

PRESS RELEASE:

For Immediate Release

Young People Want to Vote But Need Encouragement?

A survey carried out by Junior Chamber International (JCI) Dublin revealed that 70% of people aged 21-25 intend to vote in the next general election, compared to just 56% in the last election.

President of JCI Dublin, Mark Kelly said this survey pointed to the need for the government to encourage young people in Ireland to vote by implementing the following:

- Knowledge is the key to this problem and the youth of Ireland must be made aware of the importance of the democratic process. It is not enough just to tell young people that they must vote.
- Politics must be taught and examined in the Irish second level education system. This new subject would involve role-playing the different political systems as well as helping the youth of Ireland form political opinions through teaching them the political history of Ireland and the rest of the world.
- Younger political candidates who represent young people and their issues. These candidates will be better prepared to reach out to the youth of Ireland.
- Colleges and Universities should be used as a medium for introducing students to the political process and its representatives. Encourage 3rd level institutions to make politics available through media that are attractive to its students.

Political awareness and voter participation among the young are key issues in Ireland with the upcoming election in 2007. It is amazing that it is so difficult to find reliable data on a subject that affects so many potential voters.

One of the key questions in this discussion is 'Do politicians want members of the public to start voting when they are young?' The old saying "if it is not broken don't fix it" comes to mind – it suggests to us that today politicians fear that younger voters will not vote for them. This kind of thinking must stop. These people must have faith that the youth of Ireland will vote for the person who best represents their interests. Mark Kelly, President of JCI Dublin said "Politicians needs to start taking youth issues in Ireland seriously. They must put the same emphasis on youth issues in Ireland that they put on the issues affecting pensioners in Ireland."

The study carried out by JCI Dublin found that, more young people intend to vote in the next election than voted in the last election as you can see in fig 1 & 2. This could be attributed to good intentions, but we believe more needs to be done to help encourage the people to start voting earlier. We believe that as young people grow up they slowly realise the importance of taking part in the political process. JCI Dublin's survey has shown that once young people begin to exercise their right to vote, they will continue to do so.

Percentage breakdown by age of voter turn out in the 2002 election. Fig 1

	16 – 20 Col %	21 – 25 Col %	26 – 30 Col %	31 – 35 Col %	36 – 39 Col %
Did Not Vote	n/a	44%	40%	39%	28%
Did Vote	n/a	56%	60%	61%	72%

Percentage breakdown by age of those intending to vote in the next election Fig 2

	16 - 20	21 – 25	26 – 30	31 - 35	36 – 39
	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
Will Not vote	52%	30%	31%	28%	24%
Will Vote	48%	70%	69%	72%	76%

A similar study done by the CSO in the third quarter of 2002 showed that 53% of people in the group 20 – 24 voted. The interesting part about this study was that it also highlighted that as people age they start to vote, with the highest voter turnout in the 74 – 75 age category of almost 90%. President of JCI Dublin Mark Kelly said “These statistics only add weight to the argument if you want to get anything from the government you have to vote”.

The study by JCI Dublin has also shown that political knowledge is directly related to age, with the youth of Dublin scoring lower in every category in political awareness. One example being, that only 1.6% of the people in the 16 to 20 age bracket could identify the current Minister for Transport, Martin Cullen whereas 31% of the people in the 36 to 39 age bracket identified him correctly.

JCI Dublin president Mark Kelly is also calling on the youth of Ireland to start making their voice heard “if the youth of Ireland could achieve even half of what the pensioner lobby has achieved by talking to their TD’s and writing letters to the national papers, youth affairs would have a far better representation”. Mark is also appealing to young adults to join organisations that represent the youth of Ireland such as JCI (Junior Chamber International) Dublin, he said “At the moment in Ireland young people need a voice, it is an understatement to say we are getting a raw deal and together we will achieve more”.

 **Junior Chamber International Dublin**
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Editors Note:

Junior Chamber International (JCI) is a personal development and networking organisation for young people. Our aims are to provide outstanding personal development and leadership opportunities, and to enhance the skills of our members. JCI Dublin is part of an international organisation of young people who want to make a positive impact on their community. Often confused with the Chamber of Commerce, we are a separate organisation focused on developing individuals rather than on developing business. JCI Dublin provides a range of activities and projects in 4 opportunity areas: individual, community, international and business. JCI is a not-for-profit, voluntary organisation.

JCI Dublin meets in the London Collage Dublin 26 Merrion Square at 7:30 on the second Wednesday of the month

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