

YOUNGER AND OLDER PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE

A French Perspective

List of contents

Introduction

Some figures

A comparison of generations

A local example

Solutions

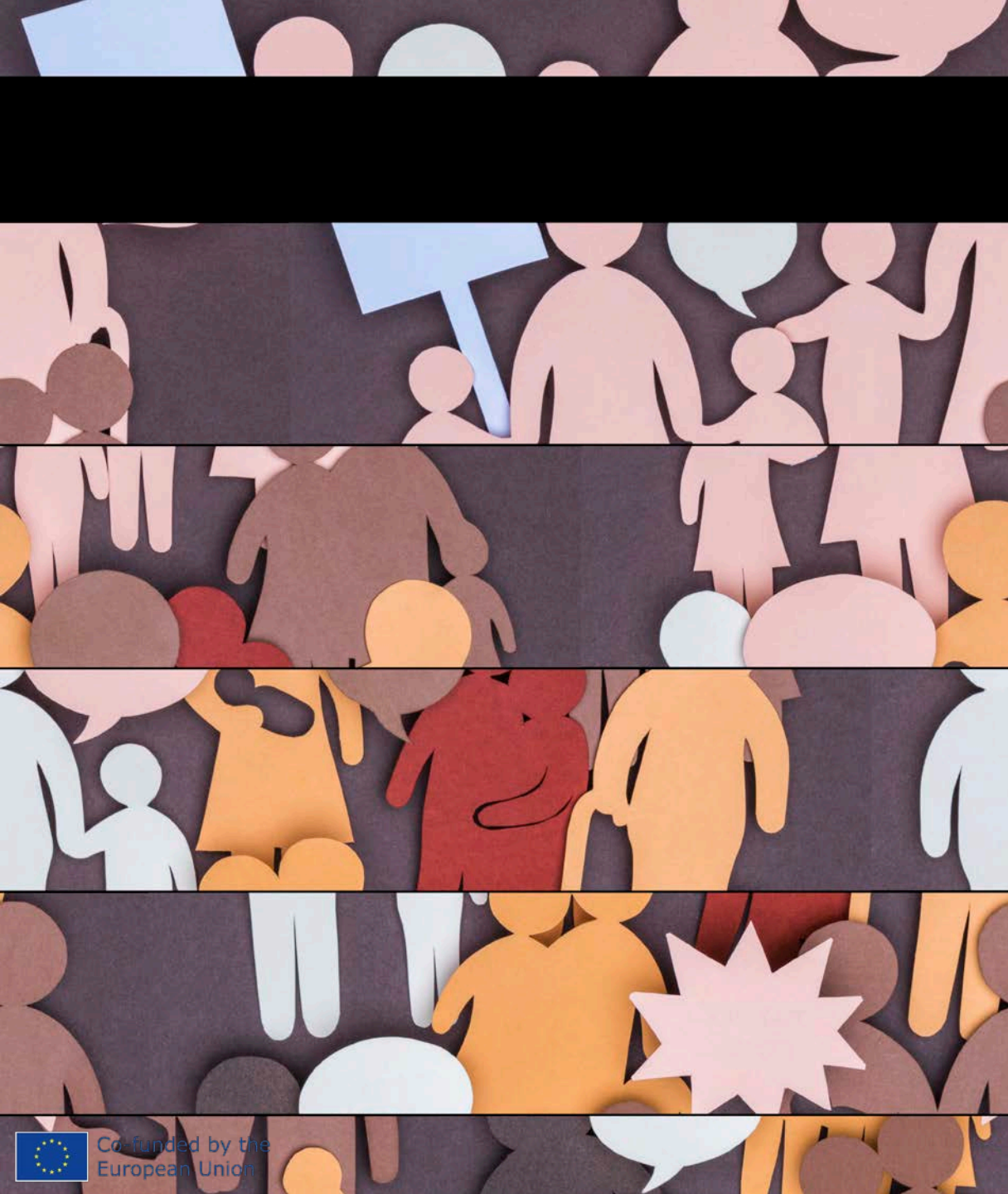
Conclusion



Introduction

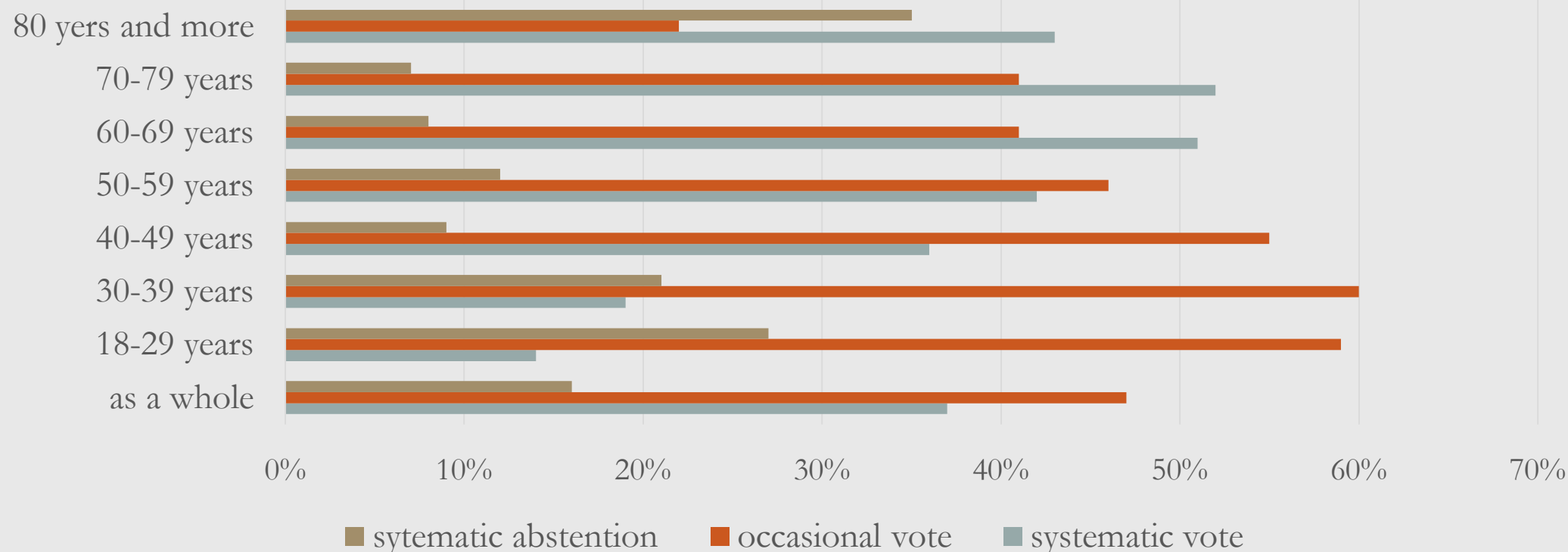
A majority of young people are moving away from traditional politics :

There is a significant political disaffiliation among young people, meaning that a large proportion of them do not see themselves as being close to any political party or trend, either through incomprehension, disinterest or perhaps also rejection.



Some figures

Voting behaviour by age groupe



Interpretation: Among registered voters aged 40 to 49 in 2022 and living in Centre-Val de Loire, 36% voted systematically in both elections (presidential and legislative), 55% voted intermittently and 9% abstained systematically.
Scope: People living in the Centre-Val de Loire in 2020 and registered to vote in France in 2022.

A survey by the Montaigne Institute

- In September 2021, the Montaigne Institute questioned 8.000 young people, 1.000 people of the parent generation and 1.000 people of the so-called “baby-boomers”
- The main finding: A large proportion of young people are disaffected from politics, meaning that they cannot identify with any particular party or political tendency because they are unfamiliar with it, uninterested in it or reject it
- 43% of young people do not have precise enough ideas to take a stand and **are not** taking a stand, compared to only 25% of parents not taking a position and 20% of grandparents
- 55% are unable to state a party preference and do not support a particular party, compared to 35% of parents and 32% of grandparents
- 61% feel poorly represented by the members of parliament
- Only 51% feel very attached to democracy, compared to 59% of parents and 71% of grandparents

Political disinterest = No political commitment ?!



Young people demonstrating
for the climate in Marseille on
20 September 2019



Students blocking Paris' Science
Po University on 26 April 2024



Citizens' convention on the
end of life in December 2022




The call for a boycott: a non-
violent political act turned into
an act of civil disobedience

Political disinterest = No political commitment ?!

Maybe the result of an age effect but more likely of a generation
→ culture shift



The political disaffiliation of younger generations seems to be linked to strong distrust towards the political system



At the moment, young people are deserting the political arena, which can be seen by an increasing abstention from voting and a lack of interest in issues debated by politicians



Yet, this generation is particularly active and committed to social issues, standing in an enormous contrast to the abstention rate among young people at elections

Priority topics by generation

Topics considered very important	Young people	Parent generation	Baby Boomer
Violence against women	77	61	67
Racism	67	32	47
Terrorism	66	62	77
World hunger	65	38	43
Ecology	62	51	46
Inequality	62	36	37
LGBTQIA+ rights	55	45	56
Youth violence	35	17	14
Religion and secularism	33	20	21
Gender issues	28	12	11

Culture shift and counterexample

New forms of participation

- Young people's political commitment in the form of investment in social and political movements
- A young generation that is rather radicalized on climate, ecological and environmental issues, with extremely strong commitment
- the aim is no longer to defend political parties/candidates and ideologies, but to defend key causes such as sexual identity, climate emergencies or social justice, using demonstrations, boycotts, blockades, petitions, social networks and community work as a means of attracting attention
- The civic engagement seems no longer limited to institutional politics, and even less to the act of voting

ACT Stronger CERV Project 101081349

The catholic and conservative youth

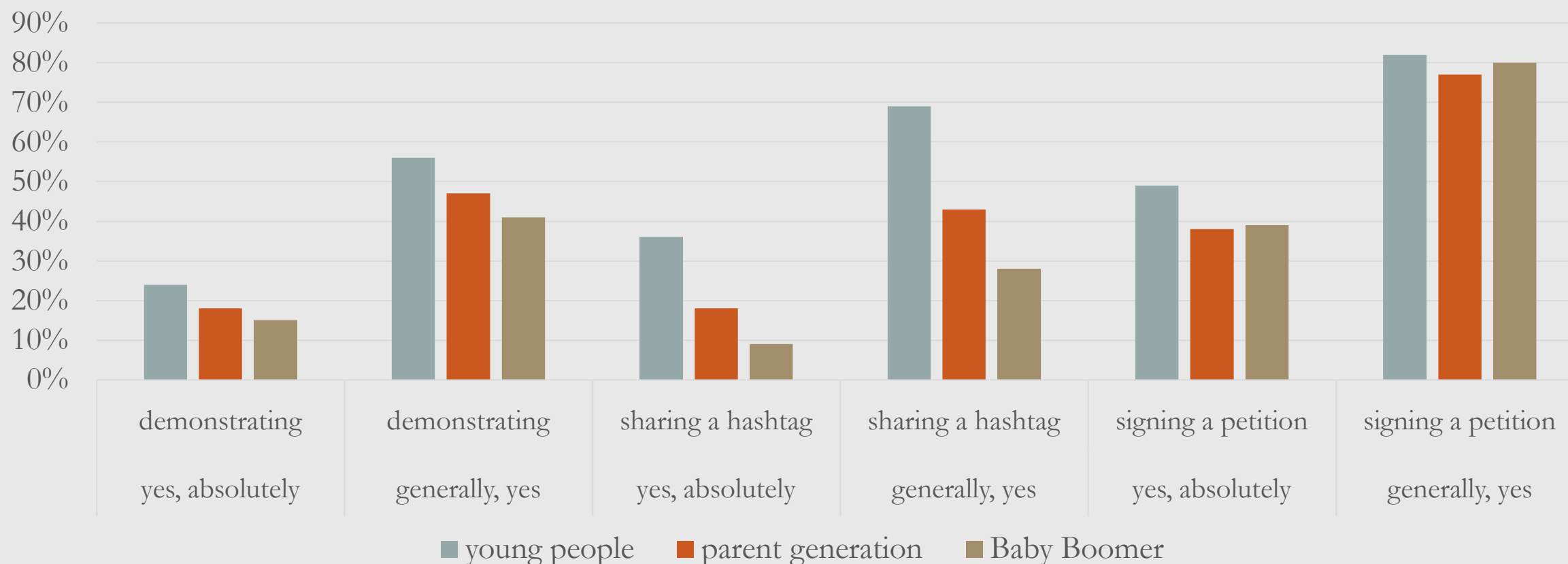
- The rather catholic and conservative youth, often coming from a rather favourable social background is mobilising and having a fairly strong influence on the vote
- Through their activism, these young people also mobilise older, more conservative and reactionary people over the age of 60, who carry a lot of weight with their votes



Young girls wearing Marianne's Phrygian cap at a demonstration in Paris in October 2020.

Ways of non-conventional political participation by generation

How far would you go to defend your ideas ?



Interpretation: 24% of young people say that they are absolutely ready to demonstrate in order to defend their ideas; 56% say that they are absolutely or rather prepared to do so



The distance between citizens and the institutional system is widening although the civil society has never been more able to play its role



Yet we find ourselves faced with a French democratic system that is strongly centered on the figure of the elected representative, the president and the elections



French democracy is not necessarily up for the task to include all its citizens more in the democratic game



There is a need for politicians to address as a priority the people who actually vote. That's why the campaigns are more focused on the generations that are most involved (the oldest)

A look into the future



That's why the impression that voting has a sense has to be given back to citizens, and in particular to future citizens, young people, in order to resolve this democratic issue. People should feel represented, feel that their ideas are supported and that politicians keep their commitments.



That's the reason why steps need to be taken to change this culture of political representatives so that they address more to the younger generations.



Ulterior motive : Talking to children means talking to parents
⇒ intergenerational dialogue

Objective → Raise children's awareness of civic responsibility

→ Give children a voice and the power to make decisions
⇒ civic engagement

→ Enable them to play an active part in the life of the city

→ Bring children into existing actions, so that adult's and children's activities are no longer separated ⇒ integration

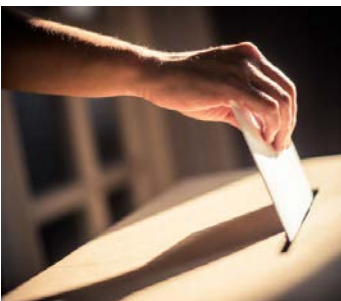
→ Facilitate the access to politics and opportunities at a local level

A local example : The children's city council



Solutions

Extend	the right to vote to 16-year-olds
Strengthen	moral and civic education by increasing the involvement of elected representatives in schools
Introduce	compulsory visits to republican institutions as part of the education process (in school, after school and outside school)
Encourage	the presence of civil society organizations working on social ties and popular education to recreate links between generations and between young people and politics
Establish	a citizenship week, including a European one, at every level of secondary school
Make	it easier for students to take part in local youth councils
Give	greater recognition to applicants' community commitments on Parcoursup



Conclusion

With their distrust of the political world and their interest in public life, the younger generations are no less committed or interested in politics than their elders. Despite high levels of abstention from voting in elections among 18–24-year-olds, young people are just as well involved BUT in other ways. It is not exactly a lack of interest, but rather a break with previous generations and therefore a cultural change.

Thank you for listening ☺

<https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6656253#figure2>

<https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/une-majorite-de-jeunes-s-eloigne-de-la-politique-traditionnelle-revele-une-enquete-de-l-institut-montaigne-6564852>

<https://www.vie-publique.fr/en-bref/284426-citoyennete-comment-faciliter-l-engagement-democratique-des-jeunes>

<https://www.emilemagazine.fr/article/2022/4/5/les-jeunes-et-la-politique-les-prmices-dune-transformation-civique->

<https://www.lesechos.fr/politique-societe/politique/les-18-24-ans-ne-se-reconnaissent-plus-dans-les-partis-et-le-clivage-gauchedroite-1384395>

<https://www.angouleme.fr/ma-ville/conseil-municipal/conseil-municipal-des-enfants/>

ACT Stronger CERV Project 101081349