A Vote of Frustration?

Young Voters in the UK General Election 2019[1]

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The youth effect in the General Election 2019: exploring demographic and experiential specificity

Scholars have long understood the importance of the elections that take place during the early years of adulthood. For instance, Butler and Stokes (1974) critically showed that the electoral choice of our early elections could shape our life-long partisan preferences. Moreover, Bruter and Harrison (2020, and 2017) suggest that turnout in one of the first two elections when a citizen is eligible to vote will equally durably shape their political participation for years to come. At the same time, a lot of attention has been devoted to the extent to which young people converge with or depart from the preferences of other generations when it comes to electoral preferences. In the UK, that question has been particularly prominent since the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union in 2016. This divisive political moment revealed the amplitude of the rift between younger and older generations and continues to linger in the British political debate. The UK General Election of 2019, the third consecutive major national vote in three years presented a unique test of whether such a rift still existed and what it entails.

Two key models are usually presented to explain on the one hand, so-called "generational effects" (different generations, with preference gaps that will not reduce over time) and "life-cycle effects" that are based on stages of life and can explain how young people will ultimately converge towards the attitudes and behaviours of their older counterparts when they eventually reach the same age (see for example, Tilley and Evans, 2014. Grasso, 2014, 2016, Neundorf and Niemi 2014, among others).

However, I argue that there may be another distinction which may be worth exploring, that is, whether age differences can be perceived as "demographic" or "experiential". In this sense, I compare the attitudes and behaviours of first-time voters versus young people in the context of

the UK General Election 2019. The existing literature typically assumes that age effects (be they generational or life cycle) can be explained mostly by demographics.

The opportunity to highlight and explore this distinction between first-time voters and other young voters is unique because existing datasets do not encompass this scope. In the vast majority of general population surveys where young people are compared to the rest of the population, at most, only a few dozens of cases might correspond to first-time voters and those would not be representative of first-time voters in the country in general. As a result, this critically understudied sub-group of the population is often overlooked, mainly due to insufficient *N* in most general population surveys. To answer those limitations, here I use unique new data, which includes a separate boosted sample of 500 young people eligible to vote for the first-time in a general election. This enables me to test experiential differences (first-time voters versus the rest) and separate them from demographic differences (young people versus the rest) to see which type of difference explains several known and unknown differences between age groups.

The implications of this type of analysis are indeed consequential. For instance, in the context of the debate on lowering the voting age to 16, any demographic difference would suggest that lowering the age of franchise would bring more immature voters into the system. By contrast, any suggestion that differences are experiential would mean, instead, that lowering the voting age brings maturity to the electorate earlier and thus may help consolidate (rather than undermine) democracy.

In an electoral context, what is meant by a "young person", however, is not necessarily as obvious as it may first sound. First of all, when it comes to differences between the behaviour of members of different age groups in an election, it is worth remembering that the political behaviour literature has long differentiated between life cycle and generational effects (Dalton,

1977, Henn et al., 2002, Jennings and Niemi, 2014, Smets, 2016). In other words, when looking at the youth vote in the 2019 General Election and its specificity, a question will always pertain to youth specificities that relate to age and may recede once young people grow older as opposed to phenomena which differentiate the current generation of young voters from preceding cohorts and which are here to remain. Second, it is important to differentiate between people who are "young" and those who are "new" to electoral democracy, i.e. first-time voters. This distinction alone will also enable us to separate between the two types of age-related effects discussed above, and the specific idiosyncrasy of the first electoral experience and the embracement of full democratic rights.

I thus approach the question of young people in the 2019 UK General Election with several unique considerations in mind. To start with, I compare not only young voters (aged 18-29) to other generations but also distinguish between first-time voters specifically and the rest of the young cohort. Secondly, I am not only interested in the two most ubiquitous dependent variables of the electoral literature – i.e. turnout and electoral choice - but also in understanding how young people's electoral psychology and notably phenomena such as democratic frustration and the perception of group dynamics (including questions of integration or marginalisation vis-a-vis other parts of the populations) were experienced and expressed by young voters in this fourth national vote in the space of four and half years.

I use unique data that was collected by the Electoral Psychology Observatory as part of a large panel study survey conducted for the UK General Election 2019. Uniquely, we studied the electoral experience, emotions, attitudes, and behaviour of both the British population in general with a representative sample of the country's general population and a specific sub-

sample of first-time voters that had never had an opportunity to participate in a first order election before the December General Election [2].

I introduce concepts such as democratic frustration and electoral hostility to understand the electoral psychology and experience of young British citizens in the General Election 2019 and to compare these findings with other generations. This nuanced analysis will also enable us to better understand to what extent a crisis may still surround the place of young British citizens in their democracy and the question of whether generational fractures may continue to shape national political debates for years to come.

From the psychological nature of frustration to the challenge of turnout estimations

Established and new democracies alike are increasingly confronted by a recurrent trend: citizens are disillusioned and disappointed by their democratic institutions. Insights derived from the psychology literature (see for example, Sorensen, 1982, Brooks, 1985, Kim, 2018) can help us to understand the increasingly fraught and frustrating nature of citizens' interaction with their democratic systems. I argue that this concept should be perhaps taken more literally and conceptualised in a systematic and empirical way to disentangle the perceived democratic crisis Frustration as a psychological concept is widely acknowledged that has a rather specific nature, in that, the strength of an existing desire is as important as an individual's sense that it is unfulfilled, as such, it is often defined as a 'failure to satisfy a motive' (Underwood, 1949)]. That centrality of desire is of critical importance because it suggests that an individual will not

[2] Overall survey sample: 2004 respondents, including 130 respondents aged under 29, separate first-time voter sample: 501 respondents. Fieldwork main survey: 19-21/12/2019. Fieldwork first-time voter sample: 20/12/2019 - 24/01/2020. All fieldwork conducted online by Opinium.

feel frustrated about something that they do not care about, and the potential for frustration increases the more one cares about something.

Specifically, Harrison (2020) suggests that citizens become frustrated when a perceived democratic delivery deficit interacts with a strong democratic expectation or desire. In that sense, the paradox of citizens' frustration (as opposed to criticality or disengagement) will stem from necessarily strong democratic desire and expectations. Young people are often most vocal in their expression of democratic frustration often criticising how democracy works and what is has to offer them but also the most idealistic in terms of what it should deliver and what is expected from it. This interactive nature means that those with higher expectations, will care more about negatively perceived delivery, which in turn is more likely to compound the expression of frustration. In the lead up to the General Election 2019, a consequence of rising levels of frustration was noted by Bruter and Harrison (2020) as electoral hostility, i.e. negative feelings towards regular citizens who vote (or are perceived to vote) differently from the hostile citizen. Unlike affective polarisation, this model does not even assume that it is strongly partisan people who start resenting others, but often those claiming that they do not even care about politics. Moreover, we define electoral hostility as negative feelings (frustration, anger, contempt, disgust) held towards individuals or groups as a result of their effective or perceived electoral preferences. It may occur in the campaign, post-election, and reinforce into self-perpetuating cycles of hostility (Bruter and Harrison, 2020). Since the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, political divisions within society have largely been presented as a generational divide, with old people preferring to support the Leave campaign, whilst young citizens were described as overwhelmingly pro-remain. Whilst this crude and oversimplified presentation of fracture lines this insistent and repeated characterisation could easily infiltrate perceptions of who the electoral 'other' is. Thus, it is crucial to understand both

the sources of frustration and electoral hostility in an increasingly divided society that was sent to the polls in the winter of 2019.

I am thus interested not only in measuring the levels of hostility of young citizens and comparing it to that of older voters, but also in understanding whether young citizens tend to primarily associate electoral others to different age groups or to other potentially relevant social, political, and demographic division lines such as urbanity, social categories, regional characteristics and more.

Methodologically, the study of young people in elections is fraught with difficulties. Firstly, there is no consensus in the literature on what are the boundaries of "youth" in a study of elections. The most widely used age criteria focus on the 18-24 and 18-29 brackets (or sometimes 16-24 or 16-29 in countries where the electoral franchise starts at 16). In the context of this article, we use the latter but also focus on the separate category of first-time voters who have never had an opportunity to vote in a first order election before (ie typically 18-20 in this case).

Additionally, a constant difficulty pertains to the estimation of youth turnout. The problem here is that most group turnout estimates rely on survey responses (including exit polls), but respondents routinely over-claim participation which means that surveys use a weighting system to recreate a realistic model of turnout. However, as noted by Harrison (2018), one issue with those procedures is that surveys typically ask citizens if they participated in the election or not without controlling for registration, whilst turnout is calculated on the basis of registered voters only[3]. Young people aged 18-24 are very significantly less likely to be registered than other generations, which means that young people who are not registered (and therefore not

[3] In July 2014, the Electoral Commission confirmed that 'younger people (under 35) are considerably less likely to be registered' with only 70.2% of 20-24-year olds on electoral registers, against 95.5% of those over 65 (LSE, 2017)

part of formal turnout calculations) often risk being wrongly counted as abstentionists[4]. Because of the weighting process, this can even disproportionately overestimate the abstention of young citizens vis-a-vis other categories where non-registration is a far more marginal problem and where the proportion of the voters out of the total population is thus a lot closer to a correct estimation of the proportion of voters out of the registered population.

I confront that issue by controlling for registration in the survey and thus excluding citizens who are not electorally registered (or who are ineligible to vote) from turnout and electoral choice calculations, including in the weighting calculations. Let us now first turn to the electoral participation and choice of first-time and young voters in the 2019 General Election.

The participation and electoral choice of young and first-time voters in the 2019 General Election

First, let us consider the turnout. The fact that young people are less likely to vote than the rest of the population is of course well known and confirmed in the figures derived from the election survey we conducted. Table 15.1 shows that after controlling for registration, turnout is reported to be 51% amongst young voters and 52% among first-time voters, a significantly lower level of participation compared to a reported turnout of 67% for the population of over 30s.

Table 15.1 about here

[4] Young people between the ages of 18 and 34 are less likely to be registered to vote. One in three weren't registered on the electoral roll in September 2019, compared to 17% of the general population that hadn't signed up to cast their ballot yet. (BBC, 2019)

Most crucially, however, a constant and critical difference between young people and the rest of the population is that young people are far less likely to choose to vote by post than in person. Table 15.1 also illustrates the mode of voting amongst the three age categories. Among the over-30s age group, a third of those who voted in the election did so by post. However, among those aged under 29, that proportion was down to 22% and 21% amongst first-time voters. Those findings echo those of Cammaerts, Bruter et al. (2014, 2016) as well as Bruter and Harrison (2020) who confirm that young people who vote are far keener than the rest of the population to fully experience the polling station atmosphere and less likely to choose remote voting options. This is notably true of first-time voters who see the election as a "first-time" alongside many other coming of age experiences of their teenage years. In that generation, the excitement of the experience is therefore a far stronger mobilising factor than the duty to vote, and it weighs disproportionately in favour of in station voting whilst limiting the appeal of postal votes which experiential value is perceived as far less fulfilling.

In terms of electoral choice, table 15.2 confirms the tendency of young voters to support Labour more than other age groups in the General Election 2019. The findings here suggest that 58% of first-time voters and 62% of young voters cast a vote for Labour in the election whilst only 30% of those aged 30 and over made a similar choice. The Green vote was similarly higher than average among young voters (6%) though as much amongst first-time voters (4%) compared to those over 30 (2%). By contrast, the Conservative vote was very low (20% among first-time voters and 18% among young voters, compared to 43% among the rest of the population) for those two categories as was the share of the vote of the Brexit party. first-time voters were also less likely than average to vote for the Liberal Democrats (7%) but young voters (13%) just slightly more likely than older voters and motivating it as an anti-Brexit vote.

It is worth noting that as in 2017, strategic backing of Labour or Liberal Democrat candidates could vary significantly across constituency profiles (see Harrison, 2018).

Table 15.2 about here

In a report published by the Electoral Reform Society. nearly a quarter (24%) of voters reported that they were intending to vote tactically in December 2019[5]. This indicates a significant proportion of voters were considering turning to a party or candidate to prevent someone being elected that they disliked more. Interestingly, however, in this 2019 General Election, the timing of the electoral decision of young voters does not differ significantly from that of others. This timing of the electoral decision is presented in table 15.3. On average, 22.4% of those aged 29 and under made up their mind within a week of the vote which is very similar to the proportion of over 30s who have (23.1%).However, first-time voters were typically later deciders (28.6% within the last week). In terms of Election Day deciders, this represented 6.4% of respondents over 30, 7.2% of those under 29, and 8.5% of first-time voters[6].

Table 15.3 about here

When it comes to how enthusiastic citizens were about their vote, however, the real contrast was even more markedly between first-time voters and the rest rather than between young and old voters. Table 15.4 shows that only 14.4% of first-time voters felt some enthusiasm about their vote which is roughly twice less than other young voters (33%) and those aged over 30 (26.2%). However, across all categories, roughly a third of the population felt that their electoral choice was limited to casting a preference for the lesser of some evils (30.7% for those over 30, 33.9% for those under 29, and 34.3% for first-time voters.

[5] Polling by BMG Research, commissioned by the Electoral Reform Society. Methodology: Fieldwork dates: 8th – 11th October 2019. Sample: 1502 GB adults aged 18+. Fieldwork was conducted online. Invitations to participate were sent to members of online panels, with non-response from different demographic groups taken into account during the fieldwork phase and post-fieldwork adjustments.

[6] Survey data not available to compare 2019 General Election to other previous elections

Table 15. 4 about here

This tells us that on balance, first-time voters in particular were feeling significantly more underwhelmed by the electoral choices offered to them than the rest of the population, a narrative which contradicts frequent references to a supposed enthusiastic embrace of Corbynism by the very young. In other words, despite the Labour share of the vote being similar amongst first-time voters and other young voters, the level of enthusiasm associated with it by the citizens themselves seems significantly divergent.

Frustrated youth?

Does the lack of enthusiasm of young and notably first-time voters translate into a greater sense of frustration of young people vis-à-vis other electoral categories? Crucially, based on the model of frustration discussed earlier and its grounding in the existing psychology literature, democratic frustration is operationalised as an interactive concept whereby expectations are one of the two ingredients of frustration alongside a perceived democratic delivery gap. In that sense, multiple references to "apathetic" youth would make frustration impossible in that apathetic people are precisely defined by a lack of caring or valuing democratic processes. This contrasts with the popular discourse on young people being consistently frustrated within the context of their democratic systems. Here again, our findings presented in table 15.5 suggest that the key difference is not to be found between young and old voters but rather between those who vote for the first-time and everyone else in the population.

Table 15.5 about here

In practice, on all three dimensions of democratic frustration, first-time voters score significantly lower than the rest of the population (even though a majority of them indeed qualify as "democratically frustrated"). This is largely due to their democratic expectations being significantly less clearly set before people have started being enfranchised and given an opportunity to electorally engage with the system. The differences are thus marked with levels of democratic frustration for first-time voters ranging from 4.84 (institutional dimension) to 9.25 (political dimension) on a scale ranging from -100 to +100 with 0 being the frustration neutrality point. By contrast, when it comes to the differences between young voters aged under 29 and the rest, differences are minimal. Young people only prove slightly less frustrated than older generations in terms of the political dimensions (24.39 vs 28.5) whilst results are almost exactly similar on the institutional dimension (19.57 vs 19.76). When it comes to the ideological dimension, the mean frustration score for young people (19.3) is slightly higher than for the rest of the population (18.58) but the difference is not statistically significant.

What this suggests is that on balance - and with the possible exception of the political dimensions, age is not a significant factor in how democratically frustrated people feel. Young people do not significantly differ from the rest of the population, and for young and old people alike, democratic frustration is - indeed - very much the name of the game. What we find, however, is that this frustration crystallises after young people have been given a chance to vote for the first-time. It is only at that time - and interestingly enough, regardless of the age at which this happens, that democratic expectations are grounded, and this proves the prerequisite for democratic frustration to occur. In short, there is no support for the suggestion that young people were "more" frustrated than the rest of the population during the period of the General Election 2019. However, they are also not "less" frustrated than them, and if anything, their frustration might be shaped by slightly different dimensions than the rest (i.e. less focused on

disillusion vis-a-vis political personnel as opposed to institutional and ideological qualities of democracy). As frustration is often built upon preconceptions and expectations of what electoral democracy can provide and deliver, experiential rather than demographic, a distinction can be seen between first-time voters and the rest of the population rather than between the young and the old.

From frustration to hostility

As seen earlier, the literature has suggested that an increasing proportion of citizens may be experiencing feelings of electoral hostility towards those who vote (or who they perceive to vote) differently from them (Bruter and Harrison, 2020). Unlike theories of affective polarization, hostility is not related to (and does not require) strength of partisanship. It is also not necessarily related to the actuality of a citizen's or group's vote but may instead be based on perceptions of group dynamics. From that point of view, as pointed out, the Brexit debate was consistently framed as a largely generational one and for those reasons, in this section, I assess both whether young citizens and first-time voters appear to be electorally hostile, and whether the basis of their hostility is significantly focused on age differences as opposed to other potential fracture lines (such as regionality, social categories, etc).

Comparing average levels of hostility (i.e. negative feelings towards those who are perceived to vote differently from a respondent) across the three age categories of interest to this contribution, the results are this time different from those pertaining democratic frustration and this time reflect an evolution which seems far more tightly related to demography than to experience.

Indeed, table 15.6 illustrates that across categories of negative feelings held towards opposite voters, young people in general (including first-time voters) tend to be significantly more hostile than their older counterpart. For young people in the context of the General Election 2019, the level of anger towards opposite voters averages 5.05 on a scale from 0 to 10 (and 4.97 among first-time voters) as opposed to only 3.45 amongst the rest of the population. Self-declared frustration stands at 6.08 among young voters aged under 29 (5.29 among first-time voters) as compared to 4.68 among those aged 30 and over, and contempt at 4.06 (4.25 for first-time voters) whilst for the rest of the population that level is only 3.47.

Table 15.6 about here

The same differences are measured when it comes to more extreme negative feelings. For example, levels of disgust among those aged 29 and under average 4.99 on the same 0-10 scale (4.62 for first-time voters) compared to 3.53 for those older than 30. Self-declared hostility among the young has an average score of 4.78 (4.49 for first-time voters) and only 3 among those aged 30 and over, and ultimately, hatred towards opposite voters scores an average 4.3 amongst the young and 4.19 among first-time voters, whilst its average score is only 2.19 - i.e. more than 2 points lower - among the rest of the population.

Note that unlike the distribution of democratic frustration, there is no obvious pattern of difference between first-time voters and other young voters when it comes to hostility feelings. first-time voters are even more negative than other young voters in terms of contempt and hatred for instance, but a little bit more moderate than other young voters when it comes to distrust, anger, frustration, hostility, disgust, and animosity. By contrast, for all of the above scales, first-time and young voters alike hold significantly more negative feelings on average towards opposite voters than their older counterparts.

An age fracture between old and young?

However, the difference in levels of hostility does not necessarily entail that hostility must necessarily be age-related. As discussed, in the last 4 years, much has been made of the stark differences in electoral preferences between the young and the old, notably with regards to Brexit. As electoral hostility is based on perceptions of electoral alterity rather than its reality, it is therefore critical to know whether hostile young people believe that they are effectively electorally opposed to others along age lines, rather than the other social and demographic dimensions that people have historically associated with electoral cleavages in the UK such as wealth, social status, and geographical splits.

To consider this question in the General Election of 2019, we thus asked citizens what adjectives best characterise people who vote differently from them in their view, including both evaluative characterisation (such as selfishness, intelligence, naivety, etc) but also presupposed social and demographic traits (such as old or young, rich or poor, urban or rural, etc) which reflect respondents' perceptions of the social fractures underlying electoral divides in the country. Respondents were asked to pick the three characteristics which best described opposite voters from a list of objective and evaluative categories. The references provided by young people are highly meaningful and are presented in table 15.7

Table 15.7 about here

Let us first look at the answers given by first-time voters. Whilst 27.7% of first-time voters feel that their electoral nemeses can be described as wealthy (total wealth and poverty references: 36.7%), 26.5% characterise them as "old" (total age references: 41.3%). By contrast, only 7.8% would refer to them as rural for instance (total geographical references: 14.8%). In other words,

in a country historically shaped by perceived differences between the electoral interests of the rich and the poor, in the eyes of young people, age differences have become the highest perceived source of electoral fracture in the 2019 General Elections.

For young voters, the age characterisation is even more predominant than for first-time voters. At 30.8%, "old" is the single most used pseudo-objective characterisation ahead of wealthy (27.7%). In total, for the young part of our sample, age-related characteristics represent 39.3% of total answers ahead of wealth-related ones (31.5%) and geographical ones (9.3%).

Interestingly, on the face of it, age characterisation of electoral polarisation was far less prominent among older respondents. Only 23.6% of those aged 30 and over characterised opposite voters based on their age (old or young). However, this difference also affected other pseudo objective characterisation such as wealth (only 21.1% describe opposite voters are likely to be either wealthy or poor) and geography (12.1% see them as likely to be either urban or rural). In other words, differences in age reference are primarily due to older respondents being more likely to select evaluative characterisations of other voters over social and demographic ones. For instance, 44.9% would describe opposite voters as naive, and 22.9% would characterise them as stupid. In both cases, those proportions are significantly higher than in the answers provided by both first-time and young voters. This leads to a double important conclusion. Firstly, when it comes to the way in which voters perceive the social, economic, and demographic divide which electoral splits British society, all three groups of voters believe that age has become the single most important predictor of electoral opposition ahead of wealth and geography. Secondly, whilst, as seen earlier, young voters are more likely to express negative feelings towards opposite voters, they are in fact less likely to hold a disparaging image of them and to spontaneously describe them based on their supposed naivety or claimed intellectual inferiority. Here again, the differences seem to relate to age rather than experience, i.e. first-time and young voters are equivalently different from those aged 30 and over.

Note however that young and old voters alike are likely to complain about the perceived attitudes of opposite voters, in other words, first-time, young, and over-30 voters alike tend to think of opposite voters as being selfish (25.7%, 30%, and 26% respectively) and as being unpleasant (14.4%, 13.8%, and 12.2%) underlining the fact that young and old voters unanimously agree that electoral hostility is in and by itself a characteristic of "the other camp".

On balance, unlike democratic frustration, electoral hostility in the context of the General Election 2019 thus seems to vary by age group with young people more likely to hold negative feelings towards other voters than older ones, but by contrast, older voters being more likely to hold contemptuous perceptions of other voters' characteristics. In the context of the General Election 2019, across age groups, voters tend to imagine age as the main pseudo-objective characteristics of electoral polarisation of the country, and all also tend to blame others for what they perceive as a clear increase in electoral hostility and the selfish and unpleasant behaviours that they associate with it.

Conclusion: young people and the 2019 General Election - frustration and hostility between age and experience

The specificity of young citizens when it comes to electoral behaviour has intrigued political scientists and the general public alike for decades. Analytically, much of the debate has accepted the premise that young people could be analysed as a unified age group but questioned whether the group's specificity in behaviour was related to generational differences or cyclical effects related to individuals' progression throughout the different stages of their lives. This vision has been partly constrained by methodological limitations related to what social scientists can infer from nationally representative samples in which young people typically

represent small numbers. I have focused, instead, on another critical potential distinction in the nature of age specificities: the difference between demographic and experiential effects. In other words, I am questioning the extent to which some characteristics deemed to be specific to the young are in fact related to unique features specific to first-time voters instead.

It is worth remembering that in the context of a "normal" British electoral cycle, with elections held every 5 years, a franchise age of 18 does not mean that people vote for the first-time when they reach that age but, rather, that the first opportunity to participate in a first order election occurs sometime between an individual reaches the ages of 18 and 23. In that sense, analysing a group of 18-25 year old would be heavily skewed towards first-time voters.

To differentiate between those two possible types of effects, however, this article uniquely relies on two parallel surveys - of 2000 respondents who are representative of the general population, in which the answers of those under 29s can be contrasted to those of citizens over 30, and of a separate sub-sample of 500 who were eligible to participate in a General Election for the very first-time in December 2019. The comparison of first-time voters and young voters to the rest of the population resulted in an interesting distinction between demographic and experiential specificities of British young voters in the 2019 General elections, notably in the contexts of increasing democratic frustration and electoral hostility in the country over the past four years.

The key findings therefore pertain to the differentiation between certain peculiarities that distinguish young people from the rest of the population and others which are unique to a first election, constitute its specificity and "evaporate" as soon as the young citizen has been included in electoral democracy. The balance between the two is critical because it effectively differentiates between elements of generational divide and democratic learning - or as per the democratic frustration model, the calibration of democratic expectations based on democratic

experience rather than the original stage of democratic imagination. The importance of this insight is further highlighted by the repeated calls for the lowering of the age of franchise to 16 in the run up to the General Election 2019, a call that has been successful and due to be implemented in the context of the Welsh elections of 2021. The findings here suggest that it is not so much a case of being mature enough to vote, but a case of voting making a young person democratically mature.

Ultimately, a spotlight on young people in the 2019 General Election in the UK, the third consecutive election in addition to a major Referendum within 4 ½ years thus confirms a tale of two stories. The first highlights an increasingly entrenched generational rift between young British citizens and the rest of a population with whom they feel they have little in common with. The second, however, illustrates the perennial gap between those who are welcomed into electoral democracy for the first time and those who continue to play in a democratic series they have been part of for several seasons already.

Tables and Figures

Table 15.1: Turnout and mode of participation in the UK General Election 2019 across three age categories

	First-time voters	29 and under	30 and over
In person	39 (36)	38 (34)	45 (42)
Postal	11 (10)	11 (10)	22 (20)
Proxy	2 (2)	2 (2)	0 (0)
Chose NOT to vote	40 (37)	40 (36)	29 (27)
Unable to vote	9 (8)	10 (9)	4 (4)
Total turnout estimate	52 (48)	51 (46)	67 (62)
TOTAL	100	100	100
Ineligible/unregistered (Discounted from nett)	(7)	(9)	(6)

Main figure represents the net % of voters from each category having voted in person, postally, by proxy (those three add up to "total turnout estimate"), chosen not to vote, or unable to vote after ineligible/unregistered respondents have been discounted. Figures in bracket are % from gross figures including ineligible/unregistered

Table 15.2: Party Choice of voters in the General Election 2019 across three age categories

	First-time voters	29 and under	30 and over
Labour	58	58	31
Conservative	20	18	43
Liberal Democrats	7	13	11
Greens	4	6	3
Brexit Party	2	0	3
SNP	2	1	4
Independent	1	0	1
Other	1	2	2
Prefer not to say	5	1	1

The figures represent the % of people from each category voting for each of the parties mentioned. Each column totals 100 (+/- 1 due to rounding)

Table 15.3: Time of making electoral decision in the General Election 2019 across three age categories

	First-time voters	29 and under	30 and over
Before final week	71.4	77.7	76.9
Final week (except final day)	20	15.2	16.7
Final day	8.5	7.2	6.4

The figures represent the % of voters from each category who claim to have made up or finally changed their mind before the last week, during the last week except Election Day, and on Election Day. Each column totals 100 (+/- 1 due to rounding)

Table 15.4: Perceived level of enthusiasm of electoral choice in the General Election 2019 across three age categories

	First-time voters	29 and under	30 and over
Lesser of two evils	34.3	33.9	30.7
Quite happy	51.3	33.0	43.2
Enthusiastic	14.4	33.0	26.2

The figures represent the % of voters from each category who claim to have voted in the three proposed frames of mind. Each column totals 100 (+/- 1 due to rounding)

Table 15.5: Levels of perceived dimensions of democratic frustration in the General Election 2019 across three age categories

	First-time voters	29 and under	30 and over
Ideological	6.45 (23.04)	19.30 (30.79)	18.58 (28.02)
Institutional	4.84 (22.93)	19.57 (29.16)	19.76 (29.02)
Political	9.25 (28.09)	24.39 (33.98)	28.50 (33.92)

Notes: Main figures are mean frustration levels on a -100 to +100 scale. Figures in bracket represent standard deviations

Table 15.6: Levels of perceived hostility in the General Election 2019 across three age categories

	First-time voters	29 and under	30 and over
Anger	4.97 (3.11)	5.05 (3.23)	3.45 (3.55)
Frustration	5.29 (2.99)	6.08 (3.24)	4.68 (3.75)
Sympathy	3.82 (2.82)	3.45 (2.89)	2.20 (2.73)
Hostility	4.49 (2.98)	4.78 (3.21)	3.00 (3.33)
Solidarity	3.78 (2.89)	3.02 (3.00)	1.78 (2.57)
Disgust	4.62 (3.00)	4.99 (3.14)	3.53 (3.66)
Envy	3.71 (3.07)	2.90 (2.93)	1.29 (2.14)
Contempt	4.25 (2.95)	4.06 (3.00)	3.47 (3.55)
Distrust	5.03 (3.07)	5.65 (2.67)	4.15 (3.74)
Hatred	4.30 (3.02)	4.19 (3.21)	2.19 (2.94)
Animosity	4.21 (2.91)	4.55 (3.34)	3.21 (3.41)
Sense of ever-growing distance	4.92 (2.91)	5.86 (3.11)	4.49 (3.69)
Sense of resolution	3.77 (2.83)	3.05 (2.90)	2.05 (2.62)

Notes: Main figures are average levels for each qualification on a 0-10 scale. Figures in bracket represent standard deviations

Table 15.7: Top three characteristics of those who vote differently to you for voters across three age categories in the General Election 2019

	First-time voters	29 and under	30 and over
Old	26.5	30.8	10.8
Young	14.8	8.5	12.8
Wealthy	27.7	27.7	16.4
Poor	9.0	3.8	4.7
Stupid	19.4	13.8	22.9
Intelligent	13.0	9.2	4.0
Selfish	25.7	30.0	26.0
Selfless	9.0	6.9	3.9
Urban	7.0	6.2	8.3
Rural	7.8	3.1	3.9
Naive	23.0	26.2	44.9
Realistic	10.8	3.8	4.4
Nice	12.2	3.8	3.4
Unpleasant	14.4	13.8	12.2
None of the above	14.8	23.8	28.9

Figures represent % of voters from each category who used each of those descriptors as one of the three main ways to characterise opposite voters.

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