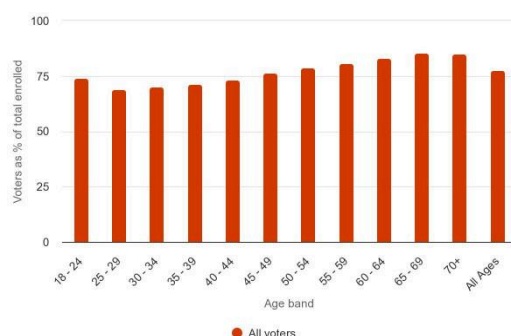


Strengthening Democracy Project 2025 - Samuel Marsden Collegiate School

What is democracy? Why is it essential?

Democracy is a system of government where citizens have the ability to elect who they want to represent them in a parliament or government. The word democracy comes from Greek words 'demos' meaning the people, and 'kratia' meaning power. In a true democracy, citizens have the right to openly express their thoughts and feelings on political matters without being punished. This leads to people being able to openly debate and directly have a say in government issues. In New Zealand, we have a representative democracy, meaning that citizens are able to vote for parliamentary members that they would like to represent them, in both national and local elections. Democracy is essential because it allows people to have a say in actions taken by the government, and allows for a fair representation of who people want to be leading their country. Democracy helps prevent governments from falling into corrupt systems such as an oligarchy or dictatorship as it helps to uphold the human rights of expressing and advocating for what they want politically. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, most notably Article 25, states "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity... to take part in public affairs directly or through chosen representatives... To vote and to be elected at periodic elections held by secret ballot..."



Why did we select this age group?

The group we have selected to focus on is 25-29 year olds, as they are the age bracket that have the lowest voter turnout in New Zealand. Many of these 25-29 year olds might choose not to vote for a variety of reasons. The predominant reason for this is that 25-29 year olds may feel that information about voting and political policies is hard to access or hard to understand. The typical ways of campaigning to voters for elections in New Zealand is not suited to this age group. Common ways of encouraging people to vote or

learn more about political parties is done through door-to-door promoting, landline canvassing and hosting clinics and debates. These are ineffective ways of encouraging 25-29 year olds to vote as they do not align with a large amount of their daily lives. This creates a sense of disconnectedness to politics, and causes them to become either disengaged in voting or wanting to exercise their political rights, but unaware of how to do it. One student of Auckland University explained that, "There's a huge lack of education in that area. I came straight out of high school to uni and I have no clue about how to vote or why I should vote for who and which policies benefit who." This age group of 25-29 year olds is typically the age group that is starting to enter the workforce after tertiary education. At this age people may also be paying off student loans or even thinking about starting families or buying houses, which means that they become more directly impacted by decisions that the government makes. To ensure that the government's decisions align with their needs and wishes, they need to vote.

We selected this age group as we think that voters feeling disenfranchised is harmful to democracy. A democratic society only works with active citizen participation where all people are freely able to vote and express their opinions. Having citizen participation involves having representation from all groups of people, and we think that this is being limited without sufficient voter turnout of 25-29 year olds.

Why would democracy be improved by this age group getting involved?

Increasing the participation of those in the age category of 25-29 would significantly improve democracy. This age group, being young, offers fresh perspectives and brings new ideas to the table. Their experiences and perceptions will be completely different to the older generations who have come before them due to factors such as Covid-19, inflation, extreme technological developments and

social media usage. These factors have massive impacts on the way people live, work, and perceive the world, meaning that their participation helps to ensure that the government is catering to **all** New Zealanders' challenges and requirements. Increasing the number of 25-29 year olds voting will also offer a more accurate representation of the population, ensuring that the government is meeting the needs of **all** citizens and not just a segment of the population. Creating policies that are inclusive of every age group ensures that democracy in New Zealand remains vibrant and fair to all.

By getting this age group involved, they would be benefiting as they will be able to have a say on the issues that directly affect them, like jobs or education or healthcare, allowing them to shape their own lives. This also gives the 25-29 year olds a voice, in which they can project their perspective into politics and society, ensuring that they are accurately represented as an age group.

If the age category of 25-29 were more involved in democracy, this would impact our age group (16-18) too. 25-29 year olds are far more likely to vote for policies that support the younger generation's education and wellbeing, as they too understand the position of being a young person in high school during the age of advancing technology, social media, and environmental decline, providing a more in depth understanding and perception of what the coming generations need. This will also encourage younger generations to get involved in politics and democracy, as leading by example and demonstrating the importance of civic engagement will show that voting is a way for their voices to be heard in politics and society. Watching the generation above vote will encourage our generation to see voting as a meaningful act that can help to shape our future.

How would our campaign work for targeting this age group?

In order to effectively promote democracy to our demographic, we believe that our campaign needs to successfully do two things. Firstly, we needed to create a campaign that would specifically cater to our demographic's interests. This step is crucial to the success of our campaign, as without it, many 25 to 29 year olds would be unaware or uninterested in our project. To effectively target our demographic, we decided to make an Instagram ad. According to a study done in 2024,¹ the most commonly used social media app by 18 to 29 year olds is Instagram, and the majority of Instagram users are between the ages of 25 to 34.² Therefore, it made sense to choose this as the main way of promoting our campaign. To make our ad stand out, we needed to capture attention at first glance. The bold percentage and colours work to capture our viewers' attention. The colours chosen, purple and orange, both do not correlate with any major parties, and orange is the colour used by Vote NZ, which means the viewer would associate our ad with the election.

The second part of making our campaign successful was being able to give further information about voting to our demographic in a way that they would find interesting and accessible. As seen at the bottom of the Instagram ad, there is a 'view more' button that takes the viewer to our website. Here is where people can find all the information they need about getting into voting. The website involves five main pieces of information; the reasons democracy is important, the reasons we need young voices, statistics about our demographic, the benefits of voting, and how to vote. We chose to include these points because we thought they would be most encouraging towards our target audience. The website also features a similar style to our ad. To top off our campaign, we also had to give it a name, and we decided on #MakeltCount. This name demonstrates the main message we wanted to spread to our demographic, being that their opinion matters and they should vote. 25-29 year olds are familiar with the concept of a hashtag being used to summarise a campaign and should find the message easy to interpret. We believe that using the mediums of a website, hashtag, and Instagram ad will be the most effective way of reaching our target audience and enhancing their participation in democracy. Our drafted website can be viewed here:

<https://vanessaardern.github.io/Democracy-Project-2025/>

¹<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics/>

²<https://www.getphylo.com/post/instagram-demographics-audience-creators-stats#:~:text=Nearly%2083%25%20of%20consumers%20use.and%202%25%20above%2065%20years>