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# Youth Perspective on Political Participation

06-08-2023

## Authors

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**Summary :** Youth participation in civil society activities (NGO) and political parties has seen an increase in the Kurdistan Region, following a trend observed in Europe. According to the survey, 86.9% of young people have not previously engaged in civil society or political party activities. This percentage rises to 91% among the 15-24 age group, indicating a substantial gap between young individuals and political parties/civil society organizations. However, when asked about their active involvement in such activities within the past 12 months, 55.5% of young people reported participating in political organizations or party-related events. In the Garmian Independent Administration, 100% of youth were engaged in political parties, while in the Raperin Independent Administration, the highest percentage of young people participated in civil society groups (100%). Notably, the level of non-participation in the past, particularly in the independent administrations of Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, Raperin, and Garmian, exceeded 90%, but this has changed in the last 12 months.

# Youth Perspective on Political Participation In the Kurdistan Region

Number of youth



1,727,903

The proportion  
of young people  
29-15 years old  
in Kurdistan Region

28%

If you have the right to vote, will you participate?



72.7%



27.3

I vote in vain



New generation movement



List of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan  
(PUK)



I do not want to speak out



List of the Kurdistan Democratic Party  
(KDP)



0.0 10.0 20.0 30.0 40.0 50.0 60.0

Which political party  
would you vote for?



Deteriorating significantly

2.1

Improving moderately

16.0

Remaining the same

16.3

Improving significantly

30.9

Deteriorating

34.7

How do you  
perceive the  
future political  
situation in  
Kurdistan?

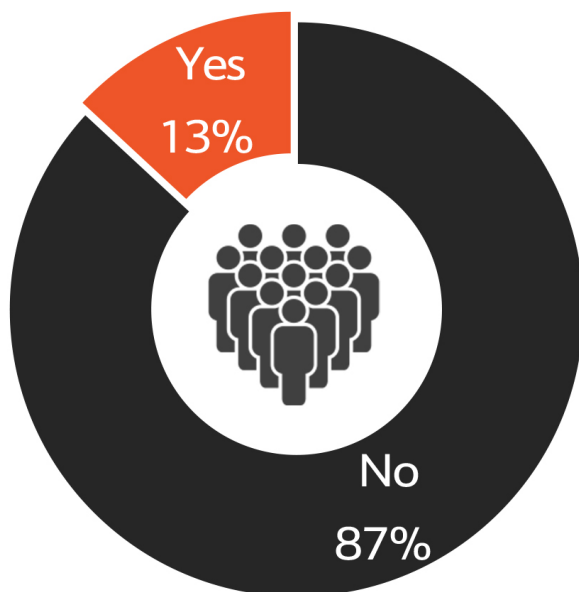
The Rudaw Research Center publishes the second part of the result of the "Youth Perspective in the Kurdistan Region - 2023" which focuses on Youth on political participations, and will publish other parts of the survey and final report of the survey in the coming days.

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## Youth Perspective Towards Organizations (NGO) and Parties

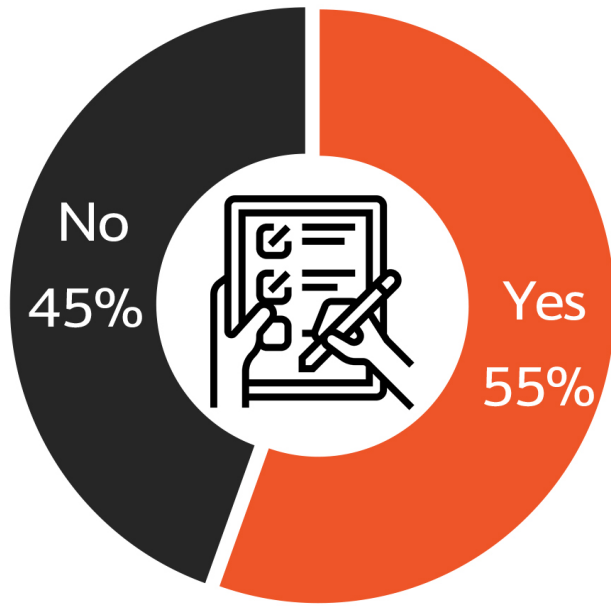
Youth participation in civil society activities (NGO) and political parties have seen an increase in the Kurdistan Region, following a trend observed in Europe. According to the survey, 86.9% of young people have not previously engaged in civil society or political party activities. This percentage rises to 91% among the 15-24 age group, indicating a substantial gap between young individuals and political parties/civil society organizations. However, when asked about their active involvement in such activities within the past 12 months, 55.5% of young people reported participating in political organizations or party-related events. In the Garmian Independent Administration, 100% of youth were engaged in political parties, while in the Raperin Independent Administration, the highest percentage of young people participated in civil society groups (100%). Notably, the level of non-participation in the past, particularly in the independent administrations of Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, Raperin, and Garmian, exceeded 90%, but this has changed in the last 12 months.



**Have you ever been involved in activities with civil society organizations (NGO) or political parties?**

The reasons behind the response of 44.5% of young people who stated they would not join organizations or political parties likely vary. Among them, 29% expressed a lack of trust in political parties and organizations, while 44% mentioned a disinterest in engaging in political activities. In the Raperin independent administration, 100% of young individuals in this group cited a lack of trust in political parties and organizations. In Halabja, 50% of young people believed that the lack of engagement stemmed from perceiving no societal need for it. A 2022 survey conducted by the European Union on young people and politics highlighted the lack of youth engagement as a significant barrier to democracy. For instance, less than 5% of young people between the ages of 15 and 29 identified themselves as political party members, and less

than 10% participated in political activities and unofficial protests.



**Have you participated in any activities in the past 12 months?**

### **If you have not participated, what are the reasons?**

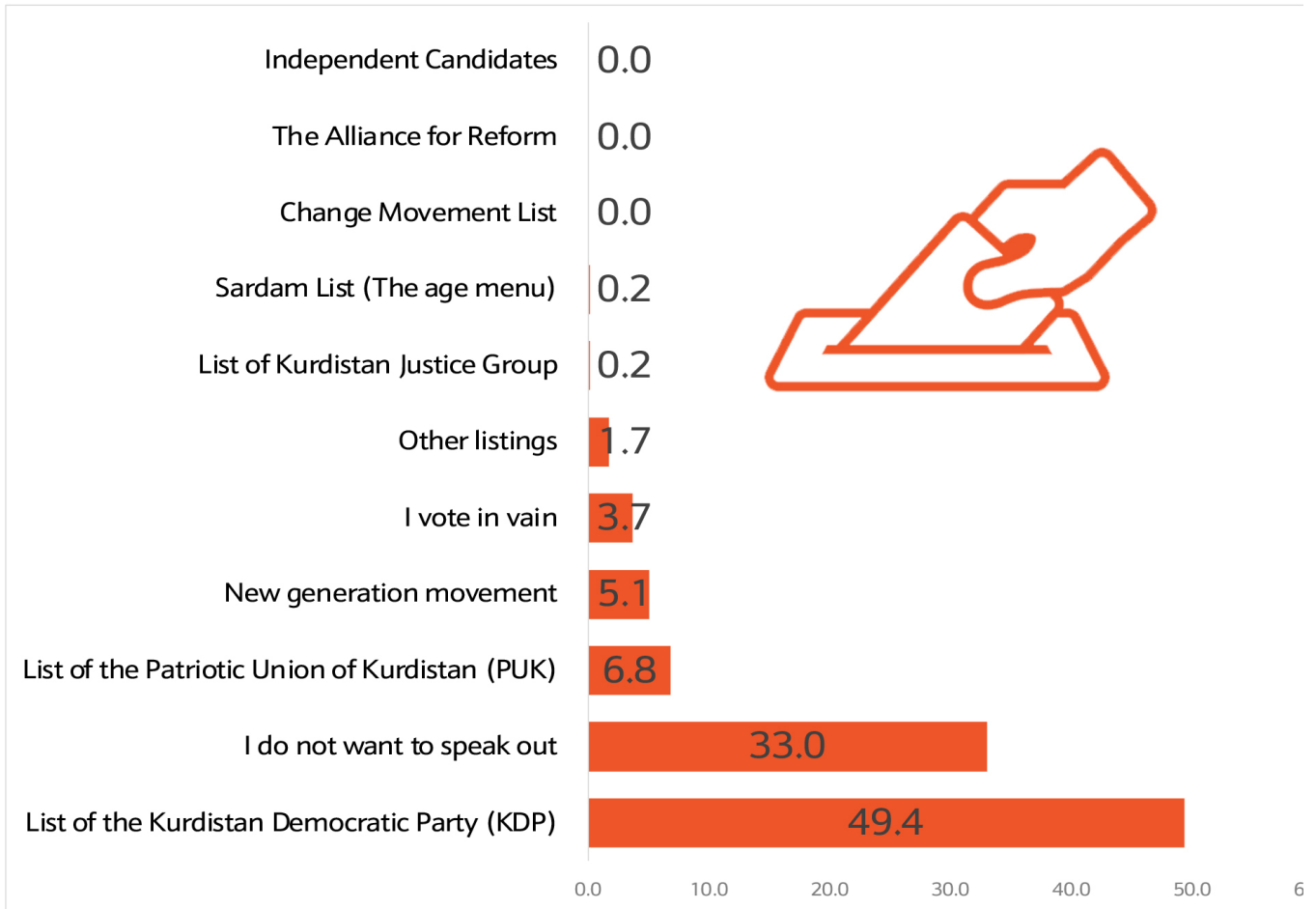


## Youth and Election

In the Kurdistan Region, 72.7% of young people expressed their intention to exercise their right to vote if given the opportunity, while 27.3% stated they would not participate. This is a notable increase compared to previous elections, with a turnout that surpasses the 59% recorded in the most recent Kurdistan parliamentary elections. It is also around 30% higher than the overall turnout for the Iraqi parliamentary elections in 2021. The growing number of young people in the Kurdistan Region positions them as a decisive factor in the upcoming elections. Moreover, this surge in youth participation is not unique to the region, as evidenced by the 14% increase in young voter turnout for the European Parliament elections between 2014 and 2019.

The findings reveal that young women and girls in the Kurdistan Region display a significantly higher inclination to vote and participate in elections compared to young boys and men. Their interest in voting is 8.5 percentage points higher, reaching a total of 77.9%. Among the different regions, Soran shows the highest desire for youth engagement (98%), followed by Zakho (86%) and Erbil (79.5%). Garmian displays the lowest aspiration for participation (48.8%), followed by Sulaymaniyah (52.3%). Halabja reflects a participation rate of 59.5%, while Raperin records 63.3%. Notably, urban areas exhibit slightly lower youth involvement aspirations compared to rural areas, with 71.3% in urban settings and 78.2% in rural environments. At the level of the Kurdistan Regional Government, 33% of young people preferred to keep their votes undisclosed. Among the 67% who did disclose their votes, 49.4% chose to vote for the PDK, 6.8% for the PUK, and 5.1% for the New Generation party. Other political parties did not receive significant support, as the majority of their former voters likely fall into the 33% who chose not to reveal their vote or those who opted not to vote at all.

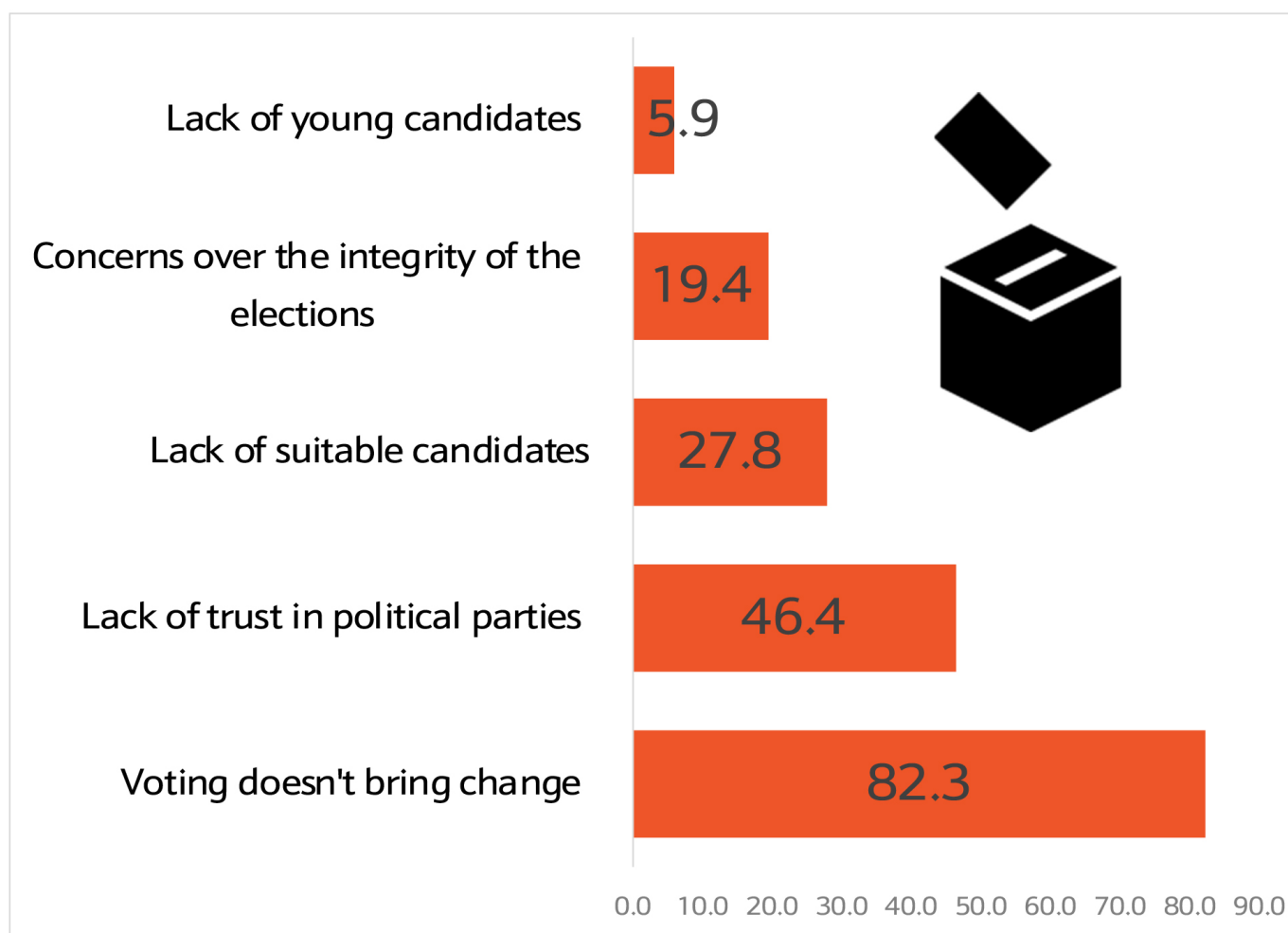
# Which political party would you vote for?



It is likely that the PDK received a significant portion of the nearly 90% vote cast in the independent governments of Zakho and Soran. In Erbil, the PDK is expected to secure nearly half of the youth vote, followed by 19% in Garmian and 6.6% in Sulaymaniyah. The PUK received 6.8% of the youth vote at the Kurdistan Regional Government level, with the highest percentage recorded in the Raperin independent administration (22.6%). They are projected to garner 19.8% of the votes from young people in Sulaymaniyah, 14.3% in Garmian, and 9.1% in Halabja. The New Generation party received the largest proportion of votes in Halabja, with 36.4%, followed by 14.3% in Garmian, 9.9% in Sulaymaniyah, 2.8% in Erbil, and 2.5% in Duhok, amounting to 5.1% of the youth vote in the Kurdistan Region. However, it is important to note that 33% of young people chose not to disclose their voting intentions, with Sulaymaniyah having the highest percentage (57.1%), followed by Erbil (46.5%), Raperin (45.2%), and Halabja (27.3%). Remarkably, only 3.7% of young people expressed their intention to cast a blank vote, while none of them supported an independent candidate. Among the young people who stated they would not vote, 27.3% were youth, 82.3% believed that the elections would not bring about any change, and 46.4% expressed a lack of trust in political parties. The independent administration of Soran had the highest proportion (100%) of young people who did not trust political parties. In Raperin, 72.2% of young people cited mistrust as the reason for not voting, followed by 66.7% in Zakho, 53.3% in Halabja. In the Kurdistan Region, 27.8%

of young people felt that the candidates were unacceptable, and 19.8% believed that the elections were neither fair nor free, leading them to abstain from voting. Moreover, regardless of gender, age group, or demographic environment, the non-voting group shares similar views. The majority of them (over 80%) believe that the election results will have no impact.

## If you chose not to participate in elections, what are the reasons?



There is a divided opinion among young people regarding the future political landscape in the Kurdistan Region. Approximately 36.8% anticipate deterioration, while 46.9% believe that things will improve, and the remaining respondents expect the situation to remain unchanged. Sulaymaniyah, Halabja, Garmian, and Raperin have the highest percentages of individuals who expect the situation to worsen, with 67.3% in Raperin and 66.7% in Garmian. In contrast, 70.7% in Soran and 50.9% in Zakho foresee progress.

