

## From 20 to 18: Considering Lowering the Age of Adulthood

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Hello, everyone.

I am a third-year student and now 18 years old. The legal age of adulthood was lowered from 20 to 18 in April of last year. I didn't turn 18 until December, so I was very disappointed that I could not vote in the House of Councillors election held last July. So, I was wondering what everyone my age thinks about coming of age and elections. Today, I would like to talk about elections and becoming a legal adult at 18 years old.

First, I carried out a questionnaire about the election held last July with third-year students and fourth-year students at Tsuyama College.

Of the third-year students, 26% had the right to vote, and of course all the fourth-year students did. Of the students who had the right to vote, 60% voted and 40% did not. Please look at these graphs. The voting rate in Okayama prefecture as a whole was not so high, while the voting rate for Tsuyama College students was high, at 60%. However, 40% did not vote.

As for the reasons for not voting, 30% said they were dormitory students and could not return to their hometowns, 28% said they had plans and could not go, 13% said they did not know about the election or it was too late when they found out, 8% said it was too much trouble, and 5% did not want to vote irresponsibly due to lack of knowledge about politics.

On the other hand, I found that 33% of those who voted had not researched the candidates' positions and promises at all.

From this I see two issues.

First, 30% of the respondents who didn't vote were unable to return to their hometowns.

Second, there is a need to raise awareness among young people.

I would like to propose two things.

The first is to allow students to vote at the nearest polling place where they actually live.

The second is for the Election Commission to conduct political broadcasts using YouTube and other social networking services, since students often have limited access to television.

What are the things we can do now that the legal age of adulthood is 18? A few examples include receiving a credit card and entering other contracts, obtaining a 10-year passport and various certifications.

From the age of 20, as before, these things are legally allowed.

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On the other hand, pachinko can be now played from the age of 18, soccer lotteries from 19, and horse races from 20, and there is no age restriction for lotteries. This is due to the differences in administrative jurisdiction.

The more complex social structure becomes, the more difficult it is for young people to understand it.

If the age of adulthood is being lowered in order to encourage young people to participate in society earlier, it would be best to allow them to make their own decisions and engage in activities that have little social impact from the age of 18. Laws should also be developed for this purpose.

I have become more aware of the fact that I am becoming an adult by conducting this survey and a lot of research. I will definitely go to the polls once I get the right to vote. By voting, I would like to become more interested and engaged in politics. I would also like to encourage my friends to go to the polls.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.