

Youth without Representation

The Absence of Young Adults in Parliaments, Cabinets, and Candidacies

Officeholders in contemporary parliaments and cabinets are more likely than not to be male, wealthy, middle-aged or older, and from the dominant ethnicity, whereas young adults have an insufficient presence in political office. Young adults—those aged 35 years or under—comprise a mere ten percent of all parliamentarians globally, and three percent of all cabinet members. Compared to their presence in the world’s population, this age group faces an underrepresentation of one to three in parliament and one to ten in cabinet. In this book, Stockemer and Sundström provide a holistic account of youths’ marginalization in legislatures, cabinets, and candidacies for office through a comparative lens. They argue that youths’ underrepresentation in political office constitutes a democratic deficit and provide ample evidence for why they think that youth must be present in politics at much higher rates. They further embed this book within what they label a vicious cycle of political alienation, which involves the declining political sophistication of the young, their waning electoral participation, and their insufficient of representation in office. Empirically, the authors combine a global focus with in-depth studies, discussing the country-level, party-level, and individual-level factors that bar young adults’ entry to positions of political power. This is the first comprehensive book on youth representation and it has relevance for those broadly interested in issues of representation, democracy, inequality, and comparative politics.

Daniel Stockemer is Full Professor and Konrad Adenauer Research Chair in Empirical Democracy Studies in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa, Canada.

Aksel Sundström is Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

“This book is a unique take on the issue of youth representation, making the case for their participation in parliaments and cabinets. This well-researched, data-driven study will make a significant contribution to our understanding of why young citizens are underrepresented in parliaments and cabinets around the world.”

—Holly Ann Garnett, Associate Professor of Political Science at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston

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Daniel Stockemer and Aksel Sundström

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