

Poll Shows Fewer Youth Planning to Vote But Much Can Be Done to Improve Turnout

Toronto – October 1, 2007 – A Dominion Institute poll conducted by Innovative Research Group shows that while three quarters of young Canadians report being concerned about the low young voter turnout, intention to vote among young Canadians has dropped compared to the last election.

The decline in voting does not appear to be driven by apathy or alienation. The key reason among those who are not likely to vote is that they do not know enough today but indicate an interest in learning more tomorrow. Furthermore, there are relatively few young Canadians that aren't voting because they are uninterested or feel alienated.

The poll has even better news. The problem of low voter turnout among young Canadians can be fixed, and relatively easily.

1. Most importantly, as parents and family members we can talk to kids at home about politics. Young Canadians that discuss politics frequently at home are three times as likely to vote as those that never discuss politics at home.
2. Secondly, when we are talking about politics, we can emphasize that voting is a duty, not a choice. Young Canadians who feel that voting is their duty are twice as likely to vote than those that feel like voting is a choice.
3. Third, high schools should offer a course in civics. Young Canadians who took a course in high school which explained how the Canadian political system works are ten percent more likely to vote than those that didn't.
4. Fourth, ensure these civics classes focus on key attitudes. What matters from civics is how you feel about politics, not what you know. If you leave civics interested in politics and feeling like you can make a difference, you can learn the details over the rest of your life. If you are force fed facts and turned off politics, you will forget everything after the test and never pay attention again. For instance, those that strongly disagree that 'politics are too complicated' are more than twice as likely to vote as those that strongly agree. Those that strongly disagree that 'politics are boring' are thirty percent more likely to vote than those that strongly agree. Those that strongly disagree with the statement 'my vote doesn't matter' are four times more likely to vote than those that strongly agree.

5. Lastly, the political parties have a role to play as well. Young Canadians that have been engaged online by a political party are twenty percent more likely to vote than those that have not.

See attached deck for more information.