

CIVICA



Voter Insights – Open University Students Association

August 2020 Report



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Scope of Voter Insights Project

Civica Engagement Solutions provide an exploration into the voting patterns and behaviours of your voters' courtesy of your recent elections. We do this without disclosing any individual data. Through our research into voters and non-voters we provide voter insight into your electorate's engagement, including advice on improving participation.

This report will provide an executive summary of our findings from the 2020 elections for the Open University Students Association. This report will simply outline the key findings from the primary Voter Insights report which provides a detailed breakdown of voters and non-voters alike. In addition to the primary report which looks at the breakdown of all voters, we have also undertaken 16 candidate-level reports which provides a detailed breakdown of voters per contestant and candidate along key demographic markers.

Executive Summary

- The overall turnout for the recent set of elections was 1.13%, with 2,234 students out of 197,228 eligible students taking part.
- Those aged 39 and younger made up just under half (49.7%) of all voters. Older students were more likely to take part with students aged over 50 having a higher average turnout at 1.8%. This can be evidenced through age groups 60-69 (2.4% turnout) and 70-79 (2.5%) against the average turnout across all age groups of 0.9%.
- Male students were slightly more likely to have taken part than females (1% vs 0.8% turnout), as were those identified as having a disability (1.2%).
- Students in the 'Black_Other' ethnic group were nearly three times as likely to take part with a turnout of 2.6%. The ethnic groups which were the most significantly underrepresented were those in the 'Bangladeshi', 'Mixed' and 'Black_Caribbean' groups. Furthermore, there were no voters from the 'Gypsy_Traveller' group.

- Regional representation among voters was good with marginal differences in turnout across all the regions. Students from the 'Rest of the World/Unknown' had turnout slightly below other regions with turnout at 0.6%. The 'North' had the highest turnout of any region, with a turnout of 1.2%.
- Students from Scotland are the single largest geographical group with 15.1% of all eligible students coming from the region. Thus, as would be expected students from Scotland comprised the largest group of voters on a regional level, with 13.8% of all students coming from the region.
- There was a correlation between latest module presentation studied and turnout. Students whose latest module presentation studied was 2019E or earlier were underrepresented - these students made up 34.2% of those eligible to take part but just 4% partook in the elections. Furthermore, students whose last module presentation studied was 2019E or earlier accounted for just 6.8% of voters.

1.1 Age

Age Group	Voted	% OF Total Vote	Number of Students	% Of Students	% Turnout
18 and under	17	1%	5,317	2.7%	0.3%
19 – 29	381	22.7%	75,750	38.4%	0.5%
30 – 39	435	25.9%	59,392	30.1%	0.7%
40 – 49	354	21.1%	32,667	16.6%	1.1%
50 – 59	302	18%	16,409	8.3%	1.8%
60 – 69	143	8.5%	5,843	3.0%	2.4%
70 – 79	40	2.4%	1,631	0.8%	2.5%
80 and over	5	0.3%	210	0.1%	2.4%
<i>Not defined</i>	0	0%	3	0.0%	0.0%
Total	1,677		197,222		0.9%

Turnout was higher amongst older age groups, with the highest participation rates seen for those aged between 70 and 79 years old as 2.5% of those eligible to vote, did so. Nonetheless, as younger age groups make-up a much larger proportion of the university's populace, they accounted for a larger share of the total votes. For instance, those aged between 30-39yrs old accounted for over a quarter of all votes (25.9%) -the largest of any age group. The following provides a breakdown of voter turnout for the remaining age groups:

- In-line with the trend of older groups voting at a higher rate, those aged 18yrs old and under had the lowest turnout at 0.3%. Whilst this age group makes up 2.7% of all students, it made up only 1% of all votes cast.
- Students aged between 19yrs and 29yrs old make-up the largest share of the student population, 38.4% of all students falling into this age bracket.

However, there was a 16% difference between the proportion of students in this age bracket and their share of votes (22.7%).

- Students aged between 40 yrs. and 49 yrs. old make-up 16.6% of the student population, however, the group comprised 21.1% of all voters. As seen with the remaining older age groups, the proportion of voters exceed the proportion of students falling into those age brackets.
- Whilst students aged between 50yrs and 59yrs old accounted for just 8.3% of all students. The group made up more than double that percentage of voters, with an impressive 18% of voters deriving from this age group.

1.2 Gender

Gender	Voted	% OF Total Vote	Number of Students	% Of Students	% Turnout
Female	935	55.8%	122,091	61.9%	0.8%
Male	742	44.2%	75,119	38.1%	1%
<i>Not defined</i>	0	0.0%	12	0.0%	0.0%
Total	1,677		197,222		0.9%

There was a higher turnout among men (1%) than women (0.8%). Whilst, men, constitute only 38.1% of the student population, across all voters, 44.2% of voters were male. In contrast, there was a -6.1% difference between the number of women that are eligible and the percentage of women who voted in the elections.

1.3 Disability

Disability?	Voted	% OF Total Vote	Number of Students	% Of Students	% Turnout
Yes	507	30.2%	43,919	22.3%	1.2%
No	1,170	69.8%	153,300	77.7%	0.8%
<i>Not defined</i>	0	0.0%	12	0.0%	0.0%
Total	1,677		197,222		0.9%

There was a higher turnout among students that had a disability (1.2%) than those that did not (0.8%). Whilst students who have a disability make-up 22.3% of all eligible students, the group comprised 30.2% of all voters – an impressive 7.9% increase.

1.4 Ethnicity

Age Group	Voted	% OF Total Vote	Number of Students	% Of Students	% Turnout
White (inc. Welsh & Other White Background)	1,402	83.6%	171,698	87.1%	0.8%
Gypsy_Traveller	0	0%	49	0%	0.0%
Mixed	39	2.3%	5,227	2.7%	0.7%
Asian	1	0.1%	103	0.1%	1.0%
Bangladeshi	5	0.3%	670	0.3%	0.7%
Chinese	5	0.3%	624	0.3%	0.8%
Indian	21	1.3%	2,039	1.0%	1.0%
Pakistani	24	1.4%	2,215	1.1%	1.1%
Asian_other	16	1.0%	1,705	0.9%	0.9%
Black	2	0.1%	77	0.0%	2.6%
Black_African	65	3.9%	3,443	1.7%	1.9%
Black_Caribbean	19	1.1%	2,616	1.3%	0.7%
Black_other	11	0.7%	590	0.3%	1.9%
Arab	5	0.3%	449	0.2%	1.1%
Other	13	0.8%	1,383	0.7%	0.9%
<i>Not defined</i>	49	2.9%	4,334	2.2%	1.1%
Total	1,677		197,222		0.9%

Students who identify being 'Black' ethnicity had the highest turnout of any ethnic group (a turnout of 2.6%). In contrast, there was not a single voter among the 49 students who belong to the 'Gypsy/Traveller' group. Additionally, the lowest turnout is among 'Mixed', 'Bangladeshi' and 'Black Caribbean's' ethnic groups, with each having a turnout of 0.7%.

'White (including Welsh & Other White Background)' ethnic student's make up 87.1% of all students. Therefore, it is of little surprise that 83.6% of all voters emanate from this group. Nonetheless, many ethnic minority groups made up a larger share of the vote than their share of the student population. This phenomenon is evidenced most clearly with the case of those who identify as 'Black African' with the group making up only 1.7% of the student population but 3.9% of all voters. The two ethnic groups which proved to not adhere to the general trend were those who belonged to the 'Mixed' and 'Black Caribbean.'

1.5 Region

Region	Voted	% OF Total Vote	Number of Students	% Of Students	% Turnout
London	140	8.3%	16,779	8.5%	0.8%
South	147	8.8%	16,581	8.4%	0.9%
South West	113	6.7%	13,710	7.0%	0.8%
West Midlands	98	5.8%	13,178	6.7%	0.7%
East Midlands	119	7.1%	12,971	6.6%	0.9%
East	156	9.3%	17,683	9.0%	0.9%
Yorkshire	80	4.8%	11,412	5.8%	0.7%
North West	126	7.5%	15,366	7.8%	0.8%
North	178	10.6%	14,780	7.5%	1.2%
Wales	115	6.9%	14,367	7.3%	0.8%
Scotland	231	13.8%	29,780	15.1%	0.8%
Ireland	69	4.1%	7,433	3.8%	0.9%
South East	101	6.0%	12,476	6.3%	0.8%
Rest of the World/Unknown	4	0.2%	706	0.4%	0.6%
Total	1,677		197,222		0.9%

Regional representation among voters was good with marginal differences in turnout across all regions.

The lowest turnout regional turnout is found among those from the 'Rest of the World/Unknown' which had a slightly lower turnout than other regions at 0.6%. Participation levels were the highest in the 'North' with a 1.2% turnout, which stood 0.3% higher than the average turnout across all regions.

Scotland has the largest share of students with 15.1% of students coming from the country, so, it comes as no surprise that the region had the highest percentage of voters with 13.8% coming from the area. Other notable findings from regional segmentation of results are:

- 'Yorkshire' had a lower percentage of the total vote (4.8%) than its share of eligible students (5.8%). 'West Midlands' and 'Wales' also saw similar percentage differences between their share of the votes and student populations, with differences of -0.9% and -0.4% respectively.
- Various regions had a higher percentage of the total vote vis-à-vis its share of eligible voters with the 'North' seeing the highest differential with an increase of 3.1%.

Recommendations

As the election had a relatively low turnout in comparison to the number of eligible voters, we believe that there are a broad set of measures that could be considered to help increase the visibility of the elections.

- As the election had a relatively low turnout in comparison to the number of eligible voters, we believe that there are a broad set of measures that could be considered to help increase the visibility of the elections.
- There needs to be an increase in voters among younger age brackets as our findings highlight that those in the younger profile groups are less engaged with the electoral process but form the largest population. Therefore, tailoring the messaging concerning the importance of participation through social media, university home pages and various groups will help reduce this discrepancy.
- Similarly, to enthuse voting on a regional level, it could be worth creating more regional representatives, which could be achieved by demonstrating the benefits of standing for election.

- Students that identify as 'Bangladeshi', 'Mixed' or 'Black Caribbean' had a lower than average voter turnout, with 0.7% taking part respectively. Furthermore, there was not a single voter among the 49 students who identify as 'Gypsy Traveller'. Consideration for a campaign to improve voter turnout among these ethnic groups should be examined. In doing so, it may help improve the inclusiveness and representativeness of the electorate.
- Those whose latest module presentation studied was 2019J represented the largest proportion of electors, accounting for over 74% of all voters. This was followed by students whose latest module presented was 2020B, with those students accounting for 15.6% of all voters. Campaigns encouraging participation among these student groups and disciplines could help to increase the number of votes overall and the voter turnout.
- Similarly, students whose last module presentation studied was 2019E or earlier were underrepresented - these students made up 34.2% of those eligible to take part, but just 4% participated in the elections. Furthermore, students whose last module presentation studied was 2019E or earlier accounted for only 6.8% of voters. Focusing efforts to improve turnout among less recent students would help to make your electorate more representative.