

# Evidence Submission: Inquiry into Voter Engagement

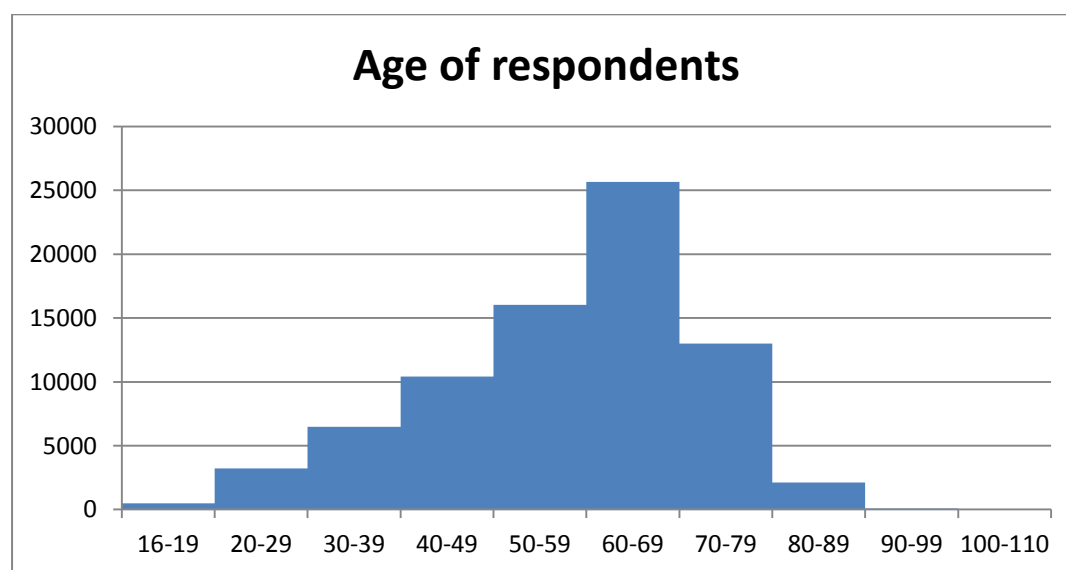
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## Introduction

We invited 2.2 million 38 Degrees members to participate in a survey on voter engagement. Of those, over 84,000 responded before the deadline for written submissions. This document contains a summary of their responses.

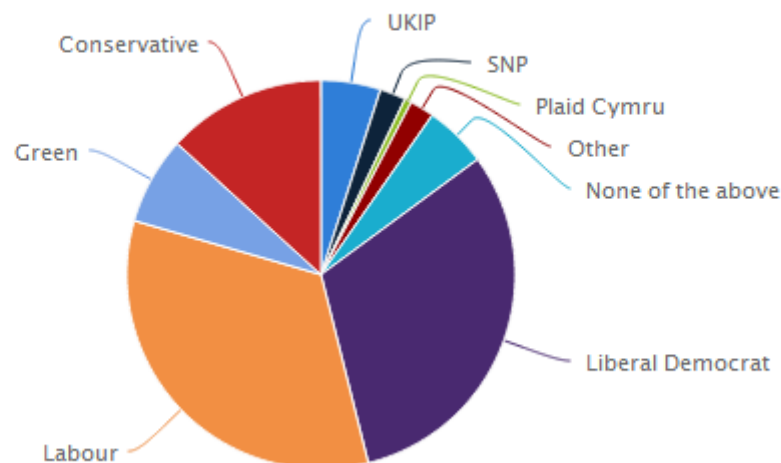
## Who are the respondents?

There was a wide spread of ages, but the majority of respondents were in the age range 50 – 80.



We asked the respondents how they voted in the 2010 General Election. As you can see there is a wide spread of different political viewpoints.

## If you voted, which party did you vote for at the last General Election?

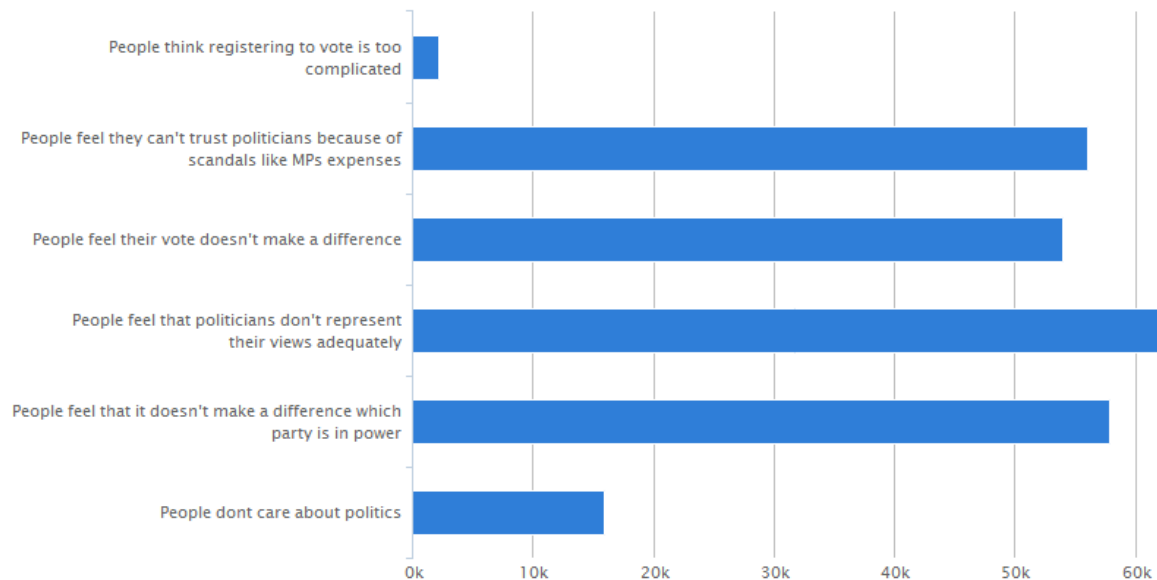


## The responses

### Why has participation in elections been falling?

We asked our members why they thought that participation has been falling in elections.

Participation in elections has been falling for decades. What do you think are the reasons for this?



Many people also wrote their own reasons. These clustered around various themes:

#### MPs don't listen to or represent the views of their constituents

*Most MPs seem to merely follow party lines on most issues, rather than reflecting their Constituents' views.*

*I was told by my MP that his views didn't match mine but surely he is there to represent the , possibly widely differing, views of the people he represents ?*

*People do not agree to wholeheartedly handing over their power to individuals at the ballot box. People believe that politicians have too much power and don't listen to their Constituents. People do not agree with party politics as they end up following policies that the people don't want or they lie about the promises they make People don't like it when the politicians they vote for break their promises*

#### MPs / parties represent the views of an upper class elite and big business

*I think that the public just don't relate to the upper classes that are representative in most political parties.*

*Political parties have been captured by business and financial interests.*

*Leaders of all the main political parties - and controllers of the media - come from the same self-perpetuating elite of white, male, upper middle class compromisers.*

*I am fed up with political parties that are more concerned for their own narrow interests, rather than the interests of the nation.*

### **There is little difference between the main political parties**

*The main parties are too similar, the smaller parties find it difficult to fund elections.*

*There is very little to distinguish the parties anymore, until UKIP arrived on the scene as a major differentiator in political views.*

### **Politicians break their promises**

*The three main parties are all alike, they are not bothered about public opinion, and really only want to know us when election time comes around, and they break their promises we don't trust them anymore.*

*Manifestos are seen to be not worth the paper they're written on and pledges and promises are broken with the promise of power.*

*The last election showed that whoever gets elected simply enacts a policy that they had been planning for a long time, and promises and undertakings made before the impending election just get jettisoned.*

### **Parties and politicians just want votes and lack a 'vision for society'**

*I don't think scandals are the problem - all the main parties are more interested in short-termism and winning the next election or by-election than changing for long term improvement of society.*

*The 3 main parties just merely play with the minor details around the edges of policy and none have 'conviction' any more - they abandon anything to stay in power.*

*Political parties should be more conviction-based, not populist.*

### **Politicians don't live in the 'real world'**

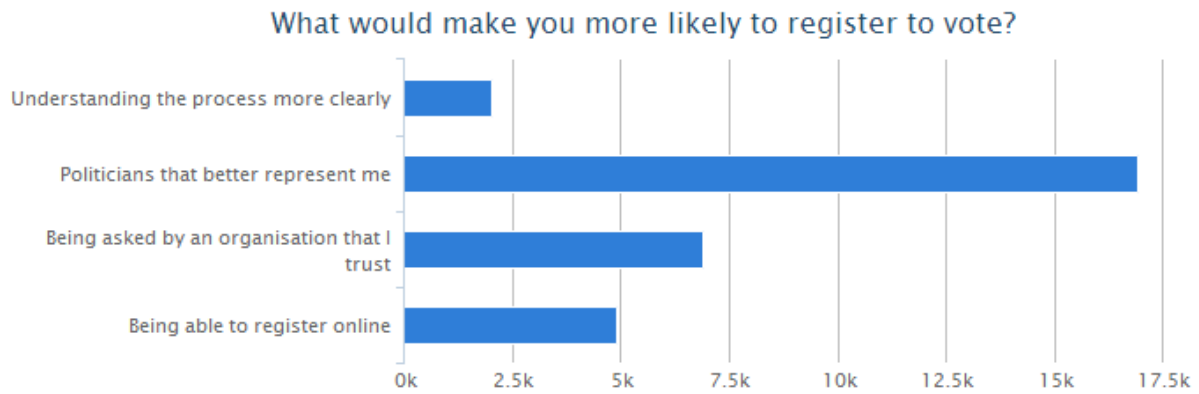
*Most of them have never done another job or lived in the real world.*

*Politicians live in their own different world, the decisions they make never effect them so they honestly don't care.*

*Politicians live in their own world, many of them have never had a proper job, and many of them can ignore their voters' concerns because they are in 'safe' seats.*

### **What would make you more likely to register to vote?**

We asked those who are not currently registered to vote what would encourage them to register.



Many people also wrote their own reasons. These clustered around various themes:

“What else would make you more likely to register to vote?”

### **Change the political system**

*The entire political system being wiped out and reinvented in a way that actually benefited the country with truth and integrity as its motto.*

*Waiting for a change to our broken political system - who has the most funds wins!*

*A party that offered changes to the political system and to the infrastructure of the country as a whole.*

### **Politicians who care about the people they are elected by**

*Honest politicians who carry out the will of the people!*

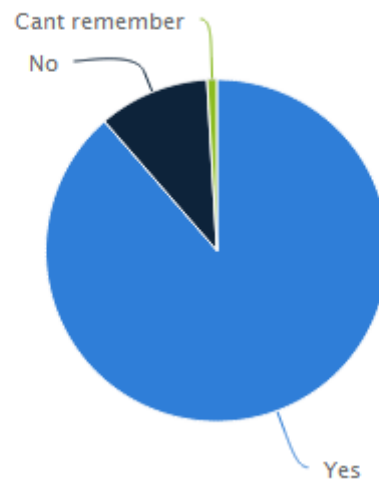
*Politicians that will invest time and effort to improve the welfare of all the people in the country, and the services the government should provide.*

*I would respect politicians more if I thought they were people of integrity interested in the common good rather than personal agendas and naked ambition.*

## Did you vote in the last General Election?

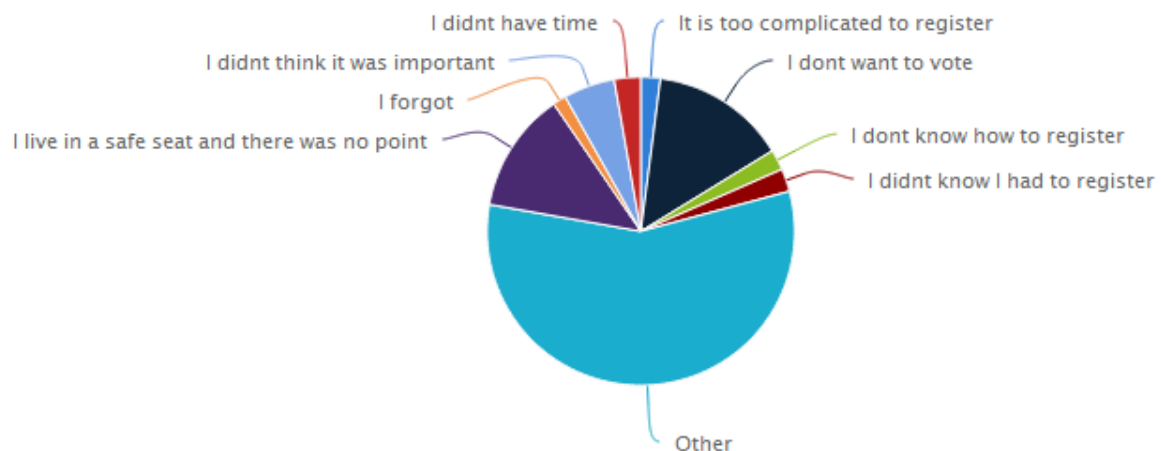
Most of the respondents had voted in the last General Election:

### Did you vote in the last general election?



Of those who said 'no', we asked why not.

### If No, why not?



Over 50% of the respondents said 'other'. In order to drill into their reasons a bit more, we looked at their responses to the question, 'what would have made you more likely to vote?'. They clustered around some key themes:

### I was living abroad or I was not eligible to vote

*I was living abroad and couldn't get the postal vote sorted in time.*

*Living overseas at the time and voting from abroad is difficult.*

*The reason I didn't vote in the 2010 election is because I was not eligible at the time, being only 16.*

*I will vote but was not eligible to vote at time of last general election.*

### **Dissatisfaction with politicians and parties**

*A party that represents the people and aren't just lapdogs for large companies.*

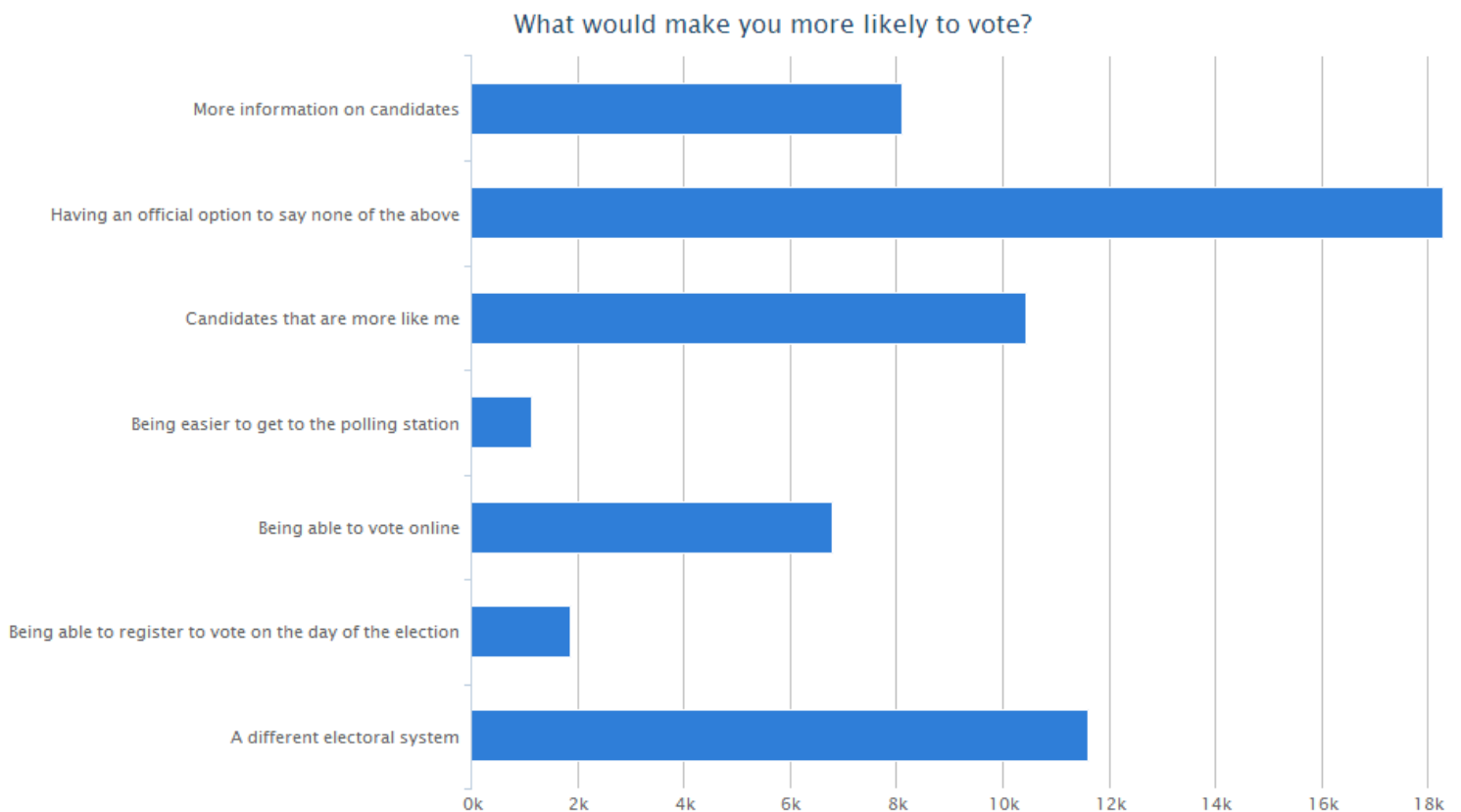
*Candidates who stood for real people, not corporations and the rich.*

*Having a party that genuinely represents ordinary people rather than the interests of big business would have made me vote.*

*Having people we believe in to vote for*

*To be honest, I don't trust any parties or politicians any more.*

### **What would make you more likely to vote in the 2015 General Election?**



The most popular option with respondents was a way of saying 'none of the above', followed by a different electoral system and 'candidates that are more like me'.

### **Open questions**

Finally we asked respondents about their views on politicians and the best ways to get the public more engaged in politics.

#### **What is your view of politicians?**

The answers to this question clustered around the following main themes:

### **Politicians don't represent the views of their constituents.**

*Out of touch. Don't keep promises made to the public; generally vote for their views not their constituents!*

*They mainly act against the views of other politicians not for the people they represent*

*Do not have 'real life' experiences; use it as a career; not concerned about constituents; vote party line and their personal views.*

### **Some politicians do a good job**

*There are just a few, however, who are decent and really do represent their constituents' views and try to put a balanced argument on major issues.*

*Some are genuinely concerned, work hard & really try to represent their constituents.*

### **The political system constrains politicians and what they can do**

*Most are hard-working and committed to improve the lives of people in the UK but the party political system often means they can't achieve much.*

*As a citizen, I feel our political system does not respond properly to popular will and needs.*

*The higher up they get in the political system the more they behave as elected autocrats, with a complete disregard to the common good, but selling out to corporate interests*

*Most go into it with good intentions but the higher they climb the harder it is for them to continue representing the views of their constituents.*

### **Politicians toe the party line or are too concerned with their careers**

*Too many are only interested in furthering their careers, not the views of those they represent.*

*They do not represent their constituents, but are ruled by party whips.*

*They are Career politicians with little care for their constituents' views and plenty for the lobbyists and their own isolated social religious views.*

### **What is the best way to get the general public engaged in politics?**

The answers to this question clustered around the following main themes:

#### **Make voting compulsory**

*Voting should be compulsory.*

*Making voting compulsory, even if people spoilt their ballot paper, might help.*

*Make general election voting compulsory with fines for failure to vote - works in Australia!*

*Voting should be made compulsory.*

## **Change the system**

*Change the political system!*

*Change the voting system, break up the old political parties and Oxbridge feeder system that supports it.*

*Change of voting system to something more representative - there are too many safe seats, and elections are decided by too few people.*

*Change the electoral system to proportional representation*

*Change the voting system so no safe seats.*

## **Make people feel like participation makes a difference**

*By making them feel that participation will make a difference.*

*People are disengaged because they feel whatever they do they cannot make a difference.*

## **Political education at school**

*Education at school as to the importance of the democratic process and the ease with which totalitarianism can prevail.*

*More education for school children on political issues.*

*More education at school level about how significant it is to vote and worthwhile to take notice of who's running the country*

## **Fully tax-funded political parties**

*Wholly tax funded political parties.*

*Political parties to be publicly funded so that money has less influence on policies and politicians.*

*State funded political parties*

## **More difference between the parties**

*More variety of political voice - many feel unrepresented by the three traditional PARTIES - a view that they are all the same is often expressed.*

*Political parties to have some political ideas and not all the same.*

## **Abolish the parties**

*Ban political parties*

*Ideally an end to the big political parties.*