

The suffrage age – world wide

In the 1800s the suffrage age was 21 in most parts of the world. During the 1900s it was consistently lowered to 18 years. The latest trend is to lower to 16 years.

The suffrage age was already typically around 21 towards the turn of the century in Latin America, the Balkans and Eastern and Central European countries, whereas it was significantly higher in Western Europe.

In the latter half of the 1960s and through the 70s, the 18 year suffrage age quickly spread across the world. The youth re-

to be continued... 

COUNTRIES WITH SUFFRAGE AGE ABOVE 18 (ALL)

Country	Suffrage age (years)
South Korea	19
Japan	20
Taiwan	20
Tunisia	20
Cameroon	20
The Central African Republic	20
Gabon	21
Malaysia	21
Morocco	21
Liechtenstein	21
Monaco	21
Maldives	21
Oman	21
Singapore	21
Salomon Islands	21
Tonga	21
Fiji	21
Djibouti	21
Dominica	21
Italy	25 (senate elections)
Uzbekistan	25

COUNTRIES WITH SUFFRAGE AGE BELOW 18 (EXAMPLES)

Country	Suffrage age (years)
Austria	16
Brazil	16 (those liable for military service are not allowed to vote)
Cuba	16
Germany	16 (at local elections in seven federal states)
Guernsey	16
Isle of Man	16
Jersey	16
Nicaragua	16
Ecuador	16
Hungary	16 (if you are married)
Philippines	16 (at local elections, if you are married then also Parliamentary elections)
Switzerland	16 (in the Glarus canton)
Guyana	17
East Timor	17
Israel	17 (at local elections)
Indonesia	17 (including married persons, regardless of age)
Seychelles	17
Sudan	17
USA	17 (19 federal states, if you are 18 on or before the election date)

volt, the youth's increasing involvement in society, an increased number of school years, a focus on human rights and a change in upbringing resulted in a number of countries lowering the suffrage age.

In 1969, Great Britain lowered the suffrage age to 18 – and New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Ireland followed suite in 1971. It was not until the end of the 1970s that the suffrage age of 18 appeared in the more conservative Nordic countries.

Suffrage age of 18

Today, the most common suffrage age in the world is 18, but a few countries have a higher suffrage age. These include Japan and South Korea, where the suffrage age is 20.

Suffrage age of 16

Since the turn of the century, a number of countries have considered to lower the suffrage age even further, in order to give young people in the age of 16 and 17 the right to vote. Austria is the first country in Europe to give 16-year-old the right to vote, while

young Germans and Swiss can vote in local elections in several federal states. A similar development is taking place in Ireland, Norway, Finland and Estonia.

In Great Britain, a suffrage age of 16 has been part of government policy since 2005. A youth commission, formed in 2007-2009 by the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, researched the possibility of a 16 year suffrage age with positive results. The expectations are for Great Britain to lower the suffrage age to 16 by 2015. The Liberal Democrats and Labour Party, as well as the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments, support a change in the suffrage age to 16. The suffrage age was lowered on the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey in 2006.

In Canada, New Zealand, USA and Australia there are also proposals for a 16 year suffrage age. In Australia the 16 year suffrage age is a top priority as part of the constitutional reform carried out in 2010. A number of developing countries give young people under the age of 18 a chance to vote during election time. Indonesia has also lowered the suffrage age to 17 years and in Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua sixteen year olds can also vote.