



**Youth, Peace and Security
and Electoral Processes
in times of Youth-led Protests
around the world**

This thematic paper was developed at the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a contribution to the Secretary-General's report on Youth, Peace and Security and the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). It responds to growing interest across development and youth empowerment practitioners in understanding how the YPS agenda can strengthen youth-inclusive electoral and political processes at a time of rapid shifts in civic engagement, including the increasing influence of Gen Z movements and digital forms of participation.

The paper was prepared by the Youth team, in collaboration with the Democratic Institutions and Processes team of UNDP, specifically the Brussels based Electoral Task Force, and in consultation with various members of the Global Coalition on YPS and the Electoral Assistance Division of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA).

Drawing on evidence and field experience across regions, the paper highlights practical examples, lessons learned, and emerging approaches that contribute to advancing the YPS agenda through more peaceful, inclusive, and youth-inclusive electoral processes.

Lead authors

Sare Knoope (UNDP)

Pauline Deneufbourg (UNDP)

Kiri Ginnerup (UNDP)

Josip Ivanovic (UNDP)

About UNDP

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet.

Learn more at undp.org or follow at [@UNDP](https://twitter.com/UNDP).

UN Disclaimer

The views expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including UNDP, donor agencies, or the United Nations Member States.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

- **Civic space:** described as the enabling environment that allows individuals and civil society actors to participate meaningfully in public life. This includes the legal, political, social, and informational conditions that make such participation possible.
- **Civic Technology (Civic Tech):** Digital tools, platforms, and applications that enable citizens—particularly youth—to participate in governance, engage with political and electoral processes, monitor accountability, provide feedback, and collaborate on public decision-making. Civic tech can strengthen transparency, democratic responsiveness, and the capacity of young people to influence policies and hold institutions accountable.
- **Digital space:** refers to the online environments and platforms where people access information, express views, participate, deliberate, and mobilize.
- **Disinformation:** Information that is false or misleading and is deliberately created, produced, or shared to cause harm, influence public opinion, manipulate behavior, or distort political processes. It often aims to undermine trust in institutions, elections, or democratic participation. It differs from misinformation in its intent to cause harm, and from malinformation which is based on reality but taken out of context.
- **Gen Z:** refers broadly to young people born from the mid 1990s onwards. UNSCR 2250 defines young people as 18-29 years old. However, the resolution also recognises varying definitions that may exist at the national and international levels.
- **Hate speech:** Any kind of communication — online or offline — that attacks or uses discriminatory language with reference to a person or group based on identity factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or other protected characteristics. Hate speech can contribute to exclusion, polarization, and violence, particularly in electoral and conflict-affected contexts.
- **Youth Meaningful participation:** rights-based, inclusive, safe, and youth-driven process in which people are informed, empowered, and able to genuinely influence decisions through transparent and accountable mechanisms.
- **Youth, Peace and Security:** Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) is the global policy framework that recognizes the crucial role young people play in building peace and preventing conflict. It was formally established by UN Security Council Resolution 2250, adopted in December 2015.

Contents

Key terms and definitions	3
Introduction	5
Context: Youth Participation in times of emerging youth led protests	6
From Duty-Based Participation to Issue-Driven, Digital-First Engagement	7
Everyday Activism and Community Engagement as Political Participation	7
Diagnosis: YPS and Elections today – exploring barriers, enablers and case studies	8
Shrinking Civic & Digital Space: Repression, Risk & Youth Political Engagement	8
Transformation: Rethinking Youth Political Participation for a New Generation	9
Emerging Practices and Youth-Led Innovations: Strengthening Participation and Electoral Integrity	9
Conclusion	10

Introduction

Youth political engagement is undergoing a profound transformation globally. Since the publication of the 2018 Youth, Peace and Security progress study¹, the context surrounding youth democratic participation has evolved considerably, requiring approaches to how young people are included, supported, and engaged before, during, and after elections to match current realities. Research shows that many young people, particularly those commonly referred to as Gen Z,² show lower levels of participation in electoral processes, not due to disengagement from democratic ideals, but rather because they perceive limited institutional responsiveness to their priorities (UNDP 2022; UNDP & IPU 2021; International IDEA 2023).

This shift has coincided with an expansion of alternative forms of political agency, including digital activism, community-based initiatives, social movements, and other forms of civic engagement outside traditional political and institutional processes, across diverse regions (UNWOMEN 2023; CIVICUS 2022).³ Recent mobilizations further illustrate this trend, with a new generation of politically active and digitally networked youth movements taking to the streets across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. Often labelled as “Gen Z protests” or youth-led mobilizations, these movements reflect common grievances such as political exclusion, limited representation, and socio-economic marginalization, alongside demands for accountability and more inclusive, responsive governance.

The Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda recognizes young people as critical actors in preventing conflict, pro-

moting peaceful societies, and strengthening democratic governance. Established by UNSCR 2250 (2015), it calls for meaningful youth participation in political and decision-making processes, alongside commitments to protection, prevention, partnerships, and support for youth-led peacebuilding. The forthcoming Second Independent Progress Study on YPS—requested by the Pact for the Future (2024)—reaffirms the centrality of youth engagement to peace and security and highlights the need to adapt implementation to evolving political and social contexts.

This thematic paper examines how the YPS agenda intersects with electoral processes in the context of evolving forms of youth political participation. Drawing on examples from diverse regions, it explores different forms of youth engagement across the electoral cycle, from pre-election agenda-setting to post-election accountability, with a focus on programmatic lessons and implications for electoral assistance and YPS programming. The paper situates youth disengagement from formal political institutions not as apathy, but as part of a broader shift toward alternative forms of political agency, including protests, civic tech, and digital mobilization. It explores how these forms of civic engagement can be translated into meaningful participation and influence. In doing so, the paper highlights both the risks and opportunities elections present for youth engagement and identifies programmatic approaches to align electoral assistance with how young people organize, participate, and shape political outcomes.

UN electoral assistance is provided to Member States at their request or based on mandates from the UN Security Council or General Assembly only. The UN system-wide focal point for electoral assistance matters, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, decides on the parameters of such assistance, based on needs assessments led by the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). Implementation is guided by UN electoral policies set by the Focal Point, in consultation with UN entities, including UNDP.

¹ https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/the_missing_peace_first_independent_progress_study.pdf

² Refers broadly to young people born from the mid 1990s onward. UNSCR 2250 defines young people as 18-29 years old. However, the resolution also recognises varying definitions that may exist at the national and international levels.

³ Even in cases where certain alternative forms of participation may turn disruptive or manifest through hate speech and violence, they nonetheless reinforce the imperative of expanding and safeguarding constructive, democratic pathways for youth to engage meaningfully.

Context: Youth Participation in times of emerging youth led protests

Electoral processes are instrumental in assessing the implementation of the YPS agenda and the extent to which young people meaningfully engage in peacebuilding and democratic accountability.

Despite their demographic weight, young people continue to face structural, social, and economic barriers that limit their participation in governance processes, including elections. The Gen Z cohort is coming of age in a hyper-connected world where digital platforms shape identity, discourse, and activism. Unlike previous generations, their engagement is mediated through social media ecosystems that amplify voices but also generate disinformation and polarizing narratives⁴.

Amongst other factors, these constraints contribute to a widening disconnect between youth, and institutional politics, pushing many to engage through alternative pathways. Without addressing these barriers, political systems risk losing legitimacy among younger generations and undermining long-term peace and resilience (UNDP, 2024). The UNICEF Innocenti report notes that “this frustration with democracy may be leading youth to exercise citizenship in different ways (...) they favour informal means, such as protests, petitions or boycotts, rather than formal ones” (UNICEF Innocenti, 2024). Drawing on research across more than 70 countries, IFES similarly finds that young people increasingly engage through cause-based, digital, and non-institutional forms of action rather than formal electoral channels, with important implications for democratic accountability and resilience (IFES, 2024).

Survey data reinforces this shift and highlights underlying gaps in representation and trust. Across 26 countries surveyed by the Be Seen Be Heard Youth report, only 14 percent of young people felt represented in politics, while over 50 percent participated in non-electoral civic actions such as petitions, boycotts, or protests (UN Youth Envoy & The Body Shop, 2022). Similarly, the Open Society Barometer (2023) found that 42 percent of people aged 18–35 globally perceive military rule as acceptable under certain circumstances, a trend associated with lower trust and engagement in democratic institutions.

These perceptions are reflected in formal political participation patterns. OECD data shows that youth turnout remains consistently lower than older cohorts in most member states, with a turnout gap exceeding 15 percentage points in some national elections (OECD, 2024). To better understand and address these trends, the UN Secretary-General and DPPA/Electoral Assistance Division encourage Member States and electoral authorities to publish voter and candidate registration and turnout data disaggregated by exact age and gender, enabling more accurate analysis and targeted responses.

Taken together, these patterns point to evolving forms of youth political engagement alongside persistent institutional gaps in representation, responsiveness, and evidence. In this context, linking the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda to electoral processes becomes particularly relevant. Elections are not only moments of voting, but platforms through which meaningful youth participation and representation can be operationalized across the electoral cycle. This requires moving beyond narrow, event-based understandings of elections and aligning electoral engagement with the ways young people organize, mobilize, and exercise agency beyond the ballot.

As noted in the Secretary-General’s 2023 report on electoral assistance, youth participation in elections extends beyond roles as voters or candidates to include engagement as observers, electoral officials, human rights monitors, party agents, journalists, and civic educators. Whether elections function as meaningful entry points for young people therefore depends in part on how institutions receive and enable such engagement—through openness, responsiveness, and a willingness to be influenced, or through symbolic inclusion that reinforces mistrust and exclusion.

⁴ [ReclaimingYouthAgencyinNamibia’sDemocraticFuture.pdf](#)

From Duty-Based Participation to Issue-Driven, Digital-First Engagement

Evidence confirms a generational shift from duty-based forms of citizenship, such as voting and political party membership, toward issue-driven and digital-first political engagement.

Research by IFES shows that Gen Z's political identity is increasingly cause-based, shaped by alignment with social, environmental, and governance-related movements rather than by loyalty to parties or institutions. Political mobilisation is often horizontal, decentralised, and digitally networked, relying on peer groups, informal networks, and transnational campaigns rather than formal leadership structures (IFES, 2024). Recent examples illustrate how these patterns translate into electoral and political arenas.

In Timor-Leste, youth organizations mobilized volunteers to deliver community-level peace messaging ahead of the 2022 elections, helping to reduce tensions and counter harmful narratives at the local level. In Nigeria, the #Not-TooYoungToRun movement demonstrated how decentralised, issue-based campaigning can shift public discourse and institutional norms, contributing to legal reforms that opened pathways for youth candidacy. Together, these examples highlight how youth are engaging in electoral politics on their own terms—through cause-based, networked, and hybrid forms of participation that link informal activism to institutional outcomes.

For young people, digital spaces are not supplementary or peripheral platforms but core political spaces. At the same time, young activists remain disproportionately exposed to online harassment, disinformation, and surveillance, particularly during electoral periods. The increasing centrality of digital environments in youth political engagement underscores the importance of recognizing these spaces as integral, with implications for digital literacy, online protection, and civic technology tools.

In Latin America, UNDP-supported civic technology initiatives illustrate how digital platforms can strengthen youth participation and agenda-setting. In Peru, Red Pública is an online platform that enables citizens, particularly young people, to identify development priorities, submit initiatives, and engage in dialogue with diverse stakeholders to co-create more inclusive public policy proposals⁵. In Honduras, Red Pública has evolved into a multi-stakeholder platform that supports youth-led participation through digital tools for proposing solutions, monitoring information, and strengthening coordination between civil society, public institutions, and academia. Its advisory board, bringing together more than 100 civil society organizations and 23 public institutions, provides an important space to ensure that young people's voices shape a public agenda focused on transparency, democratic innovation, and peacebuilding⁶.

Everyday Activism and Community Engagement as Political Participation

Alongside protest and digital activism, the youth is also increasingly engaging through forms of everyday, community-based action that fall outside traditional political categories. Mutual aid initiatives, local volunteering, peer support networks, and issue-driven community organizing have become important expressions of political agency, particularly in contexts where trust in institutions is low or formal participation channels are perceived as ineffective. These practices reflect a model of horizontal mobilization, collective responsibility, and problem-solving grounded in lived experience and community engagement rather than formal representation.

While these activities are commonly categorized as civic or social, they are closely linked to governance, accountability, and social cohesion. They may contribute to resilience

at the community level, build transferable political skills and expand social and activist networks that can be considered directly relevant to democratic participation. In many contexts, youth engagement through volunteering, mutual aid, or digital campaigns has translated into concrete electoral roles, e.g. participation in observation, education and monitoring efforts or community-based electoral conflict prevention activities. Yet, evidence indicates that many young people remain hesitant to engage in formal electoral processes, often due to limited trust in institutions or the scarcity of opportunities that allow meaningful influence over outcomes. This highlights the need for programming that builds credibility, expands meaningful opportunities, and links participation to tangible impact over time.

⁵ <https://www.undp.org/es/peru/noticias/redpublica-participacion-ciudadana-por-el-peru-que-queremos>

⁶ <https://www.undp.org/es/honduras/historias/participacion-ciudadana-con-innovacion-digital-traves-de-redpublica-honduras>

Diagnosis: YPS and Elections today – exploring barriers, enablers and case studies

As of January 2026, while half of the world population, people under 30 make up less than 3 percent of the world's parliamentarians. Even in contexts with high youth populations, electoral and political institutions and parties often have limited mechanisms to prioritize youth candidates or youth-focused issues. High age requirements, institutional and procedural barriers, and restrictive eligibility criteria limit access to decision-making roles, while youth have faced exclusion from party leadership and internal consultations, reducing opportunities to shape platforms or influence nominations⁷. These barriers are often reinforced by norms within political parties and institutions that frame youth participation as secondary or symbolic, further constraining the impact of existing participation mechanisms.

These structural barriers further intersect with gender, identity, geography, and socio-economic status in ways that produce uneven risks and opportunities. Young women, LGBTQI+ youth, young people from ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, rural youth, youth with disabilities and displaced or migrant youth often face compounded exclusion. These groups are more likely to encounter intimidation, harassment, and violence, including gender-based and online abuse, particularly during electoral periods. Digital repression and disinformation frequently target marginalized youth voices, amplifying risks while limiting access to safe channels for participation. A YPS-informed approach to elections needs to recognize that “youth” is not a homogenous category, and that intersecting and layered forms of exclusion can affect participation and compound disparities in access to electoral and political processes.

Shrinking Civic & Digital Space: Repression, Risk & Youth Political Engagement

Even where institutional channels exist, youth encounter political cultures resistant to intergenerational power-sharing. In post-conflict and fragile contexts, these tensions are often heightened, with older generations skeptical of youth capacities and young people distrustful of processes perceived as corrupt or co-opted. Innovative civic tech initiatives have helped bridge these divides; for example, in Panama, AI-assisted urban design sessions brought together multiple generations to build trust and foster collaborative problem-solving⁸.

Constraints on civic space further shape youth engagement (UNSG, 2024). Peaceful protests may be restricted through force, legal measures, or online harassment, disproportionately affecting young women, LGBTQI+ youth, and marginalized communities. Such restrictions may be more pronounced during electoral periods, when emergen-

cy measures, surveillance, and security interventions are often invoked, undermining youth-led election observation, civic education, and peaceful mobilization. These dynamics increase the risk of mistrust and escalation precisely when inclusive participation is most needed.

Digital spaces, while central to youth political engagement, are increasingly contested. Internet shutdowns, censorship, surveillance, and disinformation undermine trust, limit access to information, and heighten polarization. Protecting these digital environments and supporting youth-led monitoring, media literacy, and civic technology initiatives are essential to safeguarding meaningful participation. At the same time, there is a need to integrate risk mitigation, protection measures, and coordination with electoral, human rights, and civil society actors to ensure safe and meaningful engagement.

⁷ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recently expressed the view that “the minimum age for parliamentary candidacies **should be aligned** with the minimum voting age.” In a 2022 report, the SG described the gap between the minimum voting age and the age required to stand for election – where such a gap exists – as hindering young people from running for office, and suggested that aligning voting and eligibility ages “**could help increase youth participation.**” In the SG’s report on electoral assistance of 2023, the SG noted that some countries had taken steps to align minimum voting age with eligibility age. Separately, in *Our Common Agenda* (2021), the SG urged governments to promote political representation for youth, and noted that “this **could entail lowering the voting age and the eligibility age** for standing as a candidate for elected office.”

⁸ [Bringing Communities Together Through AI-Driven Urban Planning | United Nations Development Programme](#)

Transformation: Rethinking Youth Political Participation for a New Generation

Patterns observed across Gen Z mobilization, electoral participation, and youth-led protest movements highlight differences between institutional designs of political participation and how young people actually engage. UNDP has shifted toward long-term support in spaces where youth are already active—digital platforms, communities, and civic networks. Examples include iParticipate-linked digital literacy workshops in Guinea-Bissau, empowering youth to use online tools for civic awareness and community action⁹. In Sierra Leone, the #LetPeaceWin campaign strengthened youth engagement across the electoral cycle, while Kenya’s similarly named campaign mobilized youth for peaceful participation ahead of the 2022 General Elections.

Reframing youth participation requires moving from asking how to mobilize young voters to considering how youth can shape political agendas, monitor power, and influence outcomes throughout the electoral cycle. Participation is continuous rather than episodic and emphasizes active agency in shaping outcomes within political and institutional processes (UN, 2018). Elections should therefore be seen as entry points into a broader continuum of engagement across local, national, and transnational levels. This includes ongoing interaction with elected representatives, accountability mechanisms, and influence over policy decisions at local and national level.

Emerging Practices and Youth-Led Innovations: Strengthening Participation and Electoral Integrity

Structured platforms and civic technology are creating new avenues for youth to engage meaningfully in electoral and political processes. Electoral assistance has supported youth-led digital resilience, including initiatives to promote media literacy, counter disinformation, and strengthen information integrity. Examples include UNDP-supported civic technology platforms: iParticipate in Madagascar enables youth to share information and set community-level agendas;¹⁰ iVerify in Pakistan supports university students to counter disinformation and enhance leadership skills;¹¹ and eMonitor+ tracks hate speech and tech-facilitated gender-based violence to inform evidence-based interventions¹². The Kenyan zKe: Youth Voices initiative similarly creates deliberative digital spaces where youth can provide input on legislative and policy discussions, monitor government actions, and engage directly with institutional processes.¹³

Additionally, structured platforms such as Youth Parliaments¹⁴ and local youth councils provide sustained avenues for engagement in policy- and decision-making. These spaces help young people develop skills in dialogue, negotiation, and democratic decision-making, strengthen trust with political institutions, and bridge everyday civic action

with formal processes. Even when advisory in nature and under-resourced, such platforms can prevent grievances, promote inclusion, and cultivate a generation of leaders equipped to support transparent, credible, and conflict-sensitive processes. Similarly, national YPS coalitions in Kenya and Liberia create structured spaces for youth to engage meaningfully in civic and political life.

Building on these examples, electoral-related programs can strengthen youth engagement by linking everyday civic participation to institutional processes. This includes youth councils connected to electoral management bodies, election observation, multi-stakeholder dialogues, and advocacy for youth-friendly legal frameworks, policies, and infrastructure. Complementary initiatives such as awareness-raising, peer-to-peer education, creative arts, sports, digital literacy and game-based approaches can enhance reach and equip youth with the skills to participate effectively in both digital and offline civic spaces (SELECT Project, UNDP). UNDP supported game-based approaches include examples such as the SELECT e-learning.¹⁵

⁹ Youth Empowerment: UNDP at the Heart of Civic Leadership and Sustainable Development | United Nations Development Programme

¹⁰ Lancement officiel de l'activité iParticipate : une solution numérique innovante pour renforcer la participation citoyenne et électorale des jeunes et des femmes | Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement

¹¹ IVERIFY | United Nations Development Programme

¹² eMonitor+ | United Nations Development Programme

¹³ zKe: Youth Voices

¹⁴ For example, the UNDP-supported initiative in Uruguay – see box 8 [Parliamentary support and citizen consultations – Select](#)

¹⁵ elearning.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org

Conclusion

This thematic paper examined how youth-led mobilization is reshaping the relationship between elections, inclusion, peace, and security, with implications for the YPS agenda. Across contexts, youth engagement increasingly takes the form of protest, digital activism, and issue-driven mobilization, often alongside limited trust in electoral institutions. While elections remain important, they are no longer the sole entry point for young people to exercise influence.

Electoral periods should be understood as part of a broader political ecosystem in which youth agency unfolds continuously. These periods present both risks and opportunities for peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and democratic integrity. Sustained engagement between cycles can determine whether early investments consolidate democratic resilience or whether political energy returns to protest.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING:



Continue supporting **sustained youth engagement** before, during, and after elections.



Recognize **digital spaces as central political environments**, not peripheral, for Gen Z engagement.



Support **youth-led monitoring of disinformation, misinformation**, digital early warning systems, digital literacy, and civic technology tools (e.g., iParticipate, iVerify, eMonitor+).



Need to place stronger emphasis on **measuring youth agency**, not only electoral turnout, within YPS programming.



Safeguarding and Protection against intimidation, criminalization, harassment, (online and offline); embed digital safety within YPS programming, especially for young women.



Ensure programming and engagement approaches account for **digital divides** - particularly urban/rural and gender gaps - by integrating offline strategies and lower-bandwidth tools.



Create pathways that bridge **alternative forms of activism** (protests, digital activism, community organizing) with traditional forms of decision-making.



Continue supporting **constructive, democratic forms of youth participation** across both online and offline spaces.

Participation without protection is neither meaningful nor sustainable. Young activists, especially women and marginalized youth, face intimidation, harassment, criminalization, and digital threats, particularly during elections. Effective YPS-informed approaches must embed safety through risk assessments and safeguarding procedures, digital and legal support, and coordination with electoral and human rights actors.

Institutions also bear responsibility. Meaningful participation requires that authorities listen, respond, and act on youth input rather than offering symbolic consultation. It means linking everyday youth civic participation to institutional processes.

Electoral management bodies can strengthen youth engagement by offering digital trainings, delivering youth-friendly voter education, and adapting content for social media platforms, meeting youth where they are.

Investing in initiatives between electoral cycles remains critical. Civic technology platforms, youth forums, youth councils and parliaments, political parties, and community-based peacebuilding projects provide flexible pathways for youth to build skills, influence decision-making, and bridge informal activism with formal processes.

Finally, attention to institutional attitudes and social norms is essential to ensure youth engagement is welcomed, valued, and impactful. Programming can support this through media engagement, accountability tools, and initiatives that promote positive representation, inclusion, and non-violence.

To respond effectively to Gen Z realities, electoral processes must align with the YPS agenda and particularly with how young people organize and participate in decision making spheres, supporting continuous engagement, strengthening democratic resilience, and contributing to peace and stability in rapidly evolving political contexts.

Bibliography

- CIVICUS. (2022). State of Civil Society Report.
- Della Porta, D. (2019). Social movements in times of austerity: Bringing capitalism back into protest analysis. Polity Press.
- Earl, J., Maher, T. V., & Elliott, T. (2017). Youth, activism, and social movements. *Sociology Compass*, 11(4).
- Fernández Guzmán Grassi, E., Portos, M., & Felletti, A. (2024). Young people's attitudes towards democracy and political participation: Evidence from a cross-European study. *Government and Opposition*, 59(4), 582–604. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2023.16>
- Giugni, M., & Grasso, M. T. (2021). Youth and politics. Cambridge University Press.
- Henn, M., & Foard, N. (2014). Social differentiation in young people's political participation: The impact of social and educational factors on youth political engagement in Britain. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 17(3), 360–380.
- Holecz, F., et al. (2021). Youth political participation and democratic engagement. *Journal of Youth Studies*.
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). (2024). Understanding young people's political and civic engagement as a counter to democratic backsliding. Available at: <https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/Youth%20Learning%20Agenda%20Report%202025.pdf>
- International IDEA. (2023). The Global State of Democracy Report.
- Mirra, N., & García, A. (2017). Civic participation reconsidered: Youth activism in the digital age. *Review of Research in Education*, 41(1), 136–158.
- OECD (2024). Promoting youth volunteering and civic service engagement: A stocktake of national programmes across OECD countries: Available at: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/promoting-youth-volunteering-and-civic-service-engagement_39659e6a-en.html
- OECD. (2024). Society at a glance 2024: OECD social indicators – Voting. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/06/society-at-a-glance-2024_08001b73/918d8db3-en.pdf
- Open Society Foundations. (2023). Open Society Barometer: Can democracy deliver? Available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/open-society-barometer-can-democracy-deliver>
- Pickard, S. (2021). Politics, protest and young people: Political participation and dissent in 21st century Britain. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pickard, S., Bessant, J., & Watts, R. (2022). Informal political participation: Youth activism, everyday politics and social change. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pontes, H., et al. (2019). Youth political behaviour and democratic engagement in Europe. *European Political Science Review*.
- UN Women. (2023). Youth, Activism and Digital Mobilization Report.
- UN Youth Envoy & The Body Shop. (2022). Be seen, be heard: Understanding young people's political participation. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/be_seen_be_heard_2025.pdf
- UN. (2018). The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. United Nations.
- UNDP & IPU. (2021). Young Parliamentarians Report.
- UNDP (2024a). Youth, Peace and Security: Fostering youth-inclusive political processes. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-peace-and-security-fostering-youth-inclusive-political-processes>
- UNDP 2024b: Youth Parliament Toolkit – Effective Platforms for Future Leaders <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/youth-parliament-toolkit-effective-platforms-future-leaders>
- UNDP. (2022). Youth Political Participation Status Report.
- UNDP. (2023). SELECT project report: Youth participation to sustain peace during electoral processes (2021–2024). Available at: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-07/undp-youth-participation-to-sustain-peace-during-electoral-processes.pdf>
- UNDP. (2025). Kenya's youth are transforming communities through digital innovation. Available at: <https://www.jointsdgfund.org/article/kenyas-youth-are-transforming-communities-through-digital-innovation>
- UNICEF Innocenti. (2024). Youth, protests and the polycrisis. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/7761/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Youth-Protests-and-Polycrisis-2024.pdf>
- UNSG. (2020). Report of the Secretary-General on Youth and Peace and Security (S/2020/286). Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3855975?v=pdf>
- UNSG. (2022). Report of the Secretary-General on Youth and Peace and Security (S/2022/220). Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3966656?v=pdf>
- UNSG. (2024). Report of the Secretary-General on Youth and Peace and Security (S/2024/207). Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4042803>
- YIAGA Africa. (2022). Not Too Young to Run Campaign: Building youth power in politics. Available at: <https://www.yiaga.org/not-too-young-to-run/>
- Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., & Delli Carpini, M. X. (2006). A new engagement? Political participation, civic life, and the changing American citizen. Oxford University Press.



United Nations Development Programme

One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

www.undp.org

© UNDP 2026

UNDP works with over 170 countries and territories to build a better future. This report highlights the development results UNDP achieved in 2024. With the support of our partners, we have helped millions of people around the world to improve their lives.