefit. 16 and 17 year olds can already vote in Scotland for all non-Westminster elections.