

Taiwan's blueprint for youth electoral engagement.

In a year of significant electoral milestones, this article unveils the influence of young voters in shaping the democratic trajectory of a nation facing crossroads in geopolitical affiliations, highlighting the blend of technology, policy, and civic engagement.



HSIN-TZU YANG
CoD YouthLead,
Taiwan



Taiwan conducts presidential elections every four years, consistently achieving high voter turnouts. This year's election was an important one. Not only was Taiwan's election the first one of a historic year, where over half of the world is set to vote, but also had to determine the roadmap leading to or stepping away from China's sphere of influence.

While the older generation still exhibits the highest participation rates, young voters in Taiwan achieve very high turnout and are considered an important group. They make up about one-fifth of the island's 23.6 million population, but youth between 20 (Taiwan's legal voting age) and 34, maintain great influence in decision making, when organized.[1] For example, voters between 20 and 29 still had a turnout rate of 52.9% in the 2016 election.[2] This increased to more than 70% in 2020 under the influence of

the breakout of the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement (ELAB) in Hong Kong. [3]

This is why policies in Taiwan also have a focus on enhancing youth participation in democratic processes beyond elections. In 2022, the Legislative Yuan unanimously passed a constitutional amendment to lower the voting age from 20 to 18. Although the citizen referendum results favored the amendment, it did not pass due to not reaching the required threshold.[4] Despite this setback, the government and civil society continue their efforts to promote this issue.

The Ministry of Education ensures that classes or exams are not scheduled on election day to encourage student voters. The Youth Development Administration has been implementing the "YouthHub Let's Talk"[5] program since 2008, aiming to strengthen

youth participation in policy formation through workshops, panel discussions, and policy conferences. The creation of the Executive Yuan Youth Advisory Committee in 2016 ensures that the policies proposed by the selected youth committee members are tracked and followed up on.[6]

Today, young Taiwanese voters have the power to swing elections, not only deciding on the island's future relationship with China, but also highlighting the economy as a top concern.[7] So to support youth involvement in politics and alongside their priorities, political parties play a crucial role.

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[1] <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/taiwan-youth-presidential-election-cost-living-housing-democracy-4037281>
[2] <https://ketaalanmedia.com/2020/01/06/taiwans-household-registration-system-is-disenfranchising-young-voters/>
[3] [The Impact of the Hong Kong Protests on the Election in Taiwan - The National Bureau of Asian Research \(NBR\)](#)
[4] [Taiwan Fails To Lower the Voting Age to 18 - The News Lens International Edition](#)
[5] [教育部青年發展署青年好政 let's talk \(youthhub.tw\)](#)
[6] [行政院青年諮詢委員會 \(yda.gov.tw\)](#)
[7] <https://globalaffairs.org/bluemarble/taiwan-young-voters-presidential-election-relationship-china>



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The Sunflower Movement in 2014 marked a turning point, inspiring increased youth political engagement.[8] The Democratic Progressive Party and the New Power Party have implemented initiatives such as the "Democracy Seed," which pushed for 47 young candidates for the positions of village and neighborhood representative.[9] There are also different youth cultivation branches from each political party, encouraging youth participation through campaigns, workshops, and educational programs.

Taiwan's election laws restrict voting to in-person ballots at the registered address (usually their hometowns), potentially disenfranchising young voters who have moved away for study or work. Civil society organizations, including the Taiwan Youth Association for Democracy and the National Union of Students, have responded by offering travel subsidies for young voters.[10]

These organizations actively promote the universal values of democracy, fostering solidarity with democratic movements worldwide. This includes supporting movements like the anti-ELAB protests in Hong Kong, the 2020–2021 Thai protests, and opposing Russia's annexation of Crimea in Ukraine. They engage local youth in Taiwan's democracy, advocating for youth participation in public affairs through policy discussions, democratic education, model elections, and autonomy at the college level.

The Asia Pacific Youth Association collaborates with the youth wings of Taiwan's major political parties to organize political staff training, campus forums featuring spokespersons from presidential candidates' offices, and other initiatives to enhance the visibility of the democratic process among youth.[11]

Taiwan has long fostered a community of civic hackers and open-source programmers, leveraging information technology for democratic purposes. The 2012 "g0v" movement epitomizes this effort, promoting open-source collaboration and transparency in government.[12] Twin deliberation platforms, "vTaiwan" and "Join," exemplify real-time machine learning applications to facilitate public consensus and deliberation on national issues.[13]

Another noteworthy initiative is the "Cofacts" project, a collaborative fact-checking bot that assumes a crucial role, particularly during elections when it is susceptible to disinformation and cognitive warfare, often often originating from China.[14]

By embracing technology for political participation, Taiwan's digital democracy initiatives aim at the broader citizenry, with a natural focus on the youth who are major contributors and participants in online platforms. These efforts ultimately serve to elevate youth participation in the political landscape.

In 2020, a coalition of young YouTubers with over 20 million total subscriptions released a video[15] encouraging Taiwanese youth to vote.

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This unprecedented mobilization through social media platforms not only showcased the power of the younger generation but also highlighted the cultural pride and identity embedded in the act of voting for the Taiwanese.

Youth participation in Taiwan's elections is not solely a result of collective measures; it is deeply rooted in the nation's geopolitical context. As Taiwan faces unique challenges, the democratic spirit ingrained in the election process serves as a collective expression of identity and a safeguard of democratic freedoms against external threats, particularly from China.



[8] <https://carpejeendowment.org/2018/08/02/activist-legacy-of-taiwan-s-sunflower-movement-pub-76966>

[9] [社運青年串連投票 搶攻民進黨決選機制 風傳媒 \(storm.mg\)](#)

[10] [「這次，我們不改天」——2024 青年民主派鄉列進 | tvinnv](#)

[11] https://www.bing.com/search?q=2024校園馬拉松2.0——發言人接力賽&es_rfp=EeZjaHhWUyBeeAEEUYoGCaLACAaEFORM-ANCM9R,PC-U531

[12] [Starting from Zero: Taiwan's democratic innovation \(nai.gov.tw\)](#)

[13] [How Taiwan's 'civic hackers' helped find a new way to run the country | Technology | The Guardian](#)

[14] [Crowdsourced fact-checking fights misinformation in Taiwan | Cornell Chronicle](#)

[15] <https://youtu.be/6ppF6ITXw?si=pP35Vb-gTbYp8>