


# Politics should be something that everyone can get involved in, and Verto is proving that Voter Advice Applications play a vital role on this mission.

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By Democratic Audit UK

2016-4-11

*Voter Advice Applications have been on the rise in recent years. These websites and apps match users to a particular political party based on a set of questions about their attitudes to different policies and political statements. [Verto](#), launched last year, has been rebooted for the London Mayoral election. Here, **Oliver Sidorczuk**, **Emily Rainsford**, and **Alex Dobson** discuss the new app, arguing that it can help young voters understand and participate in politics at a time of acute disengagement.*



2015 saw the launch of [Verto](#): the UK's first voter advice app. (VAA) for young people, aiming to make politics more accessible and more understandable. Developed by [Bite The Ballot](#) in partnership with [Demos](#), the [Political Studies Association](#) and other academics. Verto was a big success in educating over 400,000 users in advance of polling day. This year, with the once-in-a-generation EU referendum and important London elections just days away, it is an important time to inspire young people to engage in the politics they've been increasingly pushed out of.

Turnout among registered 18-24 years olds at UK general elections has been lower than any other age group, with turnout in 2015 being [a concerningly low 43%](#). To add to this picture, research shows that this age group is also the most alienated from the formal political process, with low party membership rates and low self-assessed knowledge of political systems being two examples of many.

For many, elections can be challenging and confusing. Overwhelmed by complex language and jargon, the mechanics of our electoral systems are often difficult to grasp. With a growing number of parties surfacing and taking part, it's becoming difficult and time-consuming to understand exactly what each one stands for, never mind figuring out if you're in agreement with specific policies. For these reasons, VAAs are built to help us develop a sense of how our views and attitudes compare to parties' positions, as well as supporting us in deciding if a party or candidate deserves our vote. As VAAs become more popular in helping people navigate an increasingly complex

democracy, they have huge potential to engage future generations of citizens. Yet why is it that so few VAAs are designed with young people in mind?

Bite The Ballot's [Verto](#) was created as a solution to this problem. We wanted to create a VAA that's robust, informative but appealing to young people. With its simple 'swipe right to agree', 'swipe left to disagree' interface, Verto embraces a quick and easy approach many of us are familiar with (earning the nickname, '[Tinder for politics](#)'). The added features of instant feedback and the ability to share results via social media made the app even more user-friendly to younger citizens. With policy statements that are clear and accessible, including a glossary of explanations for terms that are less familiar, Verto maximises its educational potential. Verto was also used as a tool to encourage users with a 'call to action' to [#registertovote](#).

Looking back to last April, Verto saw 428,894 people use the tool – 40% of which were aged 18-25 (Bite The Ballot's target demographic). Teaming up with the [Independent](#) proved very important in building awareness and exposure for Verto, with over 90% of its users arriving at the app through their website. Attracting such a big audience also presented Bite The Ballot with a way to gather and analyse information on young people's political opinions throughout the 2015 election campaign, giving a glimpse of the power of VAAs in influencing the policy-making process.

In terms of their attitudes and values, Verto users were (mostly) socially liberal, expressed mixed attitudes on welfare and supported increased taxes for the well-off. Opinions were balanced when it came to Government spending, though a small majority of users favoured spending cuts. Users supported 'green' environmental policies and chose to prioritise health, education and the economy. Full details of the results are presented in the report '[Evaluating Verto](#)', launching tonight at an APPG on Democratic Participation event in the UK Parliament.

Verto set out to take up one of the main challenges in contemporary politics – to inspire young people's interest and involvement with political issues. Although there are lessons to learn, Verto demonstrated its huge potential during the 2015 general election. Taking forward the ideas from 'Verto 1.0', Bite The Ballot has developed a version of the app for the 2016's London Mayoral election: [Verto.London](#). Politics should be straightforward, something that everyone can understand and get involved in. And Verto is proving that VAAs play a vital role on this mission.

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*Note: this post represents the views of the author and not those of Democratic Audit or the LSE. Please read our comments policy before posting.*

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