

## **SYP - March Sitting: Electronic Voting**

### Survey

1. A survey was undertaken which asked young people how they would choose to vote if online voting was an option in addition to existing voting methods.

- 1067 young people responded. The preferred voting methods were:
  - In person at a polling station – 41.24%
  - Online – 39.46%
  - By post – 3.66%
  - Proxy vote – 0.84%
- The remainder indicated they had not yet decided on a preferred way of voting or did not plan to vote.

2. Respondents who said they would not use online voting were then asked to say why they would not choose this method.

- 622 young people responded to this question. The main reasons for not choosing to vote online if this option was available were:
  - It would be too easy to hack – 59.16%
  - I would not be sure that my vote had been counted – 42.12%
  - It would make voting feel less important to me – 32.96%
  - I would be worried someone else might steal my vote – 20.26%
  - I would be worried people would find out how I voted – 17.36%
  - I would find it more difficult to vote online – 13.50%

### Discussion Session

3. Two related topics were discussed in a consultation workshop:

- Building trust and confidence in online voting; this looked at questions such as:
  - Building trust in online voting systems;
  - How we could tackle fake news about online voting;
  - Could we do something to help 'normalise' online voting?
- Accessibility of digital voting; this considered questions such as:
  - Which groups of people with disabilities could benefit;
  - What digital voting methods should be considered;

4. The key points that emerged were:

- Trust in online voting systems was a concern to both those who supported this and those who did not;
- Building trust was seen as very challenging due to concerns about hacking and lack of trust in the institutions involved in running the systems;
- Normalising online voting was expected to take a long time and probably needs to be introduced very gradually to build confidence;
- Many people with disabilities could potentially benefit from digital voting, particularly people with sight loss;

- There was concern that older people with disabilities would not benefit as much from digital voting;
- Young people were generally in favour of those who find voting challenging having digital voting options that make voting more inclusive, but ensuring the systems used are secure remains very important.

### Key Conclusions

5. These findings are very consistent with findings from other surveys focussed on wider demographics as well as with information obtained from other evidence sources.

- **Views on online voting remain split – broadly 50/50 for and against.**
  - Those in favour and those opposed tend to hold quite strong positive or negative views.
  - This is true for both young people and most other demographics.
- **Trust and confidence in online voting are the most important factors for young people.**
  - This is true for other demographics and ensuring the security and integrity of voting systems remains a very important factor even where people support online voting.
- **Slightly more young people say they would prefer to vote in person at a polling place than by any other method.**
  - Studies of voting in Estonia, which has online voting, also show that most young people prefer to vote in person;
  - Many young people who preferred to vote in person said that it made voting feel more important to them; this finding is also consistent with the Estonian experience;
  - Perhaps contrary to what might be expected, Estonia has found that older people are increasingly more likely to vote online.
- **Young people agree that digital voting options should be made available to assist people with disabilities to vote:**
  - This is consistent with other studies that show a high degree of support for providing more digital voting options for people who experience difficulty with voting.

### **Next Steps**

6. The findings from the Session are already being used by the Scottish Government to help inform the way forward for digital voting. As a direct result of the valuable insights gained from young people a plan is now being developed for taking forward work to improve the accessibility of voting for people with disabilities as an initial priority.

7. The Scottish Government is extremely grateful to the Scottish Youth Parliament for the opportunity to gain these valuable insights from Scotland's young people and would like to thank all those who took the time to complete the survey, those who gave their valuable insights at the workshop and all those involved in organising the event.

**Scottish Government Elections Team  
October 2019**