

Not Too Young to Run? Age requirements and young people in elected office

Krook, Mona Lena; Nugent, Mary K.

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Krook, M. L., & Nugent, M. K. (2018). Not Too Young to Run? Age requirements and young people in elected office. *Intergenerational Justice Review*, 4(2), 60-67. <https://doi.org/10.24357/igjr.4.2.702>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY Lizenz (Namensnennung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY Licence (Attribution). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Not Too Young to Run?

Age requirements and young people in elected office

by Mona Lena Krook and Mary K. Nugent

Abstract: Promoting youth representation in parliaments is a growing global priority. To promote youth leadership and more inclusive politics, youth organizations in Nigeria mobilized successfully for a constitutional reform to lower the eligibility age to run for political office. In this paper, we draw on global data to assess whether lower eligibility ages will in fact lead to higher levels of youth participation. We find that lower age requirements positively affect the representation of the youngest and next youngest cohorts in parliament. We draw on qualitative interviews and gender literature to theorize that lower age limits have immediate and longer-term “mobilizing effects”, shifting the calculations of potential candidates in terms of the age at which they first decide to run for office.

Keywords: Youth, Young people, Politics, Parliament, Nigeria

Introduction

Enhancing opportunities for young people to participate in politics has become a growing global priority, with organizations like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations (UN) seeking to collect data and develop strategies to elect a larger share of young people to national parliaments. One recommendation put forward by the IPU (2016: 16) is to align the ages at which citizens may vote in elections and run for political office. In line with this logic, a movement of young people in Nigeria launched a campaign in 2016 to reduce the age limit to stand as political candidates. Conceived by YIAGA Africa, a youth-based civil society organization seeking to promote good governance and youth political participation, the campaign soon encompassed more than 100 youth organizations and became known by its hashtag #NotTooYoungToRun. Inspired by this example, in late 2016 the UN Youth Envoy launched a global Not Too Young to Run campaign in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the IPU, YIAGA, and the European Youth Forum.¹

The #NotTooYoungToRun bill in Nigeria aimed to amend sections 65, 106, 131 and 177 of the Nigerian constitution to reduce the eligibility age for the Houses of Assembly and House of Representatives from 30 to 25 years old, the Senate and Governorship from 35 to 30 years old, and the office of the President from 40 to 35 years old.² Sponsored by allies in the House of Representatives and the Senate, the bill passed both houses of parliament in July 2017. The proposed amendment was then presented to the 36 Houses of Assembly of the Nigerian states, 33 of which approved the bill (far exceeding the 24 states required for passage). In April 2018, the Senate sent the bill to the President for approval, who signed it – after further lobbying by youth organizations – into law on 31 May 2018. The final version reduced the age to run for President, the House of Representatives, and the state Houses of Assembly, but retained the existing age qualifications for Governors and Senators.

After the bill’s passage, the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign convened a press conference and declared that it marked “the beginning of a new era” in Nigerian politics. They argued that the reform would promote democratic development, deepen intergenerational dialogue and learning, reduce political violence and instability, and enhance competitive politics. They also emphasized the positive impact on the political rights of young people, pointing out that youth under the age of 35 formed 65% of the population and 53% of registered voters. They thanked all the elected officials who voted in favour of the bill, thereby demonstrating “unparalleled belief in youth leadership and inclusive politics” and “putting Nigeria on the global map as a country fully invested in meeting the needs of its youth”. They urged the “political class” – “if you want the youth vote” – to take active steps within their political parties to support the emergence of more young candidates (NotTooYoungToRun 2018a: 3).

They argued that the reform would promote democratic development, deepen intergenerational dialogue and learning, reduce political violence and instability, and enhance competitive politics.

Despite these arguments, it is not clear whether lower eligibility ages will necessarily lead to higher levels of youth representation. On the one hand, reforms may stimulate latent political ambition among youth, leading them to begin preparing political campaigns at earlier ages than they might have done prior to the legislative change. On the other hand, the new rules are permissive, not prescriptive: they allow younger people to come forward as aspirants for political office, but do not require political parties to actually nominate greater numbers of young people as political candidates. Given that young people around the world tend to eschew formal means of political participation, like voting and running for office, enacting such reforms may in fact have no effect on their political ambitions.

In this article, we explore these questions using quantitative and qualitative data and develop an original theory of “mobilizing effects” to explain how and why age eligibility reforms will, by and large increase levels of youth representation worldwide. Given the recent passage of the #NotTooYoungToRun bill, which will not apply until the next elections, we turn to global data to predict what may occur in terms of future youth representation in Nigeria. We begin in the first section by providing an overview of age eligibility requirements globally, finding that the vast majority of countries impose a “waiting time” – although this gap varies substantially across countries – between the voting age and the age required to run to become a member of parliament (MP). In the second section, we map justifications for imposing such a gap – as well as the considerations behind decisions to reduce it recently in a number of countries.

In the third section, we present descriptive statistics on youth representation worldwide and then perform a series of statistical analyses to determine the relationship between age eligibility requirements and the share of young parliamentarians. Our analysis reveals both “immediate” and “downstream” (longer-term) effects: lower age requirements positively affect the representation of the youngest cohort in parliament – but also, and even more strongly, positively influence the share of MPs in the *next* youngest cohort. This correlation holds even when controlling for other factors that might shape the proportion of young MPs, like the electoral system, age of the population, level of democracy, and how active young people are in civic and political life.

We theorize that younger age limits have “mobilizing effects,” shifting the calculations of potential candidates in terms of the age at which they first decide to run for office.

In the fourth section, we unpack these statistical relationships drawing on interviews with young MPs and activists,³ articles on the NotTooYoungToRun website, and the broadly scholarly literature on women and youth in politics. Based on these insights, we theorize that younger age limits have “mobilizing effects”, shifting the calculations of potential candidates in terms of the age at which they first decide to run for office. With a lower eligibility requirement, citizens can stand as candidates at a younger age. This opens up opportunities to run for higher offices, like parliament (an immediate effect). It can also increase the share of young people contesting lower-level offices, like local council seats, which lay the groundwork for contesting parliamentary elections in the future (a downstream effect). We conclude that rule changes can play a crucial role in signalling greater openness to youth participation, spurring their greater engagement and inclusion in the political system.

Age eligibility requirements in global perspective

To map out what age eligibility requirements look like worldwide, we constructed a dataset in partnership with the IPU, combining information from surveys completed by parliamentary information offices sent to the IPU in late 2017 with data that we coded from parliamentary websites in early 2018. Our dataset covers 192 single, lower, and upper houses of parliament in 144 countries (for the full list, see Inter-Parliamentary Union forthcoming). We have full data on voter and candidate eligibility ages for 169 chambers.

Citizens must wait – on average – more than five years after becoming a voter before they can run for office themselves.

Figure 1 illustrates the share of parliamentary houses with candidate eligibility ages falling within four different age ranges. Approximately one-quarter of countries permit citizens to run for office at age 18 (or younger). More than half stipulate a minimum eligibility age of 20 to 25. Nearly 20% require citizens to be between 26 and 35 years old, and 4% establish a minimum age of 36 or older. Despite the recent reforms, Nigerian youth will still have to wait longer than many of their peers around the world before they will be eligible to run, between the ages of 25 and 35.

Table 1 compares the average and range of age requirements to vote and to run for office. Most countries establish a minimum voting age of 18. Countries that stipulate a voting age as low as 16 years old include Argentina, Austria, Brazil and Ecuador. In contrast, citizens in the United Arab Emirates must wait until they are 25. Requirements are far more varied in relation to candidate eligibility, ranging from 17 in Timor-Leste’s unicameral parliament to age 40 in the upper chambers of Algeria, Cambodia, the Czech Republic, Gabon and Paraguay. Juxtaposing these requirements, citizens must wait – on average – more than five years after becoming a voter before they can run for office themselves. The lack of overlap can be seen even more clearly in Figure 2, showing the number of chambers corresponding to voting and eligibility age requirements.

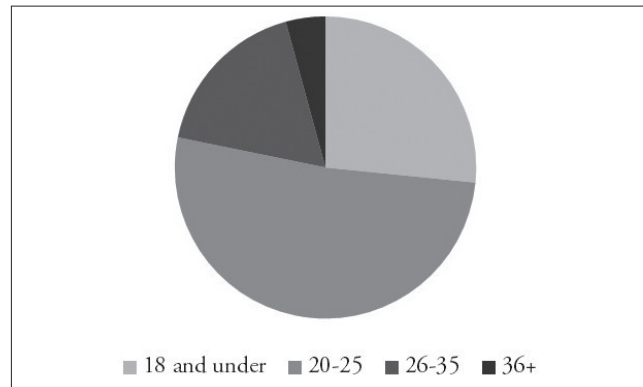


Figure 1: Minimum age eligibility requirements

	Average (mean)	Lowest	Highest
Age for voting	18.2	16	25
Age for holding office	23.4	17	40
Years ‘waiting’	5.3	0	22

Table 1: Age requirements to vote and to run for office, compared

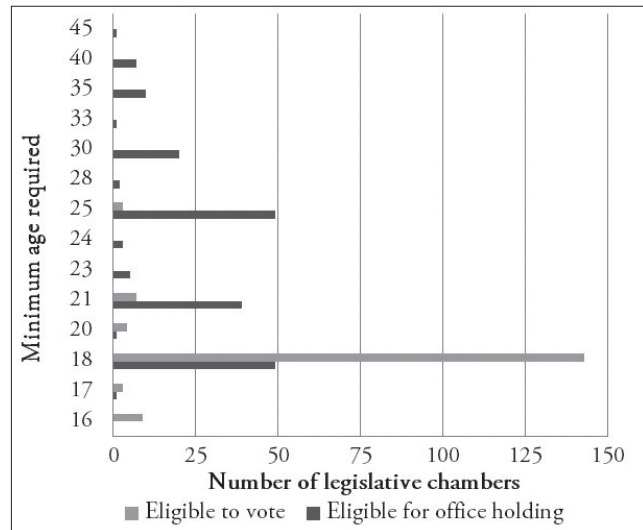


Figure 2: Voter-eligibility age gaps in global perspective

In addition to these broad patterns, it is important to note differences between lower or single chambers versus upper houses of parliament. The average age required to run as a candidate for lower or unicameral chambers is 22 (ranging from 17 to 35), while for upper houses it is 29 (ranging from 18 to 45). On average, citizens must wait just under four years to become eligible to run for lower or unicameral chambers and nearly eleven years to run for election to upper houses.

Age eligibility debates

The contrasting age requirements for these two basic political rights are puzzling. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights from 1966 states that “Every citizen shall have the right and opportunity, without any of the restrictions mentioned in article 2 [distinctions based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status] and without unreasonable restrictions... [t]o vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage.”

Members of the NotTooYoungToRun coalition also recognize that simply signing the bill into law is not a guarantee that youth representation will increase.

In 1996, the UN Human Rights Committee made several clarifications regarding this Article via General Comment No. 25. Paragraph 4 reads: “Any conditions which apply to the exercise of the rights protected by Article 25 should be based on objective and reasonable criteria. For example, it may be reasonable to require a higher age for election or appointment to particular offices than for exercising the right to vote, which should be available to every adult citizen.”

The Human Rights Council does not specify in the document why it would be “objective and reasonable” to impose a higher age for candidacy versus voting. However, interviews and scholarly research provide some insights into the mentality behind this approach. Young people, for example, are often told by middle-aged politicians that their “turn in politics has yet to come” (Trantidis 2016: 154). During the debate in Nigeria, Itse Sagay, Chairman of the Presidential Advisory Committee against Corruption, said in an interview that a young person is not fit to be President of Nigeria, stressing the importance of climbing gradually up the ladder of success (Olaniyan 2018: 1). Along similar lines, political scientists most commonly use “political experience” as a measure for judging the “quality” of elected officials (Weeks and Baldez 2015: 122).

The Human Rights Council does not specify in the document why it would be “objective and reasonable” to impose a higher age for candidacy versus voting.

Yet, as many young politicians and activists are fond of saying, “youth are not the leaders of tomorrow...they are the leaders of today” (Inter-Parliamentary Union forthcoming). Moreover, as Samson Itodo, the YIAGA Executive Director, has argued, age does not determine competence. Indeed, qualities needed to succeed as a leader include having the opportunity to lead, opportunities to expand one’s skills, and a commitment to self-growth (Uzor 2018: 2). Disqualifying youth on the grounds of being young, furthermore, begs the question of how exactly to gain the much needed “experience” to advance.

The global Not Too Young To Run campaign thus seeks to flip the traditional script with the tagline: “We believe that if you’re old enough to vote, you’re old enough to run for office.” Partner organizations support the alignment of the voting and candidacy eligibility ages on the grounds that “young people deserve the same rights to run for office and age discrimination is a hindrance

to full participation and democracy.”⁴ The campaign notes that people under the age of 30 form more than half of the world’s population, yet constitute less than 2% of all MPs. Indeed, approximately one-third of lower houses and more than 80% of upper houses have *no* young MPs under the age of 30.⁵

In addition to Nigeria, a reduction in the age of candidate eligibility was undertaken in Algeria with the express purpose of stimulating youth representation (IPU 2016: 15). In early 2018, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan was reportedly considering reducing the eligibility age for all public offices to 20, following a 2015 reform lowering the voting age from 20 to 18. Supporters argue that lowering the candidacy eligibility age may earn the party greater support among younger voters, as well as spark greater interest in politics among youth. The proposal is endorsed by several opposition parties but also opposed by some more senior members of the LDP.⁶

Despite their advocacy of the Age Reduction Bill in Nigeria, members of the NotTooYoungToRun coalition also recognize that simply signing the bill into law is not a guarantee that youth representation will increase. In their press release in early June 2018, therefore, they called for parliamentarians and political parties to take additional steps to stimulate youth participation. These include developing affirmative action measures to require a certain percentage of young candidates on party ballots, enacting electoral reform bills limiting campaign expenditures, introducing democratic primaries within political parties, and ensuring credible and peaceful elections (NotTooYoungToRun 2018a: 4). Young politicians in other countries similarly view these types of reforms as necessary for overcoming key barriers in access and resources faced by young candidates (Inter-Parliamentary Union forthcoming).

Youth representation in national parliaments

The dataset includes information on the age distribution of male and female MPs across nine age categories: 18-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81-90, and 91+. Figure 3 tabulates the global mean for six age groups, disaggregated by sex, and compares the share of MPs to the percentage of the global population within each age category. More than one-third of parliamentarians worldwide are in their fifties, and more than one-half are aged 51 and above. In contrast, MPs under the age of 40 constitute less than 15% of the total. Across all age groups, men outnumber women, often by significant proportions, although there is greater gender balance within the younger age cohorts. The figure shows in striking terms, finally, that parliamentarians under the age of 40 (particularly in the 21-30 age cohort) are under-represented in comparison to their share of the population, while MPs over the age of 40 (especially in the 51-60 age group) are massively over-represented.

Parliamentarians under the age of 40 (particularly in the 21-30 age cohort) are under-represented in comparison to their share of the population, while MPs over the age of 40 (especially in the 51-60 age group) are massively over-represented.

Although the political representation of young people is understudied in comparison to the representation of women, ethnic minorities, and – to a lesser extent – the LGBT community and

people with disabilities, the few surveys asking about the importance of representing different age groups in parliament find that “age” is identified as an important category of political representation. Lisi and Freire (2012: 373) find, for example, that parliamentarians in Belgium, France and Portugal identify “age” and “gender” to be the most legitimate targets of affirmative action in candidate selection processes. Along similar lines, data from the Political Participation and Representation (PARTREP) project,⁷ which surveyed MPs across fourteen European countries, indicates that most consider it “fairly” or “very” important that a variety of ages be represented in parliament (see Figure 4).

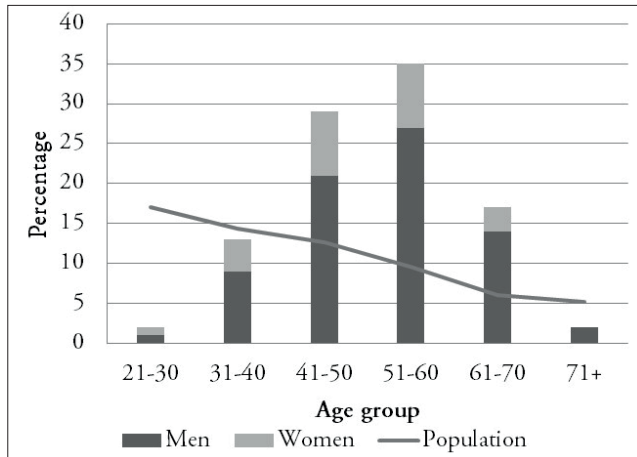


Figure 3: Global means by age and gender, upper and lower chamber, compared with population

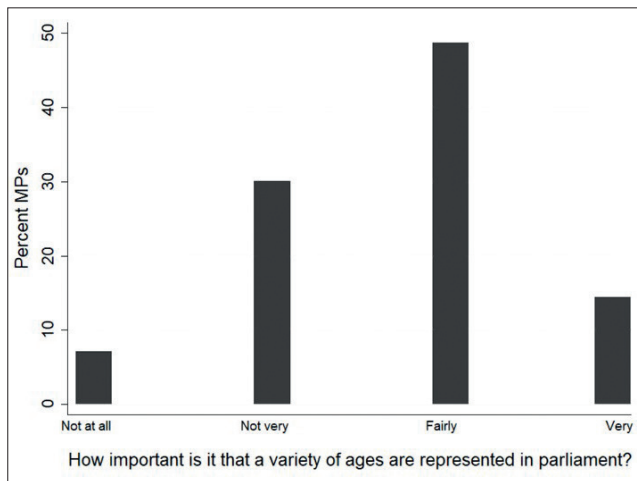


Figure 4: Parliamentary responses to the PARTREP survey

Taken together, these various sources of data indicate that (1) young people are under-represented in parliaments around the world and that (2) political elites recognize a need to include younger cohorts to a greater extent. To bridge this gap, recent scholarly contributions explore the potential of youth quotas (Bidadanure 2014: 1; Tremmel et al. 2015: 1), as well as the role of party youth organizations (Bruter/Harrison 2009: 1; Hooghe et al. 2004: 193), to recruit and elect greater numbers of young people to political office. In comparison, age eligibility requirements largely remain under-theorized and under-studied in this literature.

Given varying definitions regarding the category of “youth”, we explore the impact of eligibility requirements using three age thresholds: the share of parliamentarians under 30, under 40, and under 45. We find a strong correlation between lower candidate

eligibility ages and higher proportions of young MPs at all three age thresholds. Figure 5 shows the relationship for MPs under the age of 45, which is the definition of “young” adopted by the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians. The correlation is $-.414$ and is highly statistically significant: as the eligibility age increases, the share of young MPs decreases. This pattern remains true and significant for the other two definitions of “young”, as well as when comparing age requirements and median MP age. It holds true too for both lower and upper chambers.

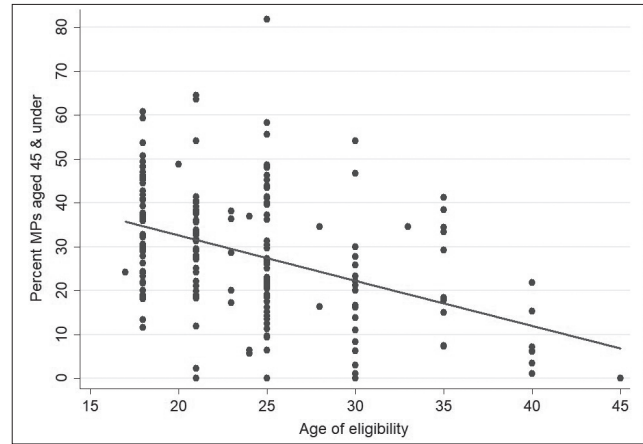


Figure 5: Share of MPs by age eligibility requirements

There are, of course, a number of factors, outside of age requirements, that might also be significant in predicting the percentage of young MPs. The electoral system is one such factor. We find that MPs under 45 constitute an average of 30.9% of MPs in legislative bodies elected via proportional representation (PR), but only 25.7% of those elected using majoritarian electoral systems (a difference that is statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$). Similarly, we find that there is a small but statistically significant difference in the age of the median MP in PR versus majoritarian systems; the average MP elected via majoritarian system is aged 52.7, whereas the average MP elected via PR is 51.2 years ($p \leq 0.05$). Other possible factors include the age of the country’s population, which shapes the pool from which potential candidates are drawn; the level of democracy, which affects how “open” the political system may be; and level of development, which we measure using the Commonwealth Youth Development Index,⁸ measuring how active young people (defined as 15-29) are in civic and political life.⁹

The average impact of reducing the minimum age to stand for office from 25 to 18 would be to increase the proportion of MPs under 45 by over 5 percentage points.

To test the independent impact of age requirements, we rerun our statistical analyses while controlling for these other factors. The resulting regression coefficients, and their confidence intervals, are plotted in Figure 6.¹⁰ The age of eligibility is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.01$), and the coefficient is $-.73$. In substantive terms, the average impact of reducing the minimum age to stand for office from 25 to 18 would be to increase the proportion of MPs under 45 by over 5 percentage points (see Appendix 1 for full output). These findings indicate an immediate effect: lower age requirements positively affect the representation of the youngest cohort in parliament.

In one final test, we explore the longer-term effects of minimum age requirements, by looking at whether age requirements have

an impact on the presence of young MPs outside those targeted specifically by the minimum age requirement. To do this, we look at the impact that age requirements on the presence of 31–40 year olds in legislative chambers where the eligibility age is 30 or below. This is testing for an indirect effect, as 31–40 year olds are free to stand for office. Technically, therefore, the minimum age requirements should not impact the presence of this “young group” per the intentions of the policy. Using the same set of variables, we find that minimum age requirements have a statistically significant effect on the presence of younger MPs, even outside of those ages specifically and directly barred from office by the age restriction (see Appendix 2 for full output). This provides evidence for a downstream effect: lower eligibility positively influences the share of MPs in the *next* youngest cohort.

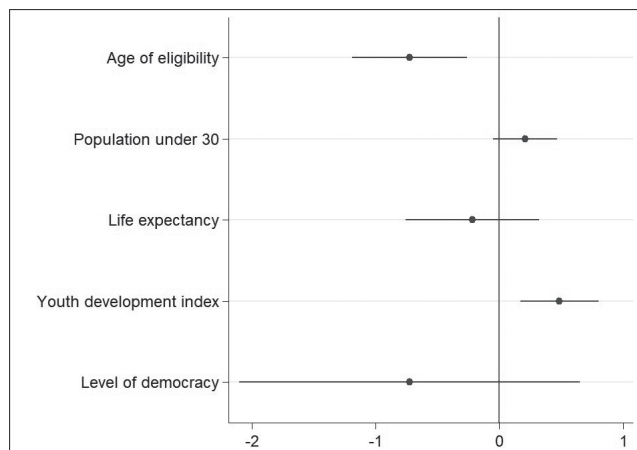


Figure 6: Regression coefficients and confidence intervals

A theory of mobilizing effects

The statistical analysis indicates that candidate age eligibility requirements have both a short- and long-term impact on the representation of young people in parliament. We theorize that lower age limits have “mobilizing effects”, shifting the calculations of potential candidates in terms of the age at which they first decide to run for office. We draw inspiration from the work of Geissel and Hust (2005: 222), who explore how introducing gender quotas affects political interest and political ambition among women. Examining women in local politics in Germany and India, they find that many women elected via quotas did not have earlier plans to run for public office. Quota adoption changed these calculations, creating opportunities for women to enter the political sphere – both of their own accord and due to increased recruitment efforts by political parties. Once in office, these female politicians gained a greater sense of political competence – as well as developed aspirations to contest other, higher political offices. The authors describe this as the “mobilizing capacity” of gender quotas.

We argue that lower age limits may operate in an analogous fashion, perhaps even more so in countries adopting reforms that reduce the eligibility age. Like women, youth are under-represented in electoral politics, albeit to varying degrees across countries. One barrier to youth participation relates to perceived inexperience, with older politicians in their own parties suggesting that they “wait their turn” to run for political office.¹¹ Their opponents may also seek to gain electoral advantage, “attempting to equate youth with ignorance and inexperience” (Mandel/Kleeman 2004: 18), according to a 2002 survey in the United States.

Due to their age, young people also often lack name recognition to stand as viable candidates. Further, they tend to be located outside the networks of more senior politicians needed to come to the attention of and be nominated by political parties. Bjarnegård (2013: 3) makes a similar observation with regard to women, arguing that male-dominated political networks are a key – if not *the* key – reason women tend to be excluded as candidates in Thailand. Finally, like women, many young people simply do not have the financial resources required to run a traditional political campaign.¹² In the case of young people, this is because they often tend to be at the start of their professional careers – or, more broadly, due to high unemployment rates among youth.¹³

One barrier to youth participation relates to perceived inexperience, with older politicians in their own parties suggesting that they “wait their turn” to run for political office.

The decision to run for office involves considering the relative costs and benefits of launching a political campaign. In a study of postgraduate students in law and public policy at two major universities in the United States, Shames (2017: 88) finds that the vast majority of these students – who are otherwise committed to a life in public service, given their choice of field of study – perceived that the costs of running far outweighed the benefits. Those who tended to see more benefits over costs – and thus were least likely to be deterred from running – were those who largely resemble representatives currently in office: white, male, with higher incomes, and very politically engaged.

In Shames’s (2017: 5, 15) sample, about 15% of the respondents had considered running for office. A far greater proportion (69%), however, appeared “moveable” towards greater consideration of running if the conditions were right. Young people thus not only harbour political ambitions, but these aspirations are malleable over time. The first point is supported by data from a survey of young party members across six European countries, which similarly finds that a sizeable minority have long desired to become politicians (Bruter/Harrison 2009: 38f.). The second point is corroborated by research on young elected officials in Norway, who report that the opportunity to hold office had given them a taste for political work, such that many planned to run again in the future (Winsvold et al. 2017: 307).

Young people thus not only harbour political ambitions, but these aspirations are malleable over time.

Based on these insights, we theorize that lower age limits can have an immediate effect in permitting – if not encouraging – younger people to contest political office. One month after achieving presidential assent, the NotTooYoungToRun campaign celebrated by officially launching its ReadyToRun programme in preparation for the 2019 elections in Nigeria. The programme was conceived in December 2017, in anticipation of the reform, with the aim of preparing young people to begin working on their political campaigns – despite, at that time, being too young to stand as candidates. A number of young people inspired to come forward as candidates, moreover, placed the hashtag #NotTooYoungToRun on their campaign posters.¹⁴ These patterns suggest that re-

forms lowering the eligibility age may stimulate latent political ambition among youth, leading them to begin preparing political campaigns at earlier ages than they might have done prior to the legislative change.

Recognizing that political careers do not necessarily start at the top, we also theorize longer-term, or downstream, effects. Local politics provides a useful starting point for a political career, with lower barriers to entry. It also affords opportunities to gain political experience and make connections necessary for advancing to higher levels of office, including parliament. In some countries, young voters themselves can open the way: in the 2011 local elections in Norway, the proportion of local councillors aged 18 to 25 doubled, largely due to preference votes cast by younger voters (Saglie et al. 2015: 268). An early start in politics is often crucial for later political success: in the United States, more than half of the top political leaders – presidents, representatives, senators, and governors – won their first elected office before the age of 35 (Mandel/Kleeman 2004: 7).

A study of party youth wings in Belgium provides insight into the mechanisms producing these downstream effects. The authors find that 41% of city councillors had started their political careers as young party activists. Due to the networks they developed at this early stage, they gained a “head start in politics”. Former youth members were first nominated as local candidates at 31 and won their first mandate at 34. In comparison, those who had not been engaged in their party’s youth organization first became candidates at 39 and office holders at 42. This eight-year difference in the first time being elected, the authors point out, can make a significant difference in the ability to be elected eventually to parliament or other higher office at a later date, given that opportunities to advance in politics are limited by electoral cycles (Hooghe et al. 2004: 202).

Low eligibility ages, [...] unlike electoral quotas, do not necessarily affect the demand for these candidates by actually requiring parties to nominate a greater share of youth.

These immediate and downstream effects, however, are not guaranteed. Low eligibility ages for candidacy remove legal barriers standing in the way of young people coming forward, thus enhancing the potential supply of younger candidates. Yet, unlike electoral quotas, they do not necessarily affect the demand for these candidates by actually requiring parties to nominate a greater share of youth. As a result, the percentage of young MPs in Nigeria – which is consistently below the global average for every age threshold in both houses of parliament¹⁵ – is not likely to translate into greater youth representation without supporting measures on both the supply and demand sides.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that this aspect of the reform is possibly what enabled the Age Reduction Bill to pass in the first place. The NotTooYoungToRun campaign was keenly aware of the need not to frame the reform in terms of “kicking out” or “taking the positions” of older MPs, on whose support they relied to pass the constitutional amendment. They opted instead to argue that the reform would contribute to a spir-

it of greater inclusion across the political system.¹⁶ In addition, they specifically sought the “buy-in” of older MPs by making the Speaker of Parliament, for example, an ambassador for the bill, as well as by emphasizing that support for the reform would “endear” these politicians to the youth population (and thus to their potential voters). The campaign also described the bill as a way for Nigeria to “set the pace” for Africa, as the first country to reduce its eligibility age.¹⁷

Conclusions

Promoting the participation of young people in political life is becoming a growing priority worldwide. In 2010, the IPU member parliaments passed a resolution on *Youth Participation in the Democratic Process*, calling for efforts to increase the participation of young people in parliament and other representative bodies. In 2013, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon created an Envoy on Youth to enhance participation by and advocacy for young people within and beyond the UN system. In 2014, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published a report on *Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle*. The *UNDP Youth Strategy for 2014-2017*, in turn, identified the strengthening of youth participation in politics and public institutions as one of its key goals. And in 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2250 on youth, peace, and security, which urged member states “to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional, and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict.”

As such, we argue, reducing age limits has largely untapped potential to expand opportunities for young people to stand as political candidates.

Academic research on young parliamentarians, almost completely absent five years ago, is also expanding at a rapid rate. Recent contributions develop normative arguments for enhancing youth representation (Bidanure 2014: 1; Trantidis 2016: 149), as well as explore the factors leading to the adoption of youth quotas in diverse countries (Belschner forthcoming; Pardo Reyes 2015: 63; Tremmel et al. 2015: 2). Longitudinal, comparative analyses provide the first insights into patterns of youth representation over time and across countries (Joshi 2018: 1; Stockemer/Sundström forthcoming b: 1). New studies also examine the role perceptions of young politicians (Winsvold et al. 2017: 297), as well as the ways in which gender and age interact to shape opportunities to be elected to political office (Stockemer/Sundström forthcoming a: 1).

This paper seeks to contribute to these emerging global debates, as well as to add to this growing body of knowledge, by exploring the impact of age eligibility requirements on youth representation. More than 80% of chambers around the world impose a “waiting time” between voting and eligibility. In extreme cases, this gap is as large as 22 years; on average, it is longer than five years. Our analysis shows that lower eligibility requirements not only increase the share of young parliamentarians in the youngest cohort, but also in the *next* youngest cohort. As such, we argue, reducing age limits has largely untapped potential to expand opportunities for young people to stand as political candidates. The example of the NotTooYoungToRun campaign in Nigeria also

indicates that campaigns to this end can additionally serve an important awareness-raising role on the broader importance of youth leadership. At the celebratory conference one month after the passage of the bill, Senate President Bukola Saraki observed: “The Not Too Young To Run Law reflects the energy possessed by our youth, which shows that today not tomorrow belongs to the youth” (NotTooYoungToRun 2018b: 2).

Notes

- 1 See <http://www.nottooyoungtorun.org/about>.
- 2 <http://yiaga.org/nottooyoungtorun/about-us>.
- 3 Most of these interviews were conducted as part of a consulting assignment for the IPU’s 2019 youth representation report, identifying and exploring barriers to – and strategies for promoting – the participation of young people in parliament.
- 4 See <http://www.nottooyoungtorun.org/about>.
- 5 See <http://www.nottooyoungtorun.org/facts>.
- 6 See <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/18/national/politics-diplomacy/ldp-mulls-lowering-minimum-ages-holding-public-office/#.W1qnGtVKhaQ>.
- 7 See <http://www.partirep.eu>.
- 8 See <http://thecommonwealth.org/YDI2016>.
- 9 We are not, unfortunately, able to include a measure for incumbency rates, which may also affect levels of youth representation, due to lack of data availability.
- 10 A number of variables from the regression model were excluded from the coefficient plot for purposes of visualization. Full regression output can be found in Appendix 1.
- 11 Conversations with Kacie Starr Triplett (St. Louis, MO, city councilor), 2009-2012.
- 12 This lack of resources can be exacerbated by childcare costs incurred in pursuing a political career.
- 13 Interviews with Malik Alkassoum (MP, Niger), 8 June 2018; Nate Erskine-Smith (MP, Canada), 5 June 2018; Yaumi Mpaweni (MP, Malawi), 30 May 2018.
- 14 Interview with Ibrahim Faruk (YIAGA), 22 June 2018.
- 15 The global average is 2.1% MPs under 30, 15.2% MPs under 40, and 27.1% MPs under 45. The corresponding figures for Nigeria are 0%, 11.1%, and 25.8% in the lower house and 0%, 0%, and 7.3% in the upper house (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018).
- 16 Interview with Ibrahim Faruk (YIAGA), 22 June 2018.
- 17 Conversation with Rafael Igbokwe (MP, Nigeria), 22 June 2018.

References

- Belschner, Jana (forthcoming): Stabilization by Inclusion? The Adoption of Youth Quotas after the Arab Uprisings. In: *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.
- Bidadanure, Juliana Uhuru (2014): *Treating Young People as Equals: Intergenerational Justice in Theory and Practice*. PhD Thesis, University of York.
- Bjarnegård, Elin (2013): *Gender, Informal Institutions, and Political Recruitment: Explaining Male Dominance in Parliamentary Representation*. New York: Palgrave.
- Bruter, Michael / Harrison, Sarah (2009): *The Future of Our Democracies: Young Party Members in Europe*. New York: Palgrave.
- Geissel, Brigitte / Hust, Evelin (2005): *Democratic Mobilisation*

through Quotas: Experiences in India and Germany. In: *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 43 (2), 222-244.

- González-Ricoy, Ínigo (2016): Legitimate Intergenerational Constitutionalism. In: *Intergenerational Justice Review*, 2 (2), 40-48.
- Gosseries, Axel / Hungerbühler, Mathias (2006): Rule change and Intergenerational Justice. In: Tremmel, Joerg C. (ed.): *Handbook of Intergenerational Justice*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 106-128.
- Hooghe, Marc / Stolle, Dietlind / Stouthuysen, Patrick (2004): Head Start in Politics: The Recruitment Function of Youth Organizations of Political Parties in Belgium (Flanders). In: *Party Politics*, 10 (2), 193-212.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (forthcoming): *Youth Participation in Parliaments: 2019*. Geneva: IPU.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016): *Youth Participation in Parliaments: 2016*. Geneva: IPU.
- Joshi, Devin (2018): *Youth Representation in Parliaments: A Comparative Longitudinal Study*. Unpublished paper.
- Kunze, Dieter / Muller, Frank (1980): *Gender Justice*. New York/London: Random House.
- Lisi, Marco / Freire, André (2012): Political Equality and the Process of Candidate Selection: MPs’ Views in Comparative Perspective. In: *Representation*, 48 (4), 373-386.
- Mandel, Ruth B. / Kleeman, Katherine E. (2004): *Political Generation Next: America’s Young Elected Leaders*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Eagleton Institute of Politics.
- NotTooYoungToRun (2018a): Statement by the Not Too Young To Run Movement on the Signing into Law of the Age Reduction Bill (Not Too Young To Run) by the President Muhammadu Buhari. <http://yiaga.org/nottooyoungtorun/26256-2>. Viewed 30 June 2018.
- NotTooYoungToRun (2018b): #NotTooYoungToRun Celebration Conference: Optimism as Campaign Launches ReadyToRun. <http://yiaga.org/nottooyoungtorun/nottooyoungtorun-celebration-conference-optimism-as-campaign-launches-readytorun>. Viewed 26 July 2018.
- Olaniyan, Sanusi (2018): 2019 Elections: Nigerian Youths and the Doubting Thomases. <http://yiaga.org/nottooyoungtorun/2019-elections-nigerian-youths-and-the-doubting-thomases-sanusi-olaniyan/>. Viewed 26 July 2018.
- Pardo Reyes, Christian (2015): A Democratic Revolution for Youth: The “Youth Tithe” as a Doctrine. In: *Intergenerational Justice Review*, 1 (1), 27-28.
- Saglie, Jo / Ødegård, Guro / Aars, Jacob (2015): Rekruttering av unge folkevalgte. In: *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 56 (3), 259-288.
- Shames, Shauna L. (2017): *Out of the Running: Why Millennials*

Reject Political Careers and Why It Matters. New York: New York University Press.

Stockemer, Daniel / Sundström, Aksel (forthcoming a): Do Young Female Candidates Face Double Barriers or an Outgroup Advantage? The Case of the European Parliament. In: European Journal of Political Research, 58 (1), 373-384.

Stockemer, Daniel / Sundström, Aksel (forthcoming b): Young Deputies in the European Parliament: A Starkly Underrepresented Age Group. In: Acta Politica.

Trantidis, Aris (2016): Is Age a Case for Electoral Quotas? A Benchmark for Affirmative Action in Politics. In: Representation, 52 (2-3), 149-161.

Tremmel, Jörg / Mason, Antony / Godli, Petter / Dimitrijoski, Igor (eds) (2015): Youth Quotas and Other Efficient Forms of Youth Participation in Ageing Societies. New York: Springer.

Uzor, Darlington (2018): 2019 Election: Why We Should Support Youth Candidacy. <http://yiaga.org/nottooyoungtorun/2019-election-why-we-should-support-youth-candidacy-darlington-uzor/>. Viewed 26 July 2018.

Weeks, Ana Catalano / Baldez, Lisa (2015): Quotas and Qualifications: The Impact of Gender Quota Laws on the Qualifications of Legislators in the Italian Parliament. In: European Political Science Review, 7 (1), 119-144.

Winsvold, Marte / Ødegård, Guro / Bergh, Johannes (2017). Young Councillors – Influential Politicians or Youth Alibi? In: Representation, 53 (3-4), 297-311.

Appendices

	Coefficient (S.E.)	Beta
Minimum age requirement	-0.73** (0.24)	-0.30
Electoral system (PR)	1.70 (2.14)	0.06
% population under 30	0.21 (0.13)	0.22
Life expectancy	-0.22 (0.27)	-0.13
Youth development index	0.49** (0.16)	0.49
Democracy score	-0.73 (0.70)	-0.11
Lower chamber	5.31 (3.12)	0.16
(Constant)	19.64 (23.1)	
<i>F</i> score	6.82***	
<i>R</i> ²	0.239	
<i>Adj R</i> ²	0.204	
DV: % MPs aged 45 and under. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; *** p<0.001		

Appendix 1: Full regression output MPs aged 45 and under

	Coefficient (S.E.)	Beta
Minimum age requirement	-0.74* (0.29)	-0.24
Electoral system (PR)	0.94 (2.09)	0.04
% population under 30	0.20 (0.13)	0.24
Life expectancy	-0.24 (0.28)	-0.16
Youth development index	0.42** (0.16)	0.48
Democracy score	-0.72 (0.67)	-0.13
Lower chamber	4.98 (2.99)	0.15
(Constant)	24.04 (23.30)	
<i>F</i> score	3.71**	
<i>R</i> ²	0.159	
<i>Adj R</i> ²	0.116	
DV: % MPs aged 31-45. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; *** p<0.001		

Appendix 2: Full regression output MPs aged 31-45



Mona Lena Krook is professor of Political Science at Rutgers University (USA). She has written widely on the diffusion and implementation of electoral quotas for women, including several award-winning books and articles. She has worked closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union since 2014 on tracking and analyzing the representation of young people in national parliaments around the world.

Contact details:

Mona Lena Krook
Rutgers University
89, George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
USA
E-Mail: m.l.krook@rutgers.edu



Mary K. Nugent is a PhD candidate in Political Science at Rutgers University (USA). Her doctoral thesis, 'When Does He Speak for She? Men Representing Women in Parliament', examines when, why, and how male politicians represent women's interests in legislatures. Mary is also a 2018-19 American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow.

Contact details:

Mary K. Nugent
Rutgers University
89 George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
USA
E-Mail: mary.nugent@rutgers.edu