To Vote or not to Vote? An Analysis of the Voting Intention of Young People in Taiwan

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Introduction

Political participation by ordinary citizens is the essence of democracy. Voter turnout is a crucial indicator of the level of citizens' interest and participation in political processes. The fact that democracies across the world appear to have experienced the decline in voter turnout over the years raises worrisome questions for the health of democracy. Particularly, young voters tend to vote less than their seniors, and the age gap has widened. If a significant number of young voters consistently do not participate in the election process, the democracy is compromised. Many studies have investigated why young people do not vote and how we can promote youth participation in the electoral process. Youth voter apathy is a primary source of concern. But scholars also find that there exists a gap between turnout intentions and turnout behavior and the gap is larger for young citizens (Wuintelier and Blais 2015; Holbein and Hillygus 2020). That is, young voters may not lack an interest in politics as argued. The reasons young people vote or do not vote should receive a further analysis.

Taiwan also faces the similar situation. After democratization, since 1996, every four years, we have presidential elections and the latest election was in 2024. The highest turnout was 82.7% in 2000. Since then, voting rates have declined. More than that, youth turnout has declined more (please see the next section for more details). Even though it has been agreed that Taiwanese young people are more politically mobilized, young people report voting at a lower rate than older citizens. People may argue that there are different forms of political participation and young people tend to participate in unconventional participatory forms, such as mass protests. While it is true that young people may be more voluntaristic than older generations, voting is a special form of participation and cannot be substituted by other participatory forms because voting has profound implications for the political system. Voters cast ballots to choose among candidates from competing political parties, and their choices are important in the selection of political leaders and public policies. Any aspiring politicians will modify or change policies to meet the expectation of voters. Voting is the key mechanism for responsiveness in democratic society. Why politically motivated young people do not vote should receive more attention.

The study of voting behavior has been well developed, and factors influencing how people vote have been much identified. Voters' voting decisions can be determined by their socio-economic status, education background, or party identification. Or voters may cast their votes based on issues or candidate evaluation. Those factors also influence the turnout. But voting intention is not voting behavior. Miller and Shank (1996) indicate that voting is a two-stage decision: to vote and not to vote, and choice

among candidates for elections. When people say they tend to vote, they often fail so to do so. In addition to the question of why people do not vote, it is also important to investigate what affects people's voting intention. In order to have a better understanding personal and contextual factors contribute youth turnout and to pave the way for future research, our study conduct focus group interviews to examine possible reasons people vote or do not vote.

Trends in overall turnout in Taiwan

In Taiwan, under the authoritarian regime, although local elections were held constantly from the 1950s on,[1] the elections of the Legislative Yuan were suspended for decades and only a small number of "additional seats" were elected after 1968.[2] With the lifting of martial law (1949-1987), the end of the Period of Mobilization for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion in 1991 and the additional Articles of the Constitution in 1992, all representatives of the Legislative Yuan were reelected in 1992. Since then, legislative elections are held regularly, initially every three years (until 2008) and now every four years. Moreover, the first direct presidential election took place in 1996. The president serves one term of four years and may be re-elected for one additional term.

After democratization, there are eleven types of elections. As all representative bodies and major executive officials had different term limits and different types of elections were not held at the same time, Taiwan almost had elections every year. Since 2012, eleven types of elections in Taiwan have been unified into general and local elections,[3] and each election is held every four years respectively, i.e. every two years, Taiwan have elections. General elections are held to elect the president and vice president jointly, and members of the Legislative Yuan. The latest one was held in

[1] Except for provincial governments, local council elections were held regularly beginning in 1950. At the provincial level, the situation was a little more complicated. The Fujian provincial government was streamlined. As for the province of Taiwan, governors were appointed by the central government until 1994 but provincial legislators were elected by popular vote beginning in 1954. Although the governor of Taiwan was elected by popular vote in 1994, following a constitutional amendment in 1997, most of the Taiwan provincial government's functions were transferred to the central government in 1998. Therefore, both the post of provincial governor and the provincial assembly were abolished.

[2] The representatives for the first term of the Legislative Yuan were elected in mainland China in 1947 and, after the government of the Republic of China moved to Taiwan, remained in office until 1992. Representatives for the additional seats were elected in the territories under the government's actual control, including Taiwan Province, Kinmen (Quemoy) county and Lienchiang County (known as the Matsu islands) of Fujian Province.

[3] Nine types of elections have been unified into "local elections", the so called "9-in-1" elections. Local elections are held to elect magistrates of counties, mayors of special municipalities, cities, townships and county-administered cities, chief administrators of indigenous districts and village chiefs.

2024.

The rates of voter turnout in presidential elections and legislative elections are shown in Figure 1.

Initially, the legislators were elected by the single non-transferable vote (SNTV) system. In 2005, Taiwan conducted electoral reforms and changed the rules to the mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) systems consisting of a single member district (SMD) plurality system plus a closed-list proportional representation (PR) system. The first legislative election under the MMM was in 2008.

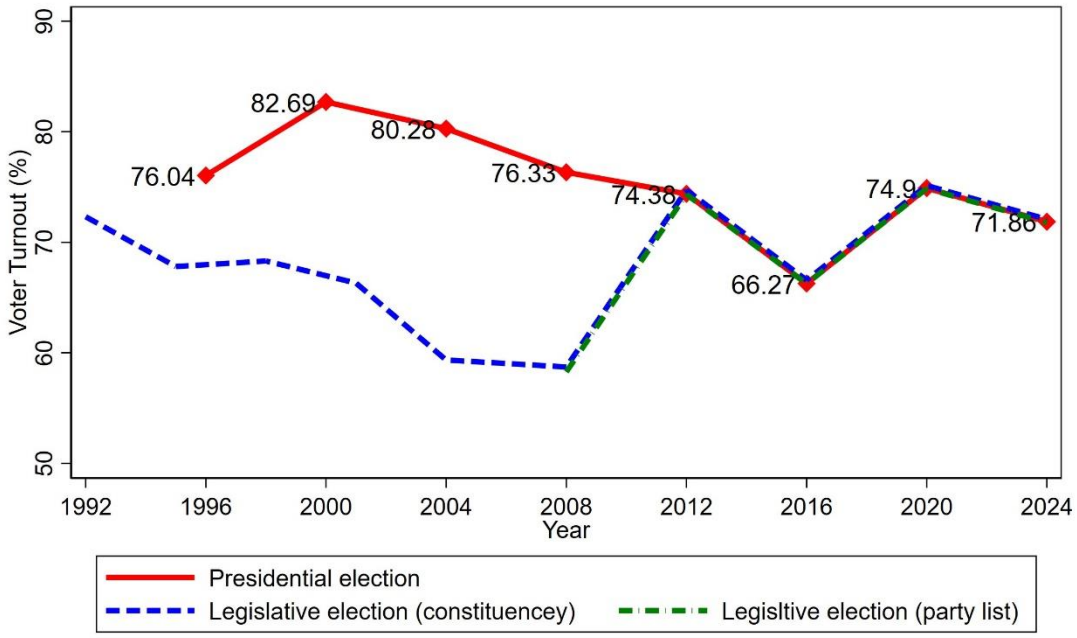


Figure 1. Voter Turnout in Taiwan's Generational Elections (1992-2024)[a]

Source: Central Election Commission

*For the Legislative Yuan, the elector rules were changed from the SNTV to the MMM and became effective in 2008.

In 1992, after democratization, the first Legislative Yuan election, the turnout was 72.0%. The rates of voter turnout in legislative elections consistently decreased, reaching its lowest point in 2008 at about 58 percent. Overall, between 1992 and 2008, the turnout rate for legislative elections, exhibited a downward trend. Since 2008, as voters have two votes, we respectively calculate rates of voter turnout for both the nominal and the PR tier in legislative elections. As shown in Figure1, turnout rates in two tiers, are slightly different. By comparison, the rates of voter turnout in

presidential elections are higher than those in legislative elections. In 2012, legislative elections were held simultaneously with the presidential election and the turnout increased up to 74.7%.

In comparison with other democracies, Taiwan's turnout is relatively good. But with a closer look, Taiwan's overall voter turnout has declined for both presidential and legislative elections at the aggregate level. Take presidential elections for example. The highest turnout was 82.69% in 2000. But since then, like other countries, voting rates declined in the following years, hitting a record low of 66.27% in 2016. The turnout increased in 2020 but decreased in 2024 from 74.90% to 71.86%.

As for young voters, we do not have the actual turnout of individual voters. Since 2016, the Central Election (CEC) started to conduct a study on turnout differences among men and women (Juang and Hung 2016, 2020). They sampled 230 neighborhoods and looked at the demographics of who turnout in these neighborhoods. Unfortunately, that they did not have the data on turnout for previous elections. Therefore, we use the Taiwan's Election and Democracy Study (TEDS) multiyear survey data conducted by the National Chengchi University Election Study Center.[4] The multiyear data enable us trace the pattern of changes in the turnout rate in recent elections. Since the survey data about the 2024 election is not available, for the 2024 election and the difference between the 2020 and 2024 elections, we refer to our survey data (Cheng 2021, 2024). [5]

The current voting age in Taiwan is 20.[6] In order to understand voting trends by age, we divide the data into 5 groups: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 and up, and represent the results in figure 2 and figure 3.

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[4] The respondents were asked whether they had cast ballots. As in other countries, respondents may not accurately report their behavior. That is, respondents report that they voted when in fact they did not. Therefore, turnout as reported in surveys is higher than the official records, as may be seen in the figure 1. For example, in 2004 the actual turnout rate was 80.28% but according to TEDS data, the overall turnout was 90.84%. Since the CEC does not have official records, the reported turnout cannot be validated. Although surveys are not very good at estimating absolute levels of turnout, turnout comparisons across age groups, which is what we are interested in, are less affected by this problem.

[5] Our survey is panel data. In addition to the over reporting, those who are willing to accept interviews repeatedly may be more interested in politics, so turnout rates from surveys are higher than official statistics. Despite these, the turnout rate of 20-29 generation (70.0%) is still much lower than that of other age groups in 2024.

[6] The common voting age in the world is 18 but in Taiwan it is 20. It has been argued that lowering the voting age would encourage participation among young people in public issues, which would drive policymakers to better reflect the needs of younger generations. In January 2018, the Referendum Act was revised and the voting age for referendums was lowered to 18. However, in 2022, a constitutional amendment was proposed to lower the voting age to 18 without success.

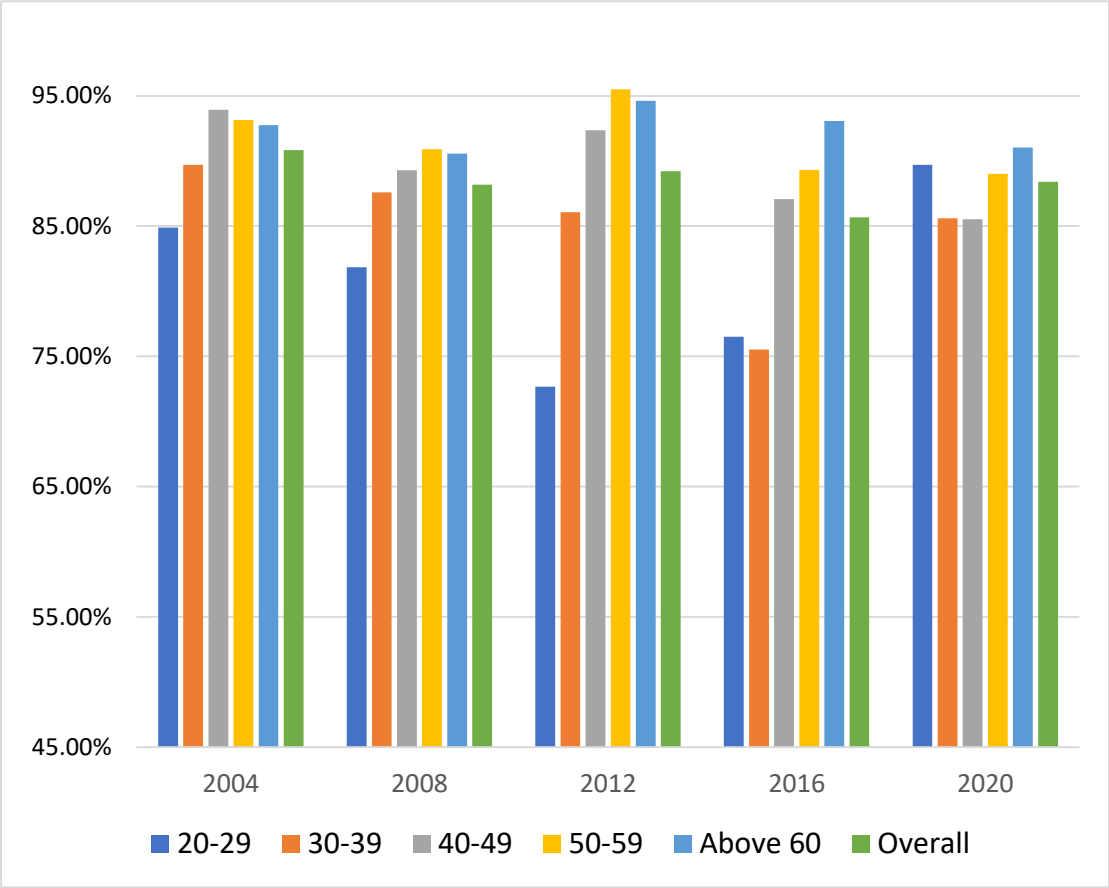


Figure 2 Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections by Age Group (2004-2020)
Source: TEDS2004、TEDS2008、TEDS2012、TEDS2016、TEDS2020

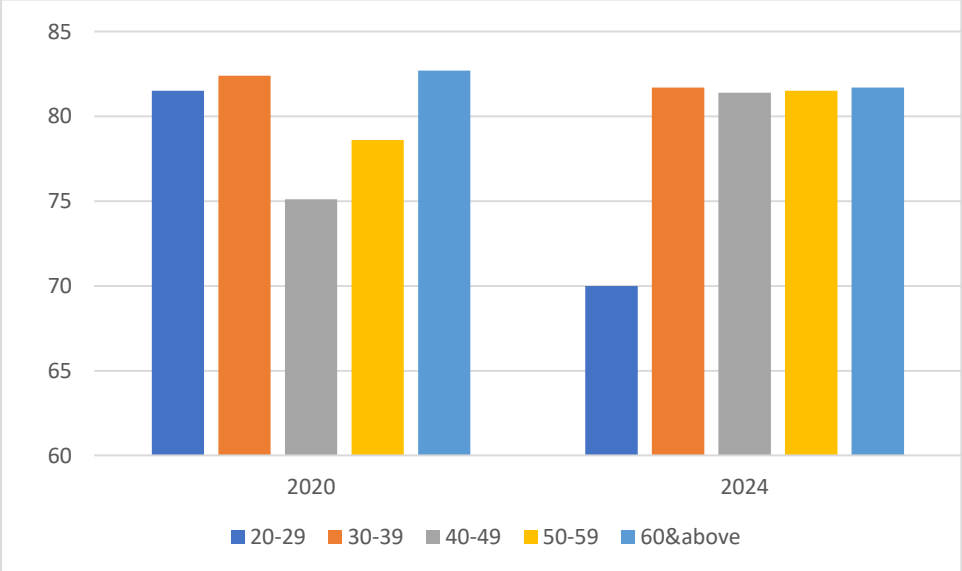


Figure 3 Voter Turnout in Presidential Elections by Age Group (2020-2024)
Source: Cheng (2021, 2024)

Based on the Figure 1 and Figure 2, we can find that voting trends by age were similar: the turnout increase with age, which is consistent with the existing theory on the effects of age on turnout. Age has a curvilinear effect on turnout. Turnout continues to increase as people reach their retirement age, but it declines mildly as people age further. [7] In Taiwan, turnout increases through a person's thirties, forties, and fifties, and is at its height when people are in their late fifties and early sixties (Tsui and Wu 2011).

We also can identify two characteristics of youth turnout in Taiwan. First of all, the reported turnout rate has gradually decreased with time. Secondly, there are age gaps in turnout, which have been widened across generations and elections. Among those 50-59 years old and those 60+, they still consistently go to vote and levels of turnout have not changed much. Therefore, the problem of declining overall voter turnout is concentrated among younger voters. In actual fact, with the exception of the 2020 election, the turnout among the 20-29 group has declined faster than the average. The lack of youth participation in the voting process is not a random phenomenon but an on-going development.

It is equally important to note that when the voter turnout increased, youth turnout increased more significantly. In 2020, the turnout increased from 66.27% to 74.90% and among young voters and the 20-29 group, the reported turnout surged. That is, when the voter turnout declines, the decline in youth voter turnout is more severe but when the voter turnout increases, youth turnout increases more substantially. Obviously, young voters do not lack an interest in politics. They are politically motivated but sometimes choose not to vote. Moreover, it should be fair to argue that although young voters usually do not vote much, when they vote, their votes may affect the results. This is what happened in 2020. It has been widely agreed that President Tsai got reelected because she received a lot of support from young voters. Changes in youth turnout should receive more attention.

Instead of only asking why young people do not vote in general, for those who are politically motivated, we argue that we should investigate what factors affect young people's voting intention. If they are politically motivated, what prevents them from

[7] It has been argued that young people are in a transition phase in life, moving away from home, building their career and yet having to acquire their adult roles, and have less of a stake in the political process. Therefore, young people have been less inclined to vote than older people. Middle-aged voters gradually become more mobilized as they have accumulated information and resources and experience. The elderly, on the one hand, may gradually retire from the civic duty of voting. As they are less physically mobile and their social network deteriorates, they become less engaged in societal matters.

voting? When they decide to vote, what are they concerned about?

Literature Review

There are varied reasons for the low levels of youth voter turnout. The conventional wisdom is that young people do not have motivation, lack a sense of civic obligation, and face barriers to voting (Holbein and Hillygus 2020). First of all, it has been argued that young people do not vote because they usually do not have motivation to vote. It could be because they lack an interest in politics or do not see the value of participation and thereby are indifferent to political activities. As they are politically apathetic, they do not want to participate in politics. As a result, they usually do not vote. Or, people do not have motivation to vote because they do not think that voting will make a difference. That is, their sense of political efficacy is low: They do not trust their ability to influence politics and do not believe that the government cares what they think. As a result, they tend not to vote.

Secondly, young voters are interested in politics but they tend to see voting as a choice than a duty. It has been agreed that the perception of citizenship norms, i.e., perceptions of good citizenship, have a positive effect on political participation. In particular, if the perception of good citizenship is more duty-based, they tend to see voting is civic duty and they are more likely to vote. However, recent research shows that younger generations have a civic orientation but they tend to see voting as a choice. Implicitly, there are different forms of participation, and voting is regarded as one of them. Young people can choose vote or not to vote. In actual fact, compared to their elders, young generations tend to participate in unconventional participatory forms, such as mass protests or increased use of social media as a new political engagement (Solijonov, 2016). For example, research shows that young people do not go to polling stations in their neighborhoods but are more likely to sign petitions and participate in demonstrations (Melo and Stockemer 2014) or dedicate themselves to volunteering (Dalton, 2006)

Thirdly, young people are interested in politics but they face obstacles and distraction which may negatively affect the attitude toward voting. Relatively, the act of voting is costly for young people. For example, the design of voting arrangement, such as elections day and location of polling stations can have an impact on turnout. In particular, in some countries like Canada, the US and the UK, voters are required to register to vote in advance before voting. The turnout has been lower than those countries with compulsory voting. These barriers could be more challenging for young voters since they are not experienced and do not have enough information

when they vote for the first time (Holbein and Hillygus 2020).[8] Therefore, to decide to cast a vote may take considerable time, effort and planning. As a result, young people fail to vote even though they intend to do so.

As for youth participation in Taiwan, many studies have investigated whether or not there exist age differences in their attitudes toward democracy and political participation and most of them find differences. For example, Chen (2010) find that the older generation's democratic values are higher than those of the younger generation. The younger generation participate more in unconventional forms. The turnout is lower among young voters (Lin, 2016; Wu and Liu 2017; Achen and Wang, 2019). And there are differences in perspectives and considerations that determine who different generations would vote for (Lin 2016).

Scholars further examine what caused age differences in political participation. One possible explanation is that the contexts where different generations grew up are different (Chen 2010). While the older generation grew up when Taiwan was at the critical turning point of making its transition from authoritarianism to democracy, the younger generation came of political age when Taiwan was in the phase of habituating to democracy. Therefore, they have different attitude toward democracy. Moreover, changes in political participation could be attributed to change in citizenship perceptions (Yang and Chen 2022).

Research shows that political efficacy and perceptions of citizenship norms have a political impact on political participation (Yu and Weng 2017; Yang and Chen 2022). In particular, the perception of duty-based citizenship norms has a significant impact on voting (Yu and Weng 2017).[9] Implicitly, if there are more people seeing voting is a civic duty, there are more people who are willing to vote. But younger generations have more people who tend to see voting as a right, not duty, and are more involved in unconventional participation than older generations. For example, the 2014 Sunflower Movement was driven by student activists who protested a free trade agreement with China and broader issues of democracy, pushing a more progressive direction (Ho, 2016). Therefore, the level of youth turnout is lower than that of older generations. But is also equally important to note that, as Balis and Achen (2019) argue, duty and preference each have strong positive effects on turnout, i.e., people may vote out of a sense of duty or because she has strong preferences about the outcome of the election,

[8] There is also an indirect opportunity cost to learning the process of voting, liking finding a polling place and learning about the candidates.

[9] Yu and Weng (2017) adopt Dalton's theoretical framework and divide citizenship norms into two dimensions: duty-based citizenship norms and engaged citizenship norms. The perception of engaged citizenship norms also has an impact on voting but the effect is not statistically significant.

and they also may have a negative interaction effect. That is, among those with a strong sense of duty, the impact of preferences about the outcome of the election is weaker. Alternatively, if people have strong preferences about the election results, even though the sense of duty is weak, they care about the outcome and still go to vote. In 2020, the surge in youth turnout might be attributed to the period effect. Stimulated by Xi Jinping's "One Country Two Systems, Taiwan Plan" speech in 2019, and 2019–2020 Hong Kong protests, young people who cared about the relationship with China and democratic value might have a strong willingness to vote (Wang and Cheng 2023).

In addition, Huang and Wang (2010) and Yu and Weng (2017) also find that whether or not people have an interest in politics has a significant positive impact on voting. Similar findings can be found in Lee, Chen, Huang and Hsiao's analysis (2008). They use student council elections to investigates whether or not information technology, i.e. internet voting, increases voter turnout. From the post-election survey, they find that although when there is online voting, there are more people with higher political interest willing to vote, those political apathetic voters are not successfully mobilized. That is, the key determinant of voting participation is not the ease of voting but the interest in public affairs. Implicitly, it is very difficult to mobilize the unmotivated ones.

The cost of voting is another factor impacting on political participation. In Taiwan, elections are always held on Saturday and if possible, election days will not be scheduled for the week of final exams and civil service exams. People do not have to register to vote. Voter rolls are generated automatically from the country's household registration system. Voters are assigned a precinct based on their official residence. As voter registration is automatic, the cost of voting is Taiwan is much lower than that in the US. But Taiwan's system also has a downside: Voters have to return to the place where their household is registered. In Taiwan, there is no early voting, absentee vote or electronic voting, and voters need to physically cast their vote. Many young voters who have left their hometown to study or work in big cities like Taipei would need to travel back home to vote. It is because traveling back home to vote places a disproportion burden on people who live far from their official pace of residence. Moreover, they may need to take off work early or even take days off to vote. Consequently, they may be reluctant to make the trip to vote. Research by Tsai (2015) shows that "residential absentee" voters are less likely to vote than their counterparts that live in their registered address. As about one third of Taiwan's youth are

residential absentees, potentially, youth turnout will be potentially driven down.[10]

Data and Data Analysis

In order to explore possible factors affecting young generations' voting intention, we conducted qualitative interviews on November 11-12, 2023, before the 2024 presidential election. Participants were recruited from the telephone interview respondents, the project "Taiwan Identity: Its Development and Implications" (Cheng 2021). Age 20 or above are eligible to vote in Taiwan. To increase the number of interviewees, we recruited participants who were the youth, between 20 and 29, either in 2016 or 2020 and those who were eligible to vote in 2022.[11]

Since party identification has been a key factor explaining voting behavior, groups segments are also based on respondents' party identification/party preferences with 6-8 people per group. Taiwan's political situation has been characterized by two major parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for many years. The Taiwan People's Party(TPP) which established in 2019 and had a candidate, Wen-je Ko, the former Taipei Mayor, running for the presidential election for the first time in 2024.[12] As the TPP received 10 seats, becoming the third large party in the legislative yuan, and is also popular among young people, we also separate the TPP's supporters from other groups. That is, there are four groups, the pan-blue (mainly KMT), the pan green (mainly DPP), the white (the TPP) and the neutral (independents). We recruited 25 respondents. Please see the Table 1 for their background.

[10] Since 2014 several university student associations have worked with non-profit organizations to raise funds to help young voters to go home to vote. They arrange buses or buy tickets at discounted prices. But to what extent this arrangement has impacted on voting has not been seriously examined yet.

[11] Although they were eligible to vote in 2020, they might have experience of voting in 2022 and tell us why they voted or did not vote. Moreover, for the then upcoming 2024 election, they could tell us whether or not they would go to vote and for what reasons.

[12] He received 26.5% of the votes.

Table1 List of participants

ID*	SEX	AGE	Education	U/I Stance	Identity
2023B01	Male	23	Senior High	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Chinese
2023B02	Female	28	Graduate School	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Both
2023B03	Male	28	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese
2023B04	Female	24	University	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023B05	Female	27	Graduate School	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023B06	Female	26	Graduate School	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese
2023B07	Male	25	Graduate School	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese
2023G01	Male	35	Graduate School	Maintain status quo, move toward independence	Taiwanese
2023G02	Female	32	University	Maintain status quo, move toward independence	Taiwanese
2023G03	Female	26	University	Maintain status quo, move toward independence	Taiwanese
2023G04	Male	29	University	Maintain status quo, move toward independence	Taiwanese
2023G05	Female	31	University	Independence as soon as possible	Taiwanese
2023G06	Female	26	University	Maintain status quo, move toward independence	Taiwanese
2023G07	Female	34	Graduate School	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023P01	Male	26	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Both
2023P02	Female	25	University	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023P03	Female	26	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Both
2023P04	Female	36	University	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023P05	Male	26	University	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023P06	Male	25	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese
2023P08	Male	24	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese
2023N01	Male	26	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese
2023N06	Female	26	Graduate School	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023N07	Female	27	University	Maintain status quo indefinitely	Taiwanese
2023N09	Male	25	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese
2023N10	Female	29	University	Maintain status quo, decide at later date	Taiwanese

*Party Identification: B=KMT, G=DDP, P=Taiwan People's Party, N=Independent

Below are the questions for interviews.

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself. Where do you get political information? Do you discuss with your family or friends about politics?
2. Do you know where your polling station is?
3. Do you think that voting is a duty or a right?
4. Did you vote in 2016 or/and 2020?
    1) If so: who did you vote for in that election? For what reason?
    2) If no: why not?
5. Will you vote for the 2024 presidential election? Why or why not?

Except for the second question is a dichotomous one which could be answered with a yes or no. Other questions are open-ended questions.

For the second question, every interviewee knows the location of the polling station. It seems that information is not the issue affecting young people's intention to vote. The next section mainly summarizes their responses to the first, third and fifth questions. If answers to the first question is related to how they make decisions (not) to vote, they will be included as well.

Since our survey is panel data, in addition to the over reporting, those who are willing to accept interviews repeatedly may have due to their higher interest in politics, most participants reported that they voted in presidential elections. Interview contents are summarized as follows.

Voting is a duty or a right?

In order to explore the voting intention of younger generations, our first concern is how do young people feel about voting? Is voting a duty or a right for them? Our interview data shows (see table 2) that most participants think it is a right or both, and only few participants consider it to be a duty. Those who believe that voting is a duty emphasize that they should express their opinions and make decisions about their future life through voting. Those who believe that voting is both a duty and a right usually emphasize that voting is also a "civil right" that should be fulfilled.

Table 2　Is voting a duty or a right?　(some quotations)

Duty	Everyone has to vote to know what everyone really thinks. (2023B01) I think it is a duty, because every decision we make will affect our subsequent lives, so no matter whether you want to choose or not, or what you choose, you must fulfill your obligation. (2023G07) I think it's a duty... Even if you say you cast an invalid ballot, I think it's still a duty because you have fulfilled your obligation (2023G01)
Both Duty and Right	I tend to think that it is both a right and a duty. But I personally feel that my vote is not so important, although I say I will vote (2023B05) (Voting) is both a right and a duty…...I must vote for this, but it feels like even if I vote, it still won't have a big impact on the election, but if I don't vote, it seems that I can't do anything. (2023B03) I think this is our obligation as Taiwanese citizens... No matter what position you stand on... I think it is important to exercise your civil rights. (2023N01) I personally feel that it's out obligation to vote because it is the right granted to us by the Constitution (2023P01)
Right	I also think it is a right, not an obligation. You cannot force a person to do this thing... You have this right but you can do or do not do it. you decide for yourself. (2023G02) It does not constitute an obligation, because after all, there is no law that stipulates that... you must do it. If you don't do it, you will be fined or something, so it is a choice. (2023P05) I think it is a right but not a duty… (2023N07) I think voting cannot be regarded as an obligation... Voting is a right... It is a channel given to us by the government to express opinions, but I think whether to use it is another matter. It involves the cost and your benefits. This is a trade-off. So I think voting is optional, it's not mandatory (2023N09) I think voting is a right, given to the people by the country……..I think this is a channel through which our lower-level people can express their opinions (2023N06) I think rights are more appropriate than duty, because we can make our voices heard. (2023P02)

As most interviewees believe that voting is a right, and they can decide whether to exercise this right, what factors influence their decisions? We got some clues from interviews.

Reasons Not to Vote

First, the reasons people choose not to vote are mainly related to political motivation, candidate, policy, cost of voting, and weather (Table 3).

Table 3 Reasons Not to Vote

No motivation	No interest in politics (political apathy)
	No sense of political efficacy
	Voting is not important (not a priority)
Candidate	No preferred candidate
Policy	Not the issues I care about
Cost of Voting	High cost of voting
	No benefit
Others	Bad Weather

The most frequently cited reason for not voting among young people is a **lack of political motivation**. From their opinions, we sorted out three different situations. The first is ***No interested in politics and political apathy***. They do not care about politics, nor do they care about the impact of politics. They think that there are too many things in life, and ***(voting) will not be the first choice... Therefore, voting may not be something they care about that much*** (2023P06). One participant also said: ***In fact, most my colleagues are quite apolitical, which is why I think those in the technology industry, at least most of the engineers in the 3 or 4 companies I work for, generally don't care what the current situation is*** (2023G07). The second type is the belief that *one's vote cannot change anything*: ***I think many young people think that there will be no difference without my vote. Most young people feel like this*** (2023P01***)***, especially when they do not believe that voting can change the helpless situation they face resulting from various problems such as low wages and high housing prices: ***It seems to be a common feeling among young people... they feel like there is nothing they can do to change politics, or life, including housing prices, work, or anything else. Then during the election, I will feel that my vote is just useless even if I express my opinion.... I think this may also be a reason why young people are not so willing to vote. ...Yes, a feeling of helplessness*** (2023B03)**.** The third is that *voting is not important or a priority*: ***For example, if someone wants to go play that day, or if someone wants to go to somewhere, it may be more important to them, so voting doesn't matter anymore*** (2023P06). One participant also said bluntly: ***(When voting) my own things come first*** (2023N07).

Our interview data also shows younger generations do not vote because of the cost of

voting. Since voters in Taiwan must vote at their registered place of residence, the time and transportation costs become considerations for young people who work and study somewhere else: ***the cost of their time and transportation costs, etc. Considering that just to vote, many young people felt that it was not worthwhile... and currently salary is very important to young people, so why should I spend so much cost just to vote for this, what is my purpose? if you are not a young person who is really passionate about politics, you will not do this*** (2023P01), and some young people do not want to vote because they will get a higher salary if they work on the election day (which is scheduled for Saturday): ***I almost always went to work on voting days, because I have double salary, I will not give up double salary just to vote*** (2023G04). One participant even thought: ***I really don't want to vote without benefit*** (2023B01).

Young people do not vote because of the lack of policies related to young people: ***Because in fact, many policies have nothing to do with young people, so they don't care*** (2023P06). They don't think these issues are related to their lives: ***most of my peers around me choose don't vote (because) they may feel that this has no direct relationship with them... and it will not directly affect our lives*** (2023P03). As for the candidate factor, only few participants mentioned that if there is no candidate they like, they will not vote: ***If I don't have someone in particular I want to vote for, I won't vote*** (2023N10). It seems that for young people, the reasons for not voting have little to do with the candidates. The last factor is weather, but there is only one participant mentioned the weather factor in our interview: ***I won't vote maybe because of rainy day*** (2023P01).

Overall, the factors that influence young people not to vote do not seem to be many. As the existing literature has argued, the main reasons Taiwan's young people are unwilling to vote can be attributed to their apathy towards politics and lack of political efficacy. Moreover, some people think that election issues and policies often do not care about young people's needs, and do not vote. We also find that economic pressures keep some people from vote because they think the cost of voting is high and it is not worth voting.

Reasons to Vote

With regard to reasons to vote, we summarized seven categories from the interview data (see Table 4): Sense of political efficacy, Candidate factors, Policy, Party politics, Incumbent's performance, Political Socialization and the Cost of Voting.

Table 4 Reasons to Vote

Sense of political efficacy	It is believed that voting will have an impact
Candidate	Like one particular candidate
	Don't like any particular candidate(s)
	Don't like the candidate that running for higher office without finishing the term
	Strategic voting
Party politics	Don't like any particular party
	Tired of conflict and gridlock between pan-blue and pan-green party /disillusioned with traditional party politics
	Supporting 3rd force/small parties
	Party turnover
	Party's quality/capacity
Policy Issues	Political platform in general
	Policy toward China
	Democratic value
	Other Issues: same-sex marriage, real estate price, environmental protection, economy
Incumbent's performance	Positive Performance
	Negative Performance
Political Socialization	Influenced by families or friends
Cost of voting	Low cost of voting

Sense of Political Efficacy

Although some participants lack the sense of political efficacy and choose not to vote, some tend to think their votes will make a difference and vote. " ***Although my vote may be just one vote... it will still have an influence. If everyone think that my vote doesn't matter anyway, and doesn't vote, then the country cannot function*** (2023B06), and believe that their votes can have an impact: ***the vote you cast will affect our future lives... No matter which candidate you support, it will actually have an impact*** (2023G05).

Candidate Factor

As for candidate factors, we sorted out four different types from the interview data. The first is that they vote because they **like a particular candidate**. The candidates they mentioned about include President Tsai Ing-wen, James Soong who ran for

president from 2000 to 2020, businessman Terry Gou, and former Taipei Mayor Wen-je Ko. Much of the support for President Tsai Ing-wen is due to the fact that she is a woman: ***I tend to support female candidates, and I also support women's participation in politic***s (2023G06). It is also related to her personality: ***Overall, I think (Tsai Ing-wen) she is a very rational and intellectual person, so she will not incite hatred like other candidates. She will only talk about her own ideas*** (2023G05). At the same time, some people expect that a female president will bring changes to the country or different issues may arise: ***Just like Obama was the first black president of the United States, would it change anything if we had the first female president?*** (2023G02), ***When women enter politics, some different issues will be raised*** (2023G05). As for the support for James Soong, we can sense young people's special concern. Since James Soong participated in six presidential elections from 2000 to 2020, although he was never elected, many participants was attracted by his perseverance: ***One candidate who insists on doing the same thing for 20 years is really not easy... Although I know that he will fail again, I am willing to help him with a small vote*** (2023B07), ***I feel that Uncle Song is great and participates every time, so I must make him get back the deposit*** (2023G04). [13]

The third candidate mentioned was Terry Gou. At the time of our interview, the cooperation among Terry Gou, the People's Party and the KMT was still in progress. Although it was not certain whether he would become a candidate or not, some interview participants expressed that they would be willing to come out and vote for him:(***If Terry Gou gets a chance to run for presidential election) then I will vote for Terry Gou...Trump is a businessman, and Terry Gou is also a businessman. Yes, just give it a try to people in different fields*** (2023G02).

As for the most mentioned candidate, Wen-je Ko, our survey data shows that 57.5% of aged 20-29 respondents voted for Wen-je Ko of the Taiwan People's Party, and nearly half (49.5%) of those aged 30-39 also supported Wen-je Ko (see Figure 4). An examination of the interview data also shows that many young people like him: ***I believe... I should say all over Taiwan... I think he should be quite popular among young people.***(2023P04). Wen-je Ko's image in their view is that of a person who speaks out, is willing to do things, and has the ability to well develop the country: ***No matter whether he is elected president or not... he wants to do things well***(2023B03), ***He dares to speak! He will speak out for us*** (2023P04); ***I will definitely vote, and then I will vote for Mr. Ko. The reason why I will vote for him mainly is because I think he will make decisions based on the long-term development of the country***

[13] In Taiwan, candidates are required to pay the deposit to discourage frivolous candidacies. The money is refunded if candidates receive more than 10 percent of the vote in their district.

(2023P08). Interestingly, the KMT candidates were not mentioned by young people as their favorite candidates in interviews.

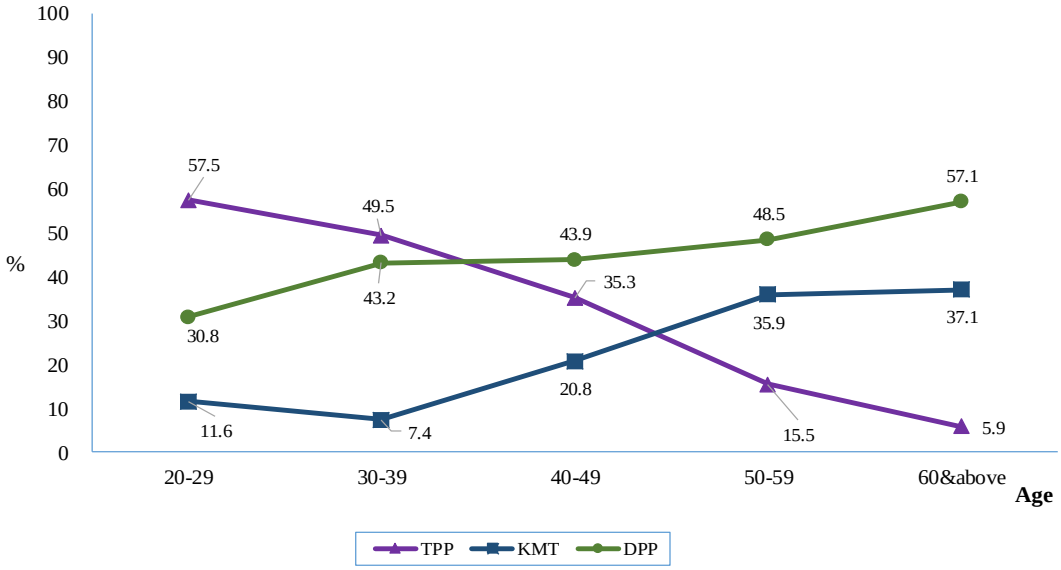


Figure 4 Survey of Voting Tendencies by Age in Taiwan's 2024 Presidential Election

Data Source: Cheng(2024)

The second candidate factor that affects young people's voting intention is that they **don't like a certain candidate**, or because they don't like particular candidates, they can only choose by elimination. In 2020, Kuo-yu Han is the most mentioned candidate they don't like. Young people believe that his image is detrimental to the dignity of the country: (***In 2020), …I couldn't accept the election of such a candidate, so I even came out to vote*** (2023G07); ***I found that he did not have the style that a country's president should have…I care a lot about a country's leader…... I don't think I can elect a president who climbed trees*** (2023P01); ***Kuo-yu Han... cannot go to the international community... At least we have to elect someone have a normal mental condition*** (2023G02). ***It's just that sometimes what he say is not what he should say as a head of state***(2023B01). Simiarily, for the 2024 election, the way You-yi Hou talks/acts is also the reason why he is not popular: ***He (You-yi Hou) claimed restarting the forth nuclear power plant. He changed his position within one day. Then I think that if you can change so quickly, it means that you are a person who has no central value... I hope that the country will have (stable) long-term development*** (2023P08).

We also found that young people will vote for candidates they dislike less: ***I think***

voting is an action driven by hatred... I came out to vote, and It's because I'm really unhappy with one candidate, ….so I just come out and vote for the other candidate (2023G07); ***I don't actually like Ching-te Lai that much, but because of the deletion method... I do not like the pa-blue party, Plus I also dislike You-yi Hou... As for Wen-je Ko, I used to be a fan of him when he first came out... I found out later that, well,.this man is weird...I don't trust businessmen to govern the country...He (Terry Gou) cares more about the interests of himself or some people's...rather than the happiness of the majority.. So, after deleting, although I don't like Ching-te Lai very much, I may still vote with tears*** (2023G06).

One special phenomenon in Taiwan is that the Kuomintang candidates Kuo-yu Han in 2020 and You-yi Hou in 2024 both ran for president without completing their mayoral terms, which attracted criticism from young people: ***Because of Guo-yu Han had just become the mayor at that time... he did not respond to the expectations that Kaohsiung City gave him.….also he have not actually accumulated enough political achievements, and then he directly run for the president, I think is a bit too fast***(2023B06). You-yi Hou is also not recognized for the same reason: ***(You-yi Hou) run for the president without finish his term of mayor,... The last time Guo-yu Han did such a thing, I didn't like it. Then this time the Kuomintang is doing the same thing again, and I really feel not that comfortable*** (2023B03). ***Just like Guo-yu Han, it is not appropriate to run for the president as mayor, …..why are you doing this to cause chaos?*** (2023P04)

Since there are three political parties running in the 2024 presidential election, we have also seen the emergence of strategic voting: ***My goal is not to let the green win. There is a gap between how much I hate pan-green and how much I like pan-blue. I might hate green a little bit more, so in order to prevent them from being elected, I might tend to vote for Wen-je Ko*** (2023B06).

Party Politics

Survey data shows that young people in Taiwan under the age of 40 are the main supporters of the TPP. From the interview data, we can find some clues that how the TPP party find a niche to develop given the two major parties. From the interview data, we summarized five factors related to political parties: party's quality/capacity, change in power, don't like any particular party, supporting the 3rd force/small parties, and tired of conflict and gridlock between pan-blue and pan-green party /disillusioned with traditional party politics.

The first type related to party factor is "**I don't like any particular party**". In our interviews, some young people with political party leanings directly expressed that

they voted because they did not like the other camp: ***It does not mean that they particularly identify with the political party I voted for. Voting may be less like party identification, or it may be that you vote for another political party because of negative feelings... It means that you hate a certain political party, so you vote for another party*** (2023B05). ***I will definitely vote because I hate the green party so much.*** (2023B06). What's interesting is that supporters of the pan-blue camp will mention that maybe the pan-blue camp is not very good, but it is really because the performance of the pan-green camp is too poor, so they will still choose to vote for the pan-blue camp: ***I grew up in a deep blue environment, and when I get older, Il feel that the pan-blue is not that good, but the pan-green is even worse, so I decide to vote for the pan-blue*** (2023B02), and even said that the pan-green camp is better at supervising than the pan-blue camp, and the pan-blue camp should be in charge, and let pan-green camp play a supervisory role is more appropriately***: pan-green camp can really mess things up sometimes. Although pan-blue may not necessarily do well... but when pan-blue is in the opposition party, the ability to supervise is not that strong... So sometimes I feel that it is better to let pan-blue be in office, and then let pan-green supervise*** (2023B01). As for the supporters of the pan-green camp, they express their dislike of the pan-blue camp more directly: ***My political leanings are rather non-Kuomintang. Anyway, I will not vote for KMT. Basically, I don't like to vote...but I just don't want the KMT to be elected. Anyway, I just hope that anything related to the KMT will not be elected*** (2023G06). ***I feel that the pna-blue camp... doesn't care about young people, so everyone is driven by hatred to vote*** (2023G07).

Compared with direct party preference, many young people also express that they are **tired of conflict and gridlock between pan-blue and pan-green party**, which can also be regarded as a kind of **disillusioned with traditional party politics**: ***because now young people may have become disgusted with blue and green. I don't want only blue and green in my life. I may have a third choice*** (2023P01). ***I just don't want the presidency with such great power to only alternate between blue and green.*** (2023P05). Perhaps because Taiwan's political situation has long been dominated by competition between the blue and green camps, young people will hope that a third force will emerge: ***I hope that another force can break this deadlock which only blue or green can be elected in 2024***(2023P05). ***My party vote is more likely to vote for the third force... I still hope that there will be checks and balances*** (2023P08). At the same time, many young people believe that they have to give small parties opportunities: ***There are fewer and fewer opportunities for small parties. I think this is not good for the development of Taiwan's long-term opposition supervision. People from both pan-green and pan-blue parties should not always***

win (2023P08), ***I will go to vote, the reason is I hope small parties can enter Congress. Therefore, my party vote may go for some small parties*** (2023N09).

Another factor related to party politics that prompts young people to vote is the hope for **party turnover**. They don't want one political party continue to be in power: ***I think that a political party should not be in power for too long... I think Taiwan must have party turnover. I think political party turnover will make Taiwan's democratic system progress and deepen... Only party turnover can promote the progress of a country*** (2023P1). ***At that time,(KMT's)Ma Ying-jeou has been governed for 8 years, so I think party turnover is necessary*** (2023N10).

As for ***Party's quality/capacity*****,** only one participant in the interview mentioned that because the DPP has a strong ability to supervise the government, he would vote for it: ***In 2016, I felt that the DPP was really powerful as an opposition party. There should be no political party that can compete with DPP, so at that time I would definitely vote for the DPP*** (2023P08).

Policy Issues

From the interviews, we found that the political issues that young people care about can be roughly summarized as "**political platform in general**, **policy toward China, democratic value and other social and economic issues"**.

Many young people mentioned in the interviews that they value the **political platforms** put forward by the candidates, they would choose to vote on policy issues that they agree with: ***The reason why I vote... is that I feel the candidate is good, and then, I would support him, and I want to see if there is anything that can be changed. I don't really care which party he belongs to. I only care about the (political opinions) he mentioned at the end*** (2023N01). ***I will choose policies that I think I agree with more and vote*** (2023B02). ***When there are political platforms expressed and debates, I will try to understand what do they really want to do over the next four years*** (2023G07).

As for the issues they care about, the most frequently mentioned is the **policy toward China**. Basically, the young people who mentioned this issue are almost all anti-China in their stance: ***The reason why I will vote is that I don't want to have a bad governing team... The first thing I look at is whether it is pro-China or not. Well, as long as it is pro-China, I will delete it*** (2023G05) ***As long as the candidate is more supportive of unification with mainland China, I will not vote for him*** (2023N10), ***because I think the KMT is pro-China, it is their own political interests, and then they will do something that I think may betray Taiwan... Maybe KMT might implement "one country, two systems", then we will become the next Hong Kong***

(2023G06).

Although the China factor or the identity factor were less mentioned in the 2024 election, since the Sunflower Movement in 2014, antipathy towards China seems to have been deeply rooted in the hearts of young Taiwanese people. Especially they have lived in a democratic society since they were born, **democratic values** are important to them. Therefore, we also see that the anti-China stance of young people is also related to their opposition to China's political system: ***(China) is a totalitarian regime, well... there is no freedom, I don't want to be their people*** (2023N07), Taiwan is a relatively free society... and the most important thing is (in China)... ***Chinese people cannot discuss the actions of politicians or leaders in public.*.. *when I was in China, I found they can only talk to me about this at places without cameras*** (2023G05).

Policies that young people care about also include **social or economic issues**. For example, same-sex marriage is considered by many young people to be a symbol of progress: ***The KMT actually does not support all issues with progressive values. For example, the issues that I am more concerned about may be things like gender. issues, especially same-sex marriage...our stance on the issue seems to be mostly opposite to the KMT's stance*** (2023G06)***For me, the issue that benefits the most is the same-sex marriage law*** (2023G05), but there are also people who do not agree with the same-sex marriage policy: ***In 2020, I voted for Kuo-yu Han because of my Christian faith...because Han Kuo-yu supports childbirth , so I oppose same-sex marriage*** (2023N01). In addition to the issue of same-sex marriage, environmental protection, housing prices and economic issues have also been mentioned, but rarely: ***I feel that my stance on environmental issues may be different from the KMT..so I did not vote for Blue*** (2023G03), ***I pay more attention to economic policies or housing prices. To be more specific, because house prices are rising rapidly now, it is a heavy burden for young people. Therefore, we hope the housing price policy should get more attention*** (2023N09) ***we will pay attention to policies related to our work or housing prices*** (2023N07).

Traditional theory of voting behavior pointed out that candidate, parties and issues have important impacts on voters' voting decisions (Campbell et al. 1954, 1960). Our interview data also show the same results.

Incumbent's Performance

Young people also consider whether or not they will vote based on the performance of the incumbent: ***I will refer to their previous political achievements and policy implementation rate*** (2023B03); some people decide to vote because of the **positive**

performance of the DPP: ***I should vote... The DPP has dealt with the issue of black money... Other parties seem to have done less*** (2023G03). ***For example, this time there seems to be an interest rate adjustment on mortgage loans... I think it is good*** (2023N01). Some people also agree with the performance of the KMT: ***The KMT does what I need...and then I feel, oh! Great, great, great! I will vote for KMT*** (2023B02) Wen-je Ko 's performance during his tenure as mayor of Taipei has also received a lot of recognition***: I should go to vote, and I should choose Ko. Mainly because of his previous actions as mayor. It feels like he has fulfilled his promises. , although he may not be ideal, but I think he is at least improving some of the political opinions he proposed, or optimizing the things left by his predecessor*** **(2023P03).** ***I will definitely vote, and I will vote for Mr. Ko. The reason why I will vote for him is because I think he is more concerned with data... I believe that as a person who understands polling, he must know that something he did will make his polls dropped a lot, but he still did it. I think he at least valued the country's money more than his own polls (2023P08)***

On the other hand, negative performance is also a factor that prompts young people to vote. These criticisms are mainly directed at incumbent Tsai Ing-wen or the ruling party DPP: ***Although I think Taiwan has indeed made progress in terms of social progressive values, but in the economic part, I feel like there is no better... so I don't really want to vote for Green again*** (2023G07). ***It seems that after Tsai Ing-wen became president, she didn't seem to do what she said she would do in the first place*** (2023P04). ***I think, especially when the epidemic is recovering, the government does not seem to be doing a very good job*** (2023P06). What's interesting is that the KMT's performance is not only dissatisfied with the opposing camps: ***the KMT made a big mess at that time, KMT just couldn't make it better, and made it worse*** (2023G06), ***(if I had the right to vote in 2016) I will probably vote for President Tsai. I think President Ma's cross-strait stance in the later period of his term is more towards unification, from maintaining the status quo to becoming more and more unified, also (I don't like) some of his administration*** (2023P08). KMT is not even recognized by his own supporters: ***My own political leanings are relatively blue, but I think Ma Ying-jeou failed to handle many cases*** (2023P06).

Political Socialization

some young people mentioned that family has an impact on their political leanings, whether they come from blue or green families: ***I grew up in a dark blue environment, and when I grow up, I feel that even though blue is not that good, but the green is worse, so I decided to vote for the blue*** (2023B02), ***Because my family is also blue, so my political leanings are more blue since I was a child (2023B04).***

Maybe because of my family is more green, and I am the same...it has long-term effects (2023G03). ***My natal family is very dark green. Yes, my family will tell you, just vote for that color... I used to vote for whatever my father told me to vote for*** (2023P04) Peer groups also have an impact: ***My peer group also has an impact: My filter bubbles belong to the group of young people who generally will come out to vote... I should go back to vote every time and research who to vote for*** (2023G06)

Cost of Voting

Most polling stations in Taiwan are close to the place of registered residence, so some young people think that the polling stations are not far away and the cost of going to vote is not high: ***I will vote when there are polls, because my registered residence is also my place of residence. So the voting place is very close... I think the distance to the polling place is really close, I should go vote*** (2023G02). ***The voting place is also very close to my home, so I think it is just like going out to play*** (2023N06), and some people think that if it is during the holiday, they should go back to vote: ***The reason why they go to vote is because the school is already on holiday at that time, I have some time to go back, and by the way, I can go home and spend time with my families*** (2023N09), ***I was on vacation at that time, so I should go back and vote*** (2023N07). In addition, if transportation is provided, it will make young people more willing to go home to vote: ***When I was in college, there was a report in the news that there was a special public transportation system for returning to hometowns for elections. My classmates might discuss it and then be willing to go back to exercise this right*** (2023N01).

Conclusion

Youth participation is vital for a representative democracy. The declining youth turnout has received much attention. This article compiles Taiwanese young people's views on voting and the factors that affect their voting intentions from the focus group interview data. From the interview data, young people in Taiwan regard voting as a non-compulsory right. Therefore, they tend to think it is their choice to decide whether to exercise this right. This may be one of the possible reasons for the lower turnout among younger generations.

Based on the interview data, why young people are unwilling to vote is mainly related to the lack of political motivation. Some participants are not interested in politics. Even though the polling station is close to where live or they already returned to place where their household is registered, they did not go to vote because of lack an interest in politics. A recurrent statement from the interview data is that people do not think

their votes will make a difference. The cost of voting is also a factor considered by young people who are economically disadvantaged. We do not find any unexpected answers and what we have drawn from the interview data are pretty much consistent the existing analysis of why young people do not vote.

Compared with other countries, the voting rate among Taiwanese younger generations is relatively high. From our interviews, we can find that young people are still very concerned about elections and have the motivation to vote. Candidates, political parties, policies, and the performance of politicians are all considered when they choose to vote. They also pay attention to democracy, and progressive values.

Qualitative data from focus group interviews provide an interpretative understanding of what affect young people's decision to vote. Political motivation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for voting. Young people with a strong sense of duty are more likely to vote. If young people believe that their votes will make a difference and have strong preferences about the election outcome, they may think it is worth voting. Moreover, we find that those who lack of interest in politics or/and do not have sense of political efficacy are mainly independent voters and are more likely not to vote. Implicitly, party identification (independent or partisan) plays a more important role than other factors such as candidate evaluation or policy issues in shaping younger voters' willingness to vote. We also find that young people are less concerned with party turnover. Many of them emphasize that they hate the long-term vicious battle between pan-blue and pan-green and hope a third force will emerge, and therefore they are willing to give opportunities to small parties. In actual fact, those who emphasize that they are fed up with the fierce fighting between pan-blue and pan-green tend to support the TPP, the newly established party. This may partially explain why the TPP is supported by Taiwan's younger generation.

It is also worth noting that, from the interview data, candidate factor is the more decisive factor in voting decision among the young voters in recent presidential elections. Different from previous elections, usually, the good evaluation on candidates among the electorate help candidates win the election. However, from our data, a significant portion of participants express their negative evaluation of particular candidates. Since they do not want particular candidates to get elected, they support other candidates instead. Young voters are more likely to be driven by negative views of candidates. Besides, although in Taiwan it is not unusual for elected representatives to run for higher offices while they are still in office, our data shows that young voters do not like these types of candidates to run for presidents, and question their integrity.

However, we must point out that the types and contents compiled in this article cannot exhaust all the views of the younger generation, nor the above analysis can be used to make inferences.[14] Our data can increase the understanding of young people's voting intentions, and may also provide possible explanation for changes in voting rate of Taiwan's young generation.

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[14] For example, to better understand how perceptions of citizenship norms on voting and investigate possible age differences, we need to further explore how other generations feel voting and whether or not those who regard voting as a right tend to vote less than those who regard voting as a duty.

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