

WHY LOWER THE VOTING AGE?

1. Voting is a fundamental right. Every voice deserves to be heard in a democracy.
2. The earlier you get the right to vote, the more likely you are to vote for the rest of your life. This means we can start to save our plummeting voter turnout rates by enacting this change.
3. When people have their first vote at 18-20 years old, they've left home to start a job or post-secondary education. There's a good chance they don't have any interest in voting for a community they aren't yet invested in. Being able to vote while you are still in high school makes civics education practical and empowering. Students will be able to put their learning into action and make an informed vote.
4. Giving 16 and 17 year-olds the vote would allow for more people's voices to be represented in the Legislature, creating a stronger democracy for Oregon.
5. 16-17 year olds are one of the most socially, culturally and politically aware and engaged generations. They understand the issues going on in our community, country and globally. They want and deserve representatives who will listen to them and reflect their interests.

RESPONDING TO FAQs / MEDIA

What's the problem with 18 – the current age?

- Democracy should be about one person, one vote. Too many people don't get to vote right now for no good reason.
- The world is also facing huge long-term issues. Young people have to have a say in the way that politicians deal with those issues because it will affect us the most. Climate change, education, youth poverty, a changing jobs market.

Doesn't the brain keep developing until it is 25? Are 16 and 17 year-olds competent to vote?

- The cognitive science supports HJR 20.
- [Adolescent psychologists say](#) that people aged 16 have reached adult levels of maturity when it comes to the long-term, thought-out decision-making involved in voting.
- Studies have revealed that [underage youth understand our political institutions](#), as well as older generations, do, and those aged 16–17 were also significantly [more likely to have taken civics courses](#) in high school compared with young adults.

Don't we need to have civics education first before we lower the voting age?

- We definitely support more civics education in schools, but it's not a good enough excuse to withhold fundamental rights
- We don't require people over 18 to have done a civics course for them to be able to vote.
- To flip the issue, extending the vote to 16 year-olds is a great incentive *for* better civics in schools. Being able to vote while you are still at high school makes civics education practical and empowering. [Research from Scotland](#) shows that lowering the voting age strengthens political discussions in classrooms, and that makes people more open to learning about civics.

Why 16? Are 16 year-olds ready to vote?

- 16-year-olds can be emancipated, pay taxes, work up to 44 hours per week, drive, be dual enrolled in community college. 17 year olds can enlist in the military. They have the [mental capacity](#) for this right. They/we should also be able to have a voice in our democracy.
- More than 20 countries have a voting age of 16 today, and another one gets added to that list every year. It's time for Oregon to catch up.
- Youth also know and understand the massive issues going on around us (climate change, mental health, homelessness, rural agriculture, inequality) - they/we want and deserve representatives who will represent their/our interests.

Don't a lot of high schoolers think that high schoolers aren't very smart?

- Intelligence has not once been a prerequisite to vote. If it were, this wouldn't be a democracy. Same goes for work experience or whether you use TikTok.
- There are 40-year-olds who aren't smart, but they should still be allowed to vote. These are not valid criteria for deciding which citizens we let to vote.

Are there any other countries with a voting age of 16?

- It is a [growing list](#)!
- The full list includes Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Estonia, Germany, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, Nicaragua, Scotland, a part of Switzerland, several US cities, and Wales.

Will 16 year-olds even turn out to vote?

- In every place where the voting age has been lowered and the [research](#) has been done, 16 and 17-year-olds reliably have a [higher voter turnout](#) than older first time voters.
- 18-21 is the worst time to start voting because you've gone off to university or started a job, maybe in a brand new city. 16-year-olds are in a community they know well. And once they vote in their first election, they are much more likely to continue voting for the rest of their life.
- Sometimes, they [even pull their parents out](#) to vote.

Won't young people be more easily manipulated or coerced?

- No. 16 and 17-year-olds can pay taxes, work up to 44 hours per week, drive, be emancipated, be charged criminally as adults, and be dual enrolled in community college. 17 year olds can enlist in the military. We trust them with these rights.
- 16-year-olds are more politically active in Oregon than almost anyone. As a group, they volunteer more, support issues more, raise and donate money for charity more, than the average adult. If we can trust anyone to know the political space, it's them.

What dangers do you see in this? Can we trust politicians not to chase the youth vote shamelessly?

- People said there were dangers in giving 18-year-olds the right to vote or women the right to vote.
- It would actually be a good thing if politicians tried to appeal to young people. Youth voices and the issues we care about aren't being properly represented in the Legislature at the moment.
- So many Oregon youth live in poverty. Our education system doesn't prepare us for the real world. Climate change is an ever-present looming threat.

Won't young people just vote the same way as their parents?

- No, they'll make up their own minds.
- Studies from the Scottish independence referendum showed that about 40% of under 18s voted differently from their parents. In Oregon, 16-17s are significantly more politically engaged than their parents, it's the parents who need to keep up.
- 16 and 17-year-olds will, just like people over the age of 18, base their decisions on a range of factors. They have a vision for their future that is different from that of their parents.

Won't young people just vote the way X tells them to?

- More than 20 countries have lowered the voting age, and there's no evidence that that happens. We shouldn't withhold the right to vote because of a hunch that something *might* happen.
- 16-year-olds prove themselves, time and again, to be mature and responsible with their right to vote. The alignment between young voters' values, and the party they end up voting for, is reliably high.

What about the fact that the alcohol purchase and gun purchase age is 21?

- There are different ages where you can do different things, but the default is that you need a good reason to withhold a fundamental human right. You can justify withholding voting rights from 4-year-olds, but not from 16-year-olds.
- Do we require people to have tried whiskey, gone to prison, or gotten married before getting to vote? Of course not. That's how we know that those rights have nothing to do with the right to vote.
- At 16, you're ready to vote. You're a citizen, you should be included in our democracy.

If we lower the voting age, won't that make a slippery slope where we eventually let 4-year-olds vote?

- Dozens of places have lowered the voting age to 16, and that has never happened.

Isn't this just a progressive power grab?

- In a [Business Insider study](#) of Gen Z individuals, about half did not identify as liberal or conservative, with the remaining population almost completely split. Therefore, many believe today's youth is still up for grabs.
- Moreover, with more youth getting involved in politics, this is an opportunity for the political parties party to engage young people. When the Scottish Conservative party unanimously voted in favour of lowering the country's voting age, [their support among young people shot way up](#).

When are you aiming to have the age lowered? Will it be lowered before the next general election?

- The sooner the better!

Is there really enough demand or evidence for this?

- Academics have compiled a wealth of evidence from Austria, Latin America, Germany, Norway, Scotland, Estonia, and the United States. It shows how lowering the voting age can increase youth turnout, can improve civic attitudes, can promote civic engagement. It shows 16-year-olds are ready. ([The book](#))
- Another country lowers its voting age every year. Two years ago it was Wales, last year it was Belgium, this year it'll probably be New Zealand or Switzerland. More and more civil society groups are calling for this. More and more politicians and party members at all levels of governments are doing the same. Vote16 will come to Oregon. The only question is whether one wants to be remembered as the party that stood in the way until the last second, or that embraced it enthusiastically.

What do you think about an IQ, competence, or civics test before people can vote?

- I don't want only the educated elite making decisions for our country. I think everyone should get a say.

[Familiarise yourself with other opposing arguments.](#)
