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Political apathy crosses all generations

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By [Nancy Revie](#)

Early statistics have the turnout for the recent Canadian federal election at approximately 65.5 per cent. That's a boost from 61.1 per cent in 2011 and 58.8 per cent recorded in 2008.

It's been stated after past federal elections that Canadian youth are apathetic about voting and politics in general. A report released in September 2015 by Samara Canada – a charity dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics – challenges this idea. The report found that across various forms of civic and political participation beyond voting – including talking politics, signing petitions, organizing or attending protests, Canadians under 30 participate at a rate 11 percentage points higher than those 30 and above.

In the 2011 federal election, only 41 per cent of people under 30 voted. This is low compared to the 63 per cent of people over the age of 30 that voted. There are no concrete statistics yet on the breakdown of demographics for Canada's 2015 election. Young or old, there are many factors that contribute to this kind of skewed voting statistic. I'm looking forward to seeing the statistical demographic breakdown of our most recent election.

The report goes on to explain Canada's political leaders are not reaching out to all Canadians equally. In a 12-month period leading into an election year, only 55 per cent of Canadians ages 18 to 29 reported being contacted. This compares to 75 per cent of Canadians aged 56 and older. Political leader contact is powerful. It encourages people to vote, thus increasing turnout.

There is a vicious cycle in politics around political engagement. Candidates don't prioritize younger Canadians, so they vote less, so candidates make younger Canadians even less of a priority and round and round it goes.

Our kids are smart. The future of Canada has some awesome attributes moving into it. Political messages have to be appealing to youth. Some of the facets of life our youth are involved in now need to be elevated and understood by candidates. High housing costs, tuition debt, expense of starting a family, climate change – these are some of the lived experiences our kids need to hear about. A real understanding of their issues needs to be demonstrated by candidates.

In Canada's recent election there were some great issues raised such as child care and affordable housing. Missing pieces included promises that lack sufficient funding commitments to make the day-to-day difference younger Canadians are looking for. Canadian youth has clear vision while political promises are hazy at best.

Our new prime minister seemed to be the most successful at connecting with our youth. He wore youth-friendly clothes - jeans, blazers, wide open dress shirts and spoke about young people and their involvements. He also realized and spoke to Generation Y's frustration with politics. It doesn't take a whole lot to connect. Simply by making contact, Trudeau may have swayed more young Canadians to vote than in recent years.

In order to have the younger demographic engaged in voting, politicians and their parties have to be engaging about issues they care about. Same goes for voters of any age. It is a confusing conundrum to know how to vote in an election. Just as with anything else in life, people, both old and young, can be apathetic about politics - in particular, voting.

It was good to have a some conversation with our Boomerang and married kids about how to vote – heart or head – always a difficult decision. I am confident Boomerangs and Boomers across Canada participated to the best of their ability with the information presented. How it turns out for Canada remains to be seen.

Nancy Revie is a Guelph author, motivational speaker, fitness instructor and entertainer. Visit Nancy at www.nancyrevie.com. Her column appears every other week.