

Democracy innovation and the quest for solidarity

Bratislava, September 2024

European youth policy & programmes approach

- How are young Europeans experiencing *solidarity* through the EU Youth Programmes?
- Democratic participation and solidarity...*with whom?*
- Is there (a) space for *innovation* in (youth) policy-making?
- What role can the youth sector play?

Why the disillusionment with democracy?

Democracy Index 2022

Only 8% of the world's population lives in a "full democracy"

Full democracies

- 9.0 – 10.0
- 8.0 – 9.0

Flawed democracies

- 7.0 – 8.0
- 6.0 – 7.0

Hybrid regimes

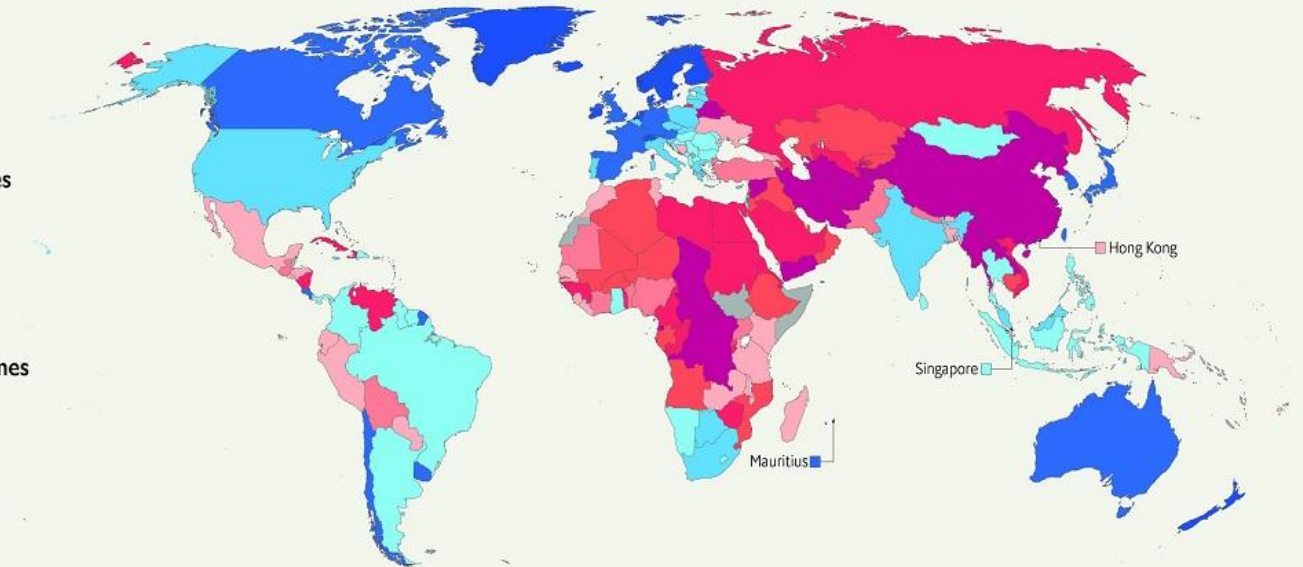
- 5.0 – 6.0
- 4.0 – 5.0

Authoritarian regimes

- 3.0 – 4.0
- 2.0 – 3.0
- 0 – 2.0

■ No data

Source: EIU.

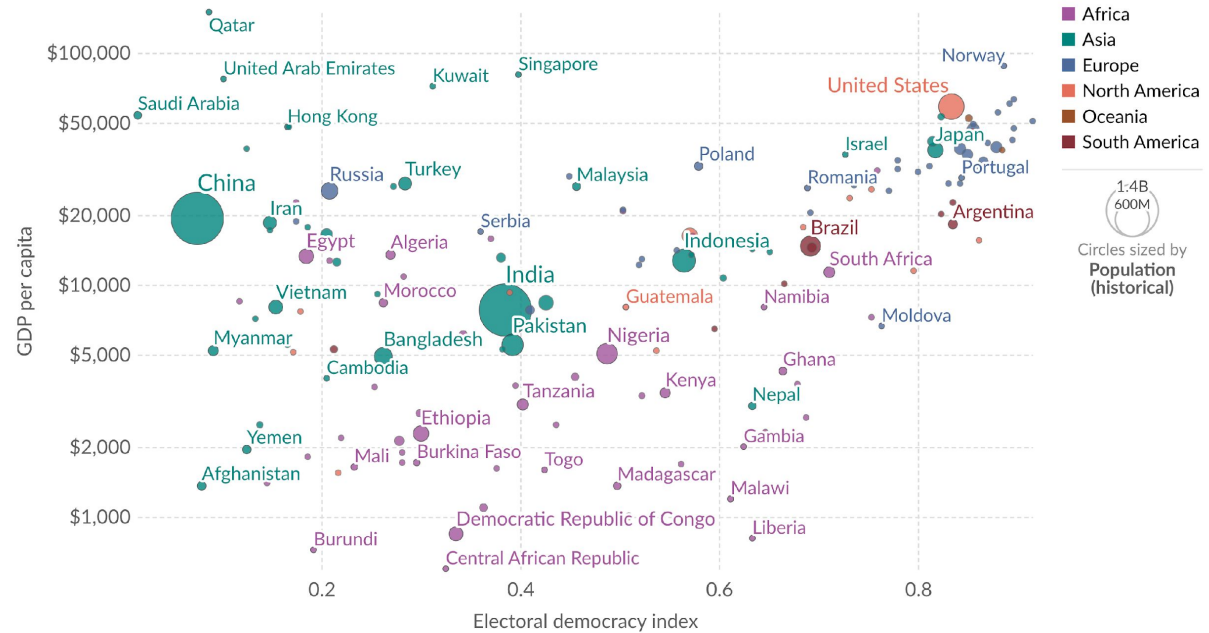


At a first glance, non-democratic regimes deliver economically for their citizens

GDP per capita vs. electoral democracy index, 2022

GDP per capita is adjusted for inflation and for differences in the cost of living between countries. Electoral democracy based on the expert estimates and index by V-Dem¹, ranging from 0 to 1 (most democratic).

Our World in Data



Data source: Bolt and van Zanden - Maddison Project Database 2023; V-Dem (2024)

OurWorldInData.org/democracy | CC BY

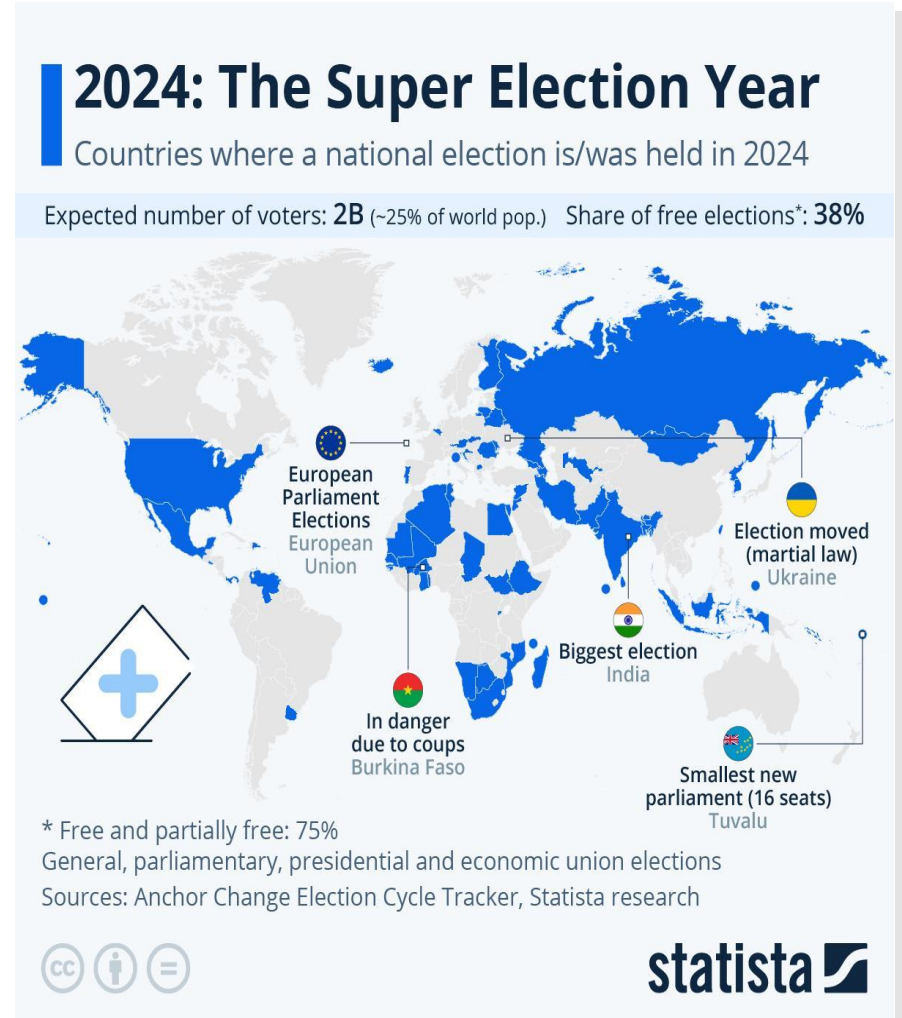
Note: GDP per capita is expressed in international-\$² at 2011 prices.

1. **V-Dem:** The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project publishes data and research on democracy and human rights. It relies on evaluations by around 3,500 country experts and supplementary work by its own researchers to assess political institutions and the protection of rights. The project is managed by the V-Dem Institute, based at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Learn more: Democracy data: how do researchers measure democracy? The 'Varieties of Democracy' data: how do researchers measure democracy? The 'Varieties of Democracy' data: how do researchers measure human rights?

2. **International dollars:** International dollars are a hypothetical currency that is used to make meaningful comparisons of monetary indicators of living standards. Figures expressed in international dollars are adjusted for inflation within countries over time, and for differences in the cost of living between countries. The goal of such adjustments is to provide a unit whose purchasing power is held fixed over time and across countries, such that one international dollar can buy the same quantity and quality of goods and services no matter where or when it is spent. Read more in our article: What are Purchasing Power Parity adjustments and why do we need them?

Eyebird view picture on elections

- The largest 3 democracies of the world have elections: India (1.3 billion), US (325 million) and Indonesia (261 mil).
- In the EU we have \approx 370 mil. eligible voters and only 16% of EU population is considered young, i.e. 15 – 29 years old. *Spoil alert: we still don't have the data of youth vote turnout in EU elections.*
- It's important that *we see the connections among these elections*, because young people live in an online world exposed to realities / behaviors/ ideas outside of their country of continent.



Does electoral democracy deliver solidarity?

- Where do most of the young people today live?

Currently, Africa is the youngest continent in the world. The median age is 20 years old and 65% of the continent's population under the 25 years old.

In EU, on the other hand:

The median age of the EU's population is increasing and was 44.4 years on 1 January 2022, meaning that half of the EU's population was older than 44.4 years.

- Who leads where young people live?

In Africa – median age of a political leader 63 years old

In Europe – the median age of a head of state is 53 years old.

Sources: Eurostat and UN Population Fund (UNFPA reports 2022)

Driving themes for Youth Participation (in elections)

- What are the trends? Young people's concerns are increasingly *global themes* and cannot be confined to national borders. Among main topics motivating young people to publicly raise their voices:

Climate change

Access to mental health support (especially after the covid-19 pandemic)

Internet governance

Access to housing

Equity, social & intergenerational justice

Anti-corruption / Good governance

- Are our participation spaces designed to allow and encourage youth participation on these themes?
- Global, interconnected and complex challenges without equally global & interconnected participation spaces for young people

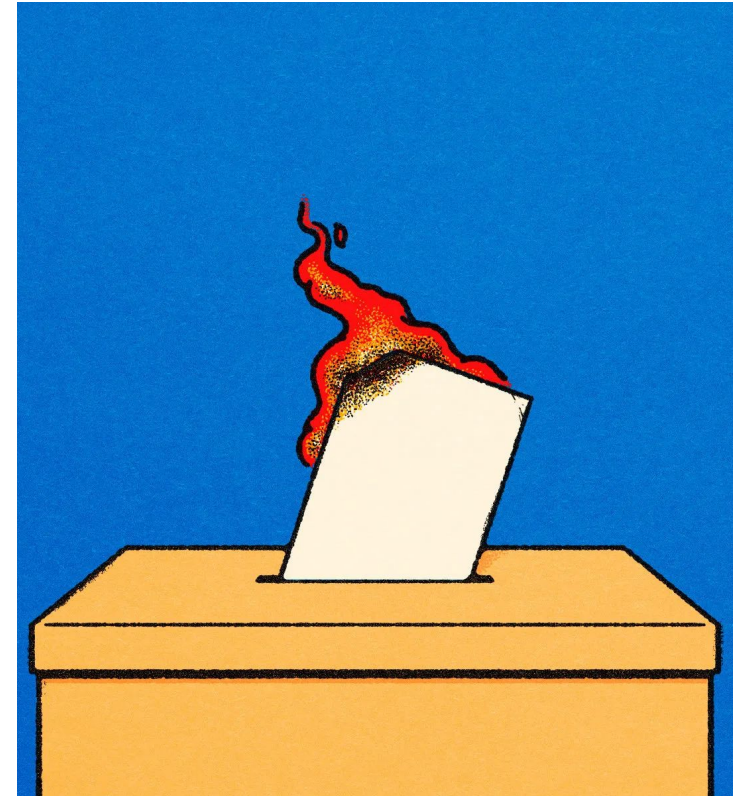
Debunking myths on #YouthVote

1.Youth are not interested in politics – they are rather not interested in how politics is organized

2.Social media radicalizes youth and leads to polarization - a growing body of academic research* show that *affective polarization is directly correlated with economic factors*, and not with time spent on social media. Polarisation is about re-distributing resources. And youth are left behind.

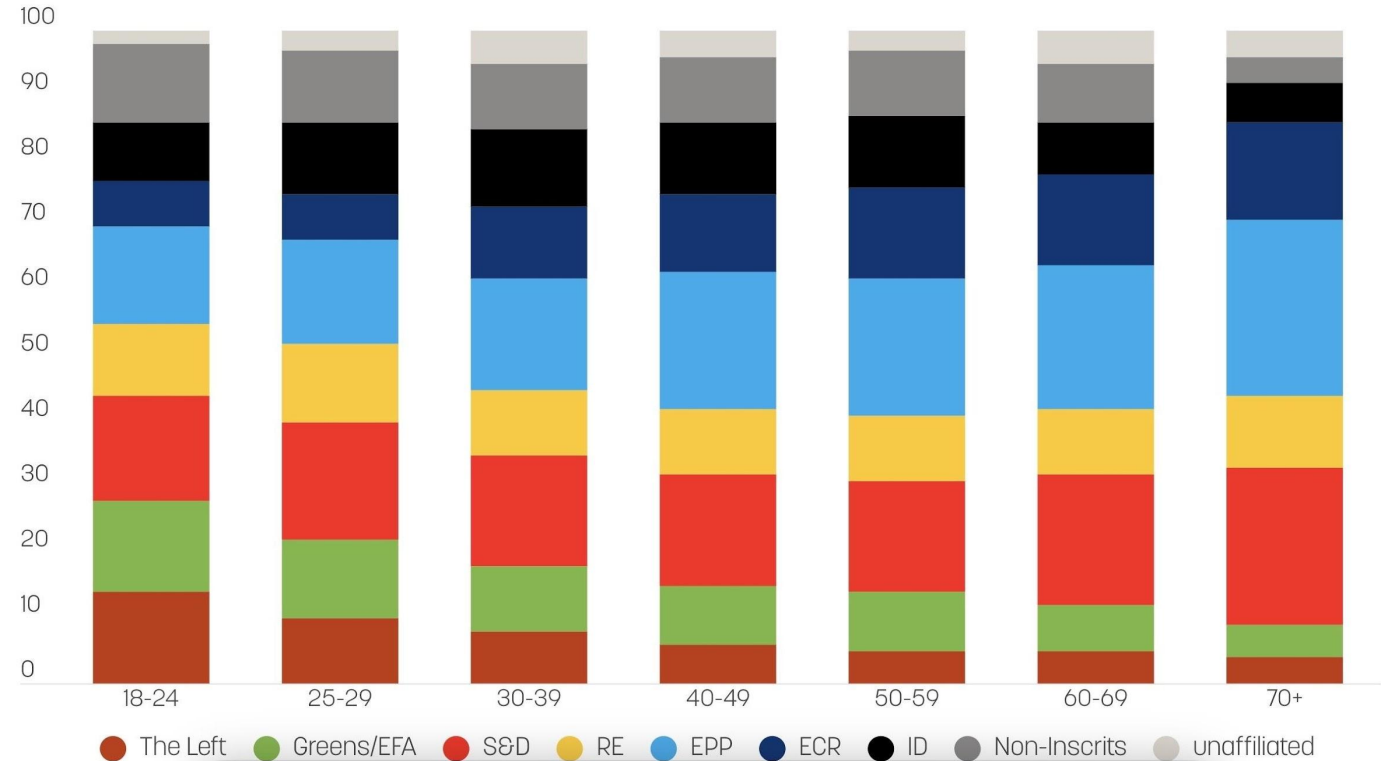
3.Young people don't know how to vote – they know how to make choices, the problem is the vast majority of political leaders do not identify young voters as a distinctive electorate and they do not communicate accordingly

* <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/cmfvb/>



Study case: EU Elections 2024
Don't be too quick to blame the youth

EU election 24: Estimated voting behaviour by age across EU countries, exit polls*



- overall, the parties on the far right spectrum (ECR, PöE and ESN) got their most
- votes from voters over 50 years old
- young voters voted mainly for the Left, Greens and Social Democrats
- worrying exceptions: France and Germany
- housing crisis: one of the main drivers for youth vote,
- the right-wing parties have capitalised on this issue more and link it to immigration

How do young Europeans experience *solidarity* through the EU Youth Programmes?

- European Solidarity Corps – community work, mainly:

Volunteering Activities

Solidarity Projects

Humanitarian Volunteering Aid

- ERASMUS Plus – youth exchanges, youth participation activities
- Missing bit: political participation - building political power – structural changes – ***innovating in the participatory aspect of our democracies***



Solidarity with whom?

A key moment for Future Generations and the role of Youth Sector

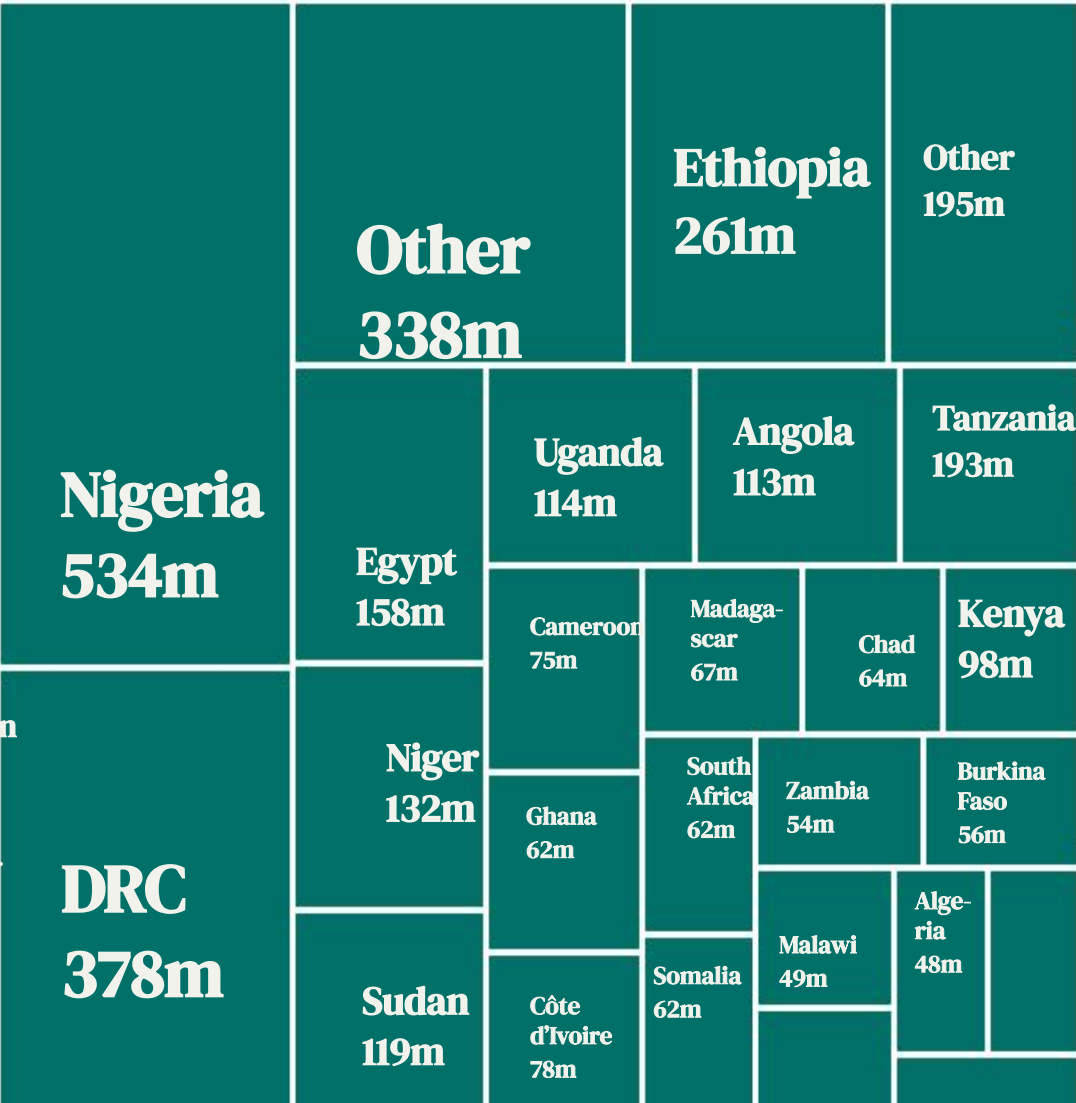
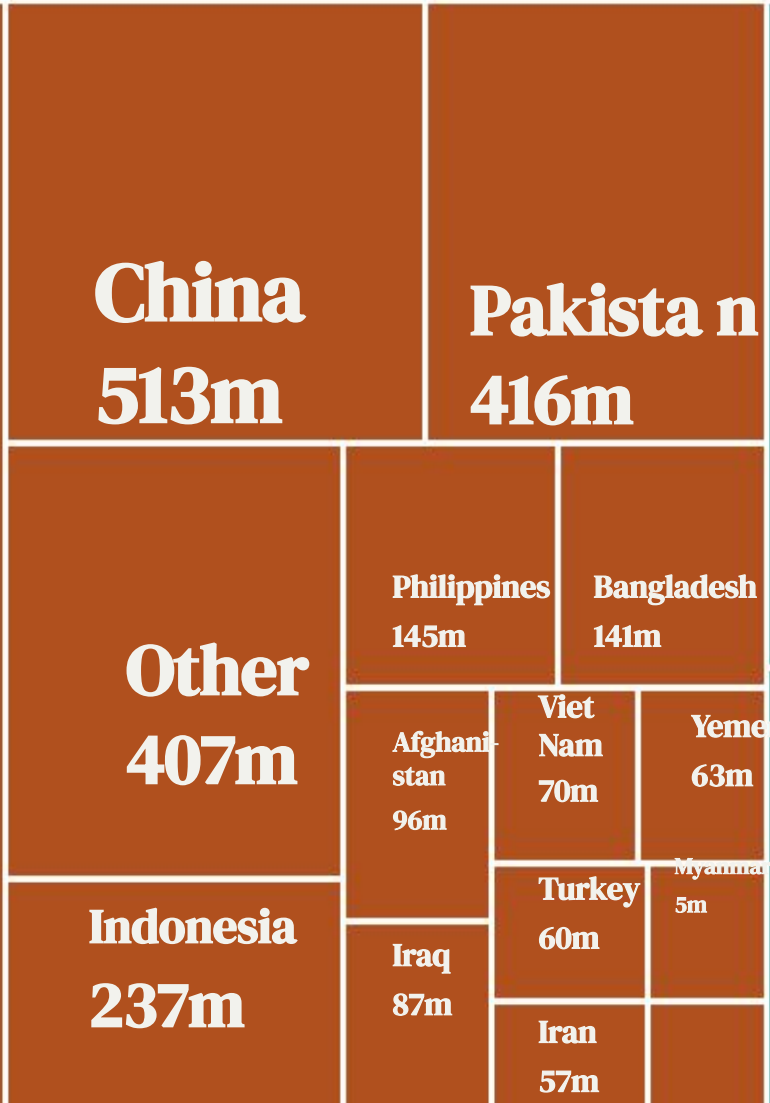
Next 8 billion

Asia

Africa

Latin America & the Caribbean

India
1.2bn



Where will the Future Generations live?

- ***The Next 8 Billion** will overwhelmingly be born in **Asia (44%)** and **Africa (42%)**. Fourteen of the **top 20 countries** are outside the G20: Nigeria, Pakistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Egypt, Philippines, Bangladesh, Niger, Sudan, Uganda, Angola, Kenya, and Afghanistan.*
- *Based on UN medium scenario, the next 8 billion people will be born **by 2083**.*

Source: UN Foundation (Next 8 billion Conference)

Do currently young & future generations have access to resources & power?

The Next 8 Billion will mainly be born in what are currently low and lower-middle income countries - and in families and communities that still have **significant unmet human development needs**. More than half will be born in countries with **low levels of gender equality**.

Indicators measured below: 1) income group 2) human development index and 3) gender inequality index

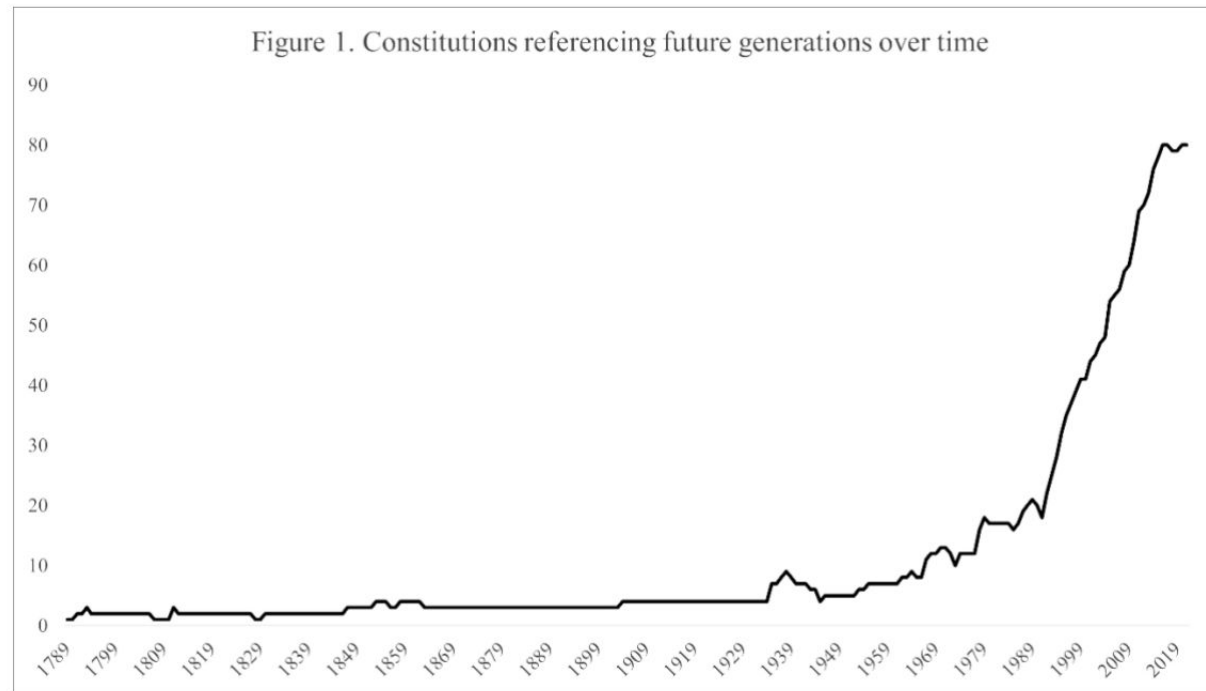


High
0.8%

Do present decision-making take into account future generations' interests?

The rise of constitutional protection of future generations:

- 81 out of 196 constitutions in force (41%)
- Youth-led movements: young people brought the topic to the headlines
- Long-termism and climate: spotlight moment for showing the relationship between climate change and long term thinking



The social infrastructure to show *solidarity* with Future Generations exists



Why do we campaign for Future Generations?



Addressing Long-term Risks and Challenges

The EU needs to protect its long-term interests and address the significant risks facing humanity: a triple planetary crisis caused by the interlinked problems of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, on which digital transformation, an ageing society, and declining democracy are piling on to make things more unpredictable and dangerous.



Protecting the Core Values of the EU

The EU must take efficient legal action to safeguard its core values, the prosperity of Member States, and the stability of democracy and the rule of law. **Protecting the interests of Future Generations through binding legal safeguards is crucial, as they will have to deal with the consequences of today's decisions and missed opportunities.**



Including Future Generations in the EU's Democratic Decisions

Although their interests are fundamentally at stake today, **children, youth and Future Generations have no representation in the EU's democratic decision-making model**, as short-term preferences repeatedly override future needs and interests in numerous EU policies.



New thinking around policy making

What can be the role of youth sector?

Participation is about *power*

- Power – resources
- Who re-distributes resources?
- Spaces for participation means allocating resources. Where do young people participate?
- Always ask yourself: what voices we do not hear in our society / community?

Examples of political innovation organisations / networks



European Youth Programmes – the key to rethinking solidarity?

- The wave of deliberative democracy is mainly present in Western Europe and at EU level, but not so much in South East Europe and Western Balkans, where we see the biggest democracy backsliding.
- Innovation in democracy is funded by private money and is happening outside of the youth sector, although young people have the biggest potential for imagination
- Future Generations initiatives are not eligible under EU Youth Programmes – youth sector is not in the driving seat of this agenda, although youth movements brought it to light
- EU Youth Programmes need to allow young citizens to *build political power* (systemic changes and resource redistribution) and contribute to future-proof democracy.

THANK YOU!

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