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Youth and the three P's: Participation in Provincial Politics

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of the children's right to participate in decision-making has proved to be a world-wide challenge (Gal, 2019; UNCRC, 2009). In the Netherlands, it is a challenge as well to motivate youth for politics (Jeugdmonitor, 2019) and the interest in provincial politics is most problematic (Kiesraad, 2022; De Blok et al., 2018). This study therefore focuses on improving youth participation in provincial politics, with the province of Groningen as research area. The research question is: which focus points should get (more) attention to increase youth participation in provincial politics in Groningen?

In policy documents of the province of Groningen, youth participation has a prominent place and several initiatives regarding youth participation are organized in the province of Groningen. By analysing documents of these initiatives and asking young people by a survey about their experiences considering (provincial) political participation, results are found regarding three conditions that influence youth participation. These are conditions of organizations, conditions of young people and conditions of other actors (Shier et al., 2014).

Based on the results, the following recommendations for the province of Groningen are formulated: involve young people in formulating purposes of initiatives, approach youth more like equal citizens, strive for more inclusion and diversity in events, draw up measures to protect the safety and privacy of participants (for example by a conduct of behaviour, a complaints procedure or external confidential contact persons), create fixed spots for young people in the decision-making cycle, provide training to people that work with youth, increase the impact of youth on decision-making, invest in a relation with young people, increase knowledge about provincial politics amongst young people, promote provincial politics and their influence / enlarge the visibility of provincial issues. By these recommendations, it is expected that youth participation in provincial politics in the province of Groningen will increase and young people will be given their right to be heard.

Keywords: youth participation, provincial politics, political participation, motivation, Rights of the Child, political engagement, decision-making

Introduction

The right of a child to be heard is recognized by all United Nations members in 1989 and is codified in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2009). This right places a high priority on the participation of children and young people in politics. In 2002, the members of the United Nations reiterated their dedication to enacting Article 12 and since then, youth engagement has been viewed as being of utmost importance. Nevertheless, implementation of the children's right to participate in decision-making has proved to be challenging (Gal, 2019; UNCRC, 2009).

In the Netherlands, it is a challenge as well to motivate youth for politics. Therefore, participation is of increasing importance in Dutch youth policy. In the policy specifically about participation, it is stated that "the participation policy is aimed at enabling young people to develop into independent and socially committed citizens, so they can function effectively at school, work and society in general. Participation in a narrower sense, that is, participation in political activities, is a means to this end" (The Netherlands Youth Institute, 2007, p. 27). However, still only four in ten young people are interested in political decision-making (Jeugdmonitor, 2019).

Looking at the Netherlands, the interest in *provincial* politics is most problematic. Last national and provincial elections have shown a big difference in voting turn-out, 78.7% of the Dutch voting population voted for national elections and only 56.2% voted for provincial elections (Kiesraad, 2022). Moreover, research by De Blok et al. (2018) shows that people think that provincial politics have less influence on their daily lives than national, municipal and European politics. Data from the local voter survey show that when being asked which government layer influences their daily life most, 60% of people answer that the national government has most influence and 33% of people say that the municipal government has most influence to their daily life. After a big gap, 4% answer that the European Union influences their daily life most and only 3% of the respondents think that the provincial government has most influence (De Blok et al., 2018). The relevance and the awareness of local issues seem to influence the image of provincial politics. The image of provincial politics gets better when local issues are considered as relevant and when people are aware of the issues (Castenmiller, 2001).

In the current study, focus will be on the province of Groningen as research area for youth participation in provincial politics. In policy documents of the province of Groningen, youth participation has a prominent place. The 'Initiation Memorandum on Participation

Policy’ has a dedicated chapter on youth, which was widely adopted in September 2021 (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2021). Additionally, the province has created a programme for the ‘Public Administration Quality Programme’. In this programme, a specific chapter for young people is included as well (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2020). Here is stated that the province of Groningen aims to give an impulse to the way in which youth participation is implemented and to create more cohesion between the various activities that the province carries out.

Initiatives for political youth participation in the province of Groningen

Several activities are planned by the province of Groningen to achieve the goals of youth participation. Schools visit the provincial government building, members of the Provincial Council visit schools to inform youth about provincial politics and there is a youth programme called ‘Praten met de Staten’ that gives young people the opportunity to speak with members of the Provincial Council. As a final internal option, young people can visit the website ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’. On this website, questions about various topics are posed to (young) people.

In addition to these internally organized activities, events from external organizations are available for Groningen youth. The first of these is the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’, organized by the National Youth Council. During this activity, young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen debate with politicians. These debates focus on local issues and in the end an official proposal about the issues is made (*Dutch National Youth Council*, n.d.). Another activity is ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’. This is the largest debating competition in the Netherlands. Fifteen provincial preliminary rounds take place throughout the Netherlands. The national eighth finals, which take place on national television, feature the champions of the provincial preliminary rounds (*Op weg naar het Lagerhuis*, 2018). Third event is the ‘Model European Parliament’. This is a simulation of the European Parliament for European students. By the ‘Model European Parliament’, an opportunity to obtain expertise in coming up with solutions to cross-border issues within the European Union is provided to the oldest secondary school students (*Model European Parliament*, n.d.). The last external organized event is the ‘Groningen Model United Nations’, also known as ‘GrunnMUN’. Every spring, Groningen hosts this one-day conference. It brings students together to look for fresh approaches to national and international issues (*GrunnMUN Conference*, 2022).

Next to these activities and events, the province of Groningen has a Youth Advisory Council. The Youth Advisory Council performs a variety of tasks for the province. The members of the Youth Advisory Council offer advice to the province, inform young people

about the work of the province and the value of their participation and they carry out various projects, also in cooperation with other organizations. In order to align the policy with the desires of youth, the province frequently presents issues to the Youth Advisory Council. The council consists of eight people between the age of fifteen and twenty-three (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2020).

By analysing these initiatives organized for youth and asking young people about their experiences considering (political) participation, this research defines focus points for the province of Groningen that should get (more) attention in policy about youth participation. In the next paragraphs, literature is discussed about the definition of political participation and political participation focused on youth. Besides that, the most prominent challenges in youth participation are explored.

Political participation

Any activity that has the intention or the effect of influencing governance is considered as 'political participation'. This influence can be direct, like influencing the formulation or implementation of public policy, or indirect, like influencing who will be in charge of making decisions (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). These concepts are related to research of Zani & Barrett (2012). They state that political participation can be conventional or unconventional. Election procedures are part of conventional political participation, whereas unconventional political participation includes any other action that could potentially affect government. Signing petitions, taking part in political rallies, and contacting politicians are a few examples of unconventional political participation. The two theories correspond, as conventional political participation links to indirect influence and unconventional political participation links to direct influence. In the current research, both conventional and unconventional political participation are considered by asking young people about their voting behaviour and their political activities besides voting.

Political participation should not be confused with civic participation. Civic participation is defined as voluntary effort done either alone or in collaboration with others in order to bring about change that aims to benefit others, a public good or address a local issue (Zukin et al., 2006). This does not influence decision-making, which political participation is about.

Political engagement is a concept that is related to political participation (Zani and Barrett, 2012). However, political engagement can be distinguished from political participation and is characterized by interest in, attention to, knowledge of, or opinions regarding either political or civic issues. Engagement is therefore psychological as opposed to

behavioural. The degree to which someone engages in political or civic discourse with family or friends, as well as their attention to media sources like newspapers, television news, and the internet, can all be used to measure their level of engagement. The higher the level of engagement, the higher the expected political participation (Zani and Barrett, 2012).

Political participation amongst youth

Youth political participation is influenced by a variety of factors. Considering participation generally, Hart's ladder of participation was one of the first models (1992). This ladder shows participation at eight different levels and mostly discusses the circumstances in which organizations help or support young people. The rungs of the ladder symbolize levels. The three lowest rungs are 'manipulation', 'decoration', and 'tokenism'. These are considered as non-participation. The higher and presumably more desirable levels of participation are represented by the top five rungs, which are 'assigned but informed', 'consulted and informed', 'adult-initiated, shared decisions with children', 'child-initiated and directed', and 'child-initiated, shared decisions with adults'. Using this ladder allows one to gauge the level of participation. This method does not concentrate on the outcomes of participation, rather than just its mode.

As a result, Shier (2001) put out a model that focuses on the connection between participation and 'empowerment'. With his approach, Shier also examines how institutions and adults react to participation. According to Shier, there are five levels of participation, which involve listening to children, assisting them in expressing their opinions, taking those opinions into account, involving children in the decision-making process, and distributing decision-making authority and responsibility amongst children. At each level, people and organizations may demonstrate varied levels of dedication to the 'empowerment' process. A significant body of research has also demonstrated that supportive adults provide the necessary emotional context through which youth voice may exert its influence on positive youth development, which appoints the importance of surrounding adults and institutions in establishing 'pathways' to participation (Shier, 2001). The research demonstrates that regardless of country, youth are most likely to feel empowered and connected when they regard themselves to be partners with adults in community groups. Related to this is a theory of Andersson (2017), which puts attention to the way decision-makers view young people as political players and the degree to which various actors value young people's political engagement in public decision-making. Andersson (2017) distinguishes the contingent approach and the developmental approach. According to the developmental approach, adults make decisions and take into account what they believe youth want. Youth are considered as

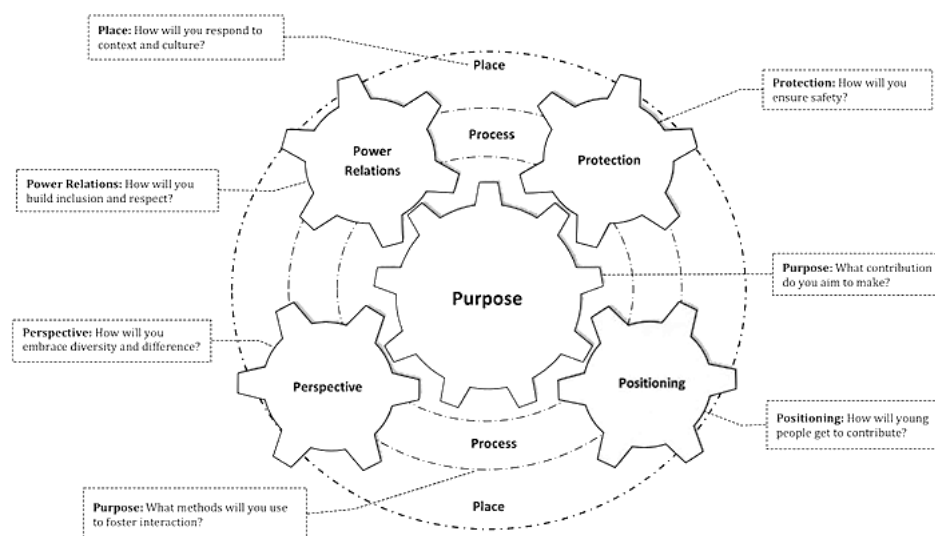
'human becomings', who do not yet have the same share in decision-making as adults. The contingent approach assumes that young people are 'human beings' and thus that young people should influence decision-making as much as adults. Due to the fact that young people should be taken seriously, while also being allowed to continue learning, these approaches are complementary (Andersson, 2017). The developmental approach of Andersson (2017) is consistent with research by Turnbull & Spence (2011) that states there is an additional tension in youth participation because young people are frequently perceived as being unprepared for participation in decision-making. This occurs because the period of 'youth' is frequently assumed to be primarily about becoming an adult, becoming a citizen, becoming independent, becoming autonomous, becoming mature and responsible. This 'futuraity' rhetoric values young people more for what they will become than for their contributions in the present (Turnbull & Spence, 2011). Shier's model (2001), which places a strong emphasis on adult-youth relationships, does face criticism. The concentration on formal and structural features of involvement as well as the hierarchical sequencing allows little room for youth-initiated participation (Malone & Hartung, 2010).

Wong, Zimmerman, and Parker (2010) establish their Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE) Pyramid in response to these criticisms. The TYPE Pyramid uses new findings in research on youth-adult partnerships to distinguish five different types of participation, each of which corresponds to a different degree of youth-adult involvement. These five forms are –from least to most youth involvement— described as 'vessel', 'symbolic', 'pluralistic', 'independent', and 'autonomous'. To show the degrees of empowerment and positive youth development potential for each participation type, the model uses a pyramid shape (Wong et al., 2010). The TYPE pyramid focuses on the degrees of empowerment and control felt by adults or youth, which addresses some of the shortcomings of earlier models. The concepts of control and empowerment are not conceptualised in this theory.

As a result, Cahill and Dadvand (2018) have created the P7 Model. Purpose, positioning, perspective, power relations, protection, place and process are the seven interconnected domains highlighted by the P7 Model. The interconnections between the domains are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The P7 Model (Cahill and Dadvand, 2018)



The model mainly focuses on the importance of the purpose. All other domains are understood to be directed by the initiative's purpose. The intersecting gears are used to refer to the ways in which events in one domain have an impact on those in other domains (see Figure 1). For instance, diverse perspectives will be included and respected if power relations are managed effectively.

Regarding 'purpose', the purpose of a programme or activity and whether or not young people have an opportunity to influence or change this are discussed. 'Positioning' draws attention to the cultural frames and understandings of young people in terms of what is desirable or attainable for their contribution. The concept of 'perspectives' encourages programmers to consider the diversities that exist between individuals and amongst groups of young people. How roles and duties are allocated, adopted, and implemented in the programme, as well as how relationships are handled to ensure equity and respect are implemented between all parties, are all aspects of 'power relations'. In order to guarantee on-going consideration of the social, political, and material safety of participants inside and surrounding the project, the domain of 'protection' is identified. 'Place' is about highlighting the limitations and opportunities that the setting itself presents, which may influence the results that can be produced through participatory projects. The connected circle 'process' captures the on-going process of participation. Process-focused thinking serves as a helpful reminder that participation strategies need to accomplish both method and objective integrity. Participation ought to be viewed more as 'an on-going discussion' than as a single occasion.

The P7 Model may be utilized as a planning, execution, and evaluation tool for youth participation (Cahill and Dadvand, 2018).

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) also has investigated how to implement youth participation, and consequently the right of the child to be heard, in a proper manner. A list of essential requirements is created for member states to adequately implement Article 12 (UNCRC, 2009). Avoiding tokenistic tactics and ensuring efficient and meaningful involvement are the two fundamental prerequisites. Tokenism means youth are being asked what their view is, but nothing is done with these views (Lundy, 2018). Furthermore, the processes for participation must be open and clear, informative, voluntary, relevant, kid-friendly, inclusive, secure and risk-aware. At last, people that work with youth should be supported by training (UNCRC, 2009).

Also Lundy (2007) identifies essential requirements for putting Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice. The first one is ‘space’, which indicates that young people should have the chance to speak up. The second component is ‘voice’, which refers to the idea that young people should be given the opportunity to share their opinions. The term ‘audience’ denotes that someone is paying attention to what young people say. The final requirement is ‘influence’, which denotes that the viewpoint of youth should actually be taken into consideration when creating policy.

Conditions influencing youth’s political participation

Shier et al. (2014) distinguishes three conditions that influence young people’s chances of political participation. These are conditions related to organizations supporting or assisting young people’s efforts, conditions related to young people themselves and conditions related to other actors. In this final category, family appears to be the most influential actor. The previously described theories are mostly about conditions of organizations supporting or assisting young people’s efforts and about conditions of other actors. Regarding conditions of young people themselves, their unique motivation, skills and leadership style have an impact on their political participation (Shier et al., 2014). The ‘Self-Determination Theory’ of Ryan and Deci (2002) can be applied to make this more tangible. The Self-Determination Theory is based on three fundamental human needs. Competence is the first one, which requires individuals to be able to rely on their capabilities and skills. Second in line is autonomy or self-rule, which requires individuals to make behaviour decisions based on their own preferences and interests. Relationship is the final fundamental need and refers to the urge to feel a sense of attachment and belonging. The theories from the literature review are related to

the conditions that influence youth participation according to Shier et al., 2014. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Theories from literature review categorized by conditions that influence youth participation

	Organizations supporting or assisting young people's efforts	Youth themselves	Other actors
Theories from literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P7 Model (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018) • Requirements of CRC (UNCRC, 2009) • Requirements of Lundy (2007) • Approaches of Andersson (2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation (Shier et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2002) • Influence of provincial politics on daily life (De Blok et al., 2018) • Visibility of provincial issues (Castenmiller, 2001) • Engagement in political participation (Zani and Barrett, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends and family (Shier et al., 2014)

Challenges in youth participation

Despite the fact that there are laws, rules, and structures encouraging youth participation, data suggest that youth participation is limited and frequently can be described as tokenistic. Youth participation in local and national government decisions is 'normatively constrained' and 'framed' (Gal, 2019). Moreover, recent cross-European research of Memory, Youth, Political Legacy And Civic Engagement (MYPLACE) shows that young Europeans are generally rather not interested (58%) than interested (42%) in politics (European Union, 2014). Research of Tisdall (2017) shows three challenges in youth participation that remain persistent. The first challenge is tokenism, which is in line with the research of Gal (2019). The other two challenges Tisdall (2017) describes, are limited impact on decision-making and lack of sustainability. These are challenges, as many young people involved in public decisions aspire to 'make a difference' (Lundy, 2018). In addition to these challenges, utilizing a variety of democratic forms and logics for stimulating young people's political engagement in decision-making is a difficulty. Adaptable and situation-based forms of democracy built on mutuality and trust rather than dominance, exclusivity, and majority opinion are required at the system level if the goal is to include 'all' young people in decision-

making (Andersson, 2017). At last, budgetary and legal restrictions put limits, such as time restraints, standardised processes, and bureaucratic expectations (Gal, 2019). The challenges are categorized as well by the conditions that influence youth participation according to Shier et al. (2014), as shown below in Table 2.

Table 2

Challenges categorized by the conditions that influence youth participation

	Organizations supporting or assisting young people's efforts	Youth themselves	Other actors
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sustainable spot for youth in the process of decision-making (Tisdall, 2017) • No use of a variety of democratic forms and logics for young people's political engagement in decision-making (Andersson, 2017) • Budgetary and legal limitations (Gal, 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tokenism (Tisdall, 2017) • Limited impact (Tisdall, 2017) • Lack of motivation and interest (European Union, 2014) 	

The conditions of Shier et al. (2014) are used to organize the theories found in the literature (see Table 1 and Table 2). By looking at these conditions and the linked literature, the following research question is answered: which focus points should get (more) attention to increase youth participation in provincial politics in Groningen?

Conditions regarding organizations supporting or assisting young people's efforts are researched through sub question 1 and conditions regarding youth and other actors are combined and researched through sub question 2:

- 1) To what extent are the initiatives in the province of Groningen organized properly (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018; Andersson, 2017; UNCRC, 2009; Lundy, 2007)?
- 2) What are young people's experiences of (provincial) political participation (Shier, 2014; Ryan and Deci, 2002; De Blok et al., 2018; Castenmiller, 2001; Zani and Barrett, 2012)?

Method

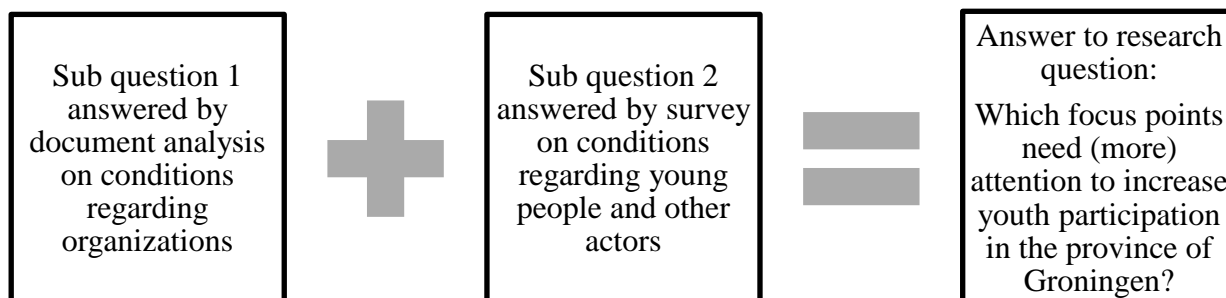
Research design

The research question 'which focus points should get (more) attention to increase youth participation in provincial politics in Groningen?' was answered by two sub questions, which were 'to what extent are the initiatives in the province of Groningen organized properly?' and 'what are young people's experiences of (provincial) political participation?' The first sub

question was investigated by a document analysis, using the theories belonging to conditions of organizations. The second sub question was researched by a survey, using the theories belonging to conditions of young people and other actors. The research design is visually shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Research design



Document analysis

A document analysis was done to get insight into the (design of) initiatives regarding political participation organized for young people in Groningen. For the document analysis, five documents and five websites were investigated. The documents gathered from the province of Groningen via personal communication were the ‘Letter to members of the Provincial Council’ about the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’, the ‘Memo on the functioning of the Youth Advisory Council’, the ‘Statute for the Youth Advisory Council + regulations’, the ‘Public Administration Quality Programme’ and the ‘Initiation Memorandum on Participation Policy’. The websites visited were the websites of the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’ (*Dutch National Youth Council*, n.d.), ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’ (*Op weg naar het Lagerhuis*, 2018), the ‘Model European Parliament’ (*Model European Parliament*, n.d.), ‘GrunnMUN’ (*GrunnMUN Conference*, 2022) and ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’ (*Stem van provincie Groningen*, 2022).

Analysis

Theories of Cahill & Dadvand (2018), Andersson (2017), UNCRC (2009) and Lundy (2007) were used to analyse whether the initiatives in the province of Groningen are organized properly. Based on these theories, the six most important aspects turned out to be purpose, positioning and power relations, perspectives, protection, place and process (see Table 3, p. 16). The following questions were used to investigate these aspects: Purpose - does the

initiative have a clear purpose? Are young people themselves included in the formulation of the goal? Positioning and Power relations - how are young people positioned? Is there a balance between the developmental approach and the contingent approach? How are roles and responsibilities assigned? Do adults listen to youth and do they do something with the opinion of youth? Perspectives - who are addressed? In what ways are as many groups as possible addressed? Protection - what is being done to ensure a safe initiative and what can young people do themselves? Is the organization risk-aware? Place - how does the physical place and the cultural/social context influence participation opportunities? Process - is youth participation an 'on-going conversation'? Are there any follow-ups? Are the processes transparent and informative? Is tokenism avoided? Are the activities voluntary? Have the people that work with youth had training?

To create an overview of the results, a table was created which contains all initiatives and the so called 'P's' mentioned above. If (a document of) an initiative pays attention to a 'P' as described in the literature, consciously or unconsciously, there is a check mark. If attention is lacking, there is a cross mark. Besides that, the results were shortly explained by words. The complete document analysis can be found in Appendix 3.

Survey

A survey was carried out to enable young people to share their experiences of (provincial) political participation. The survey consisted of eight demographical statements, ten statements about experiences with politics in general and thirteen statements about experiences with provincial politics. Instead of open questions, rating scales were used for the majority of the statements. This way, more statements could be presented to the participants and as a result high reliability and validity ratings were more likely (Drenth & Sijtsma, 2005). A rating system with six possibilities was utilized, there was no middle answer because this might be perplexing as it could be explained in various ways (Baarda & Bakker, 2012). The statements of this survey were based on topics that came up in the literature:

- Engagement in political participation (Zani and Barrett, 2012): statement 2.1 and 3.1;
- Friends and family (Shier, 2014): statements 2.2 and 2.3;
- The influence of provincial politics on daily life (De Blok et al., 2018): statement 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6;
- The self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci 2002): statement 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8;
- The visibility of provincial issues (Castenmiller, 2001): statement 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4;
- Challenges in youth participation (Tisdall, 2017): statement 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11.

Statements 1.1 till 1.9 gathered demographic information and statements 3.12, 3.13 and 4.1 were statements for gathering additional information respondents might have for answering the research question. The survey statements are found in Appendix 1.

Research population

Young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five who live in the province of Groningen made up the population of the survey. The sample consisted of forty young individuals, all from the city of Groningen. Youth who are members of political youth parties represented half of the sample and youth who are not members of a political youth party made up the other half of the sample.

None of the participants was completely randomly selected. Non-members of political parties were gathered via the network of the researcher and members of political youth parties were approached because they were part of the boards of political youth parties at that time.

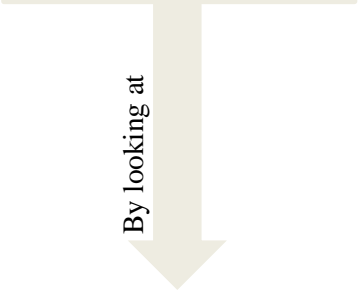
Analyses

Various statistical methods were used to analyse the data of the survey. Descriptive statistics were first employed to obtain a broad overview of the data. Mean scores per statement were compared to the mean score on the survey, to see which statements scored high or low. Based on the results of the survey it was decided to conduct t-tests to investigate whether politically active youth rated statements significantly higher than not politically active youth. Even though this was not an aim of the research, this comparison was useful to interpret the results. The significant differences between both groups were written down in the results and are taken into account in the conclusions. The last statistical analysis was utilizing Pearson's r, to determine whether there was any relation between scores on statements. The reason Pearson's r was used, lies in the fact that the dependent and independent variables were not defined.

Research method

As described, to conduct an organized document analysis that includes all theories, the theory of Andersson (2017) and the requirements of the UNCRC (2009) and Lundy (2007) were categorized by the aspects of the P7-Model (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). To design the survey, the literature of conditions regarding young people and other actors was used. An overview of these connections between the research method and the theory is presented in Table 3.

Table 3*Research method and connections to literature*

	Organizations supporting or assisting young people's efforts	Youth themselves	Other actors			
Research method	Document analysis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P7 Model (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018) • Requirements of CRC (UNCRC, 2009) • Requirements of Lundy (2007) • Approaches of Andersson (2017) 	Survey on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2002) • Influence of provincial politics on daily life (De Blok et al., 2018) • Visibility of provincial issues (Castenmiller, 2001) • Engagement in political participation (Zani and Barrett, 2012) 	Survey on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends and family (Shier et al., 2014) 			
						
Cahill & Dadvand (2018)	Purpose	Positioning and Power relations	Perspective	Protection	Place	Process
UNCRC (2009)	Relevance		Inclusive	Safety Risk aware		No tokenism Transparent and informative Voluntary Supported by training Kid-friendly
Lundy (2007)		Audience Influence				Voice Space
Andersson (2017)		Contingent and developmental approach				

Ethical aspects of the research

All participants of the research received an information letter about how their data is processed, and upon agreement they were asked to sign a letter of consent. The data of the respondents were processed anonymously, in accordance to the regulations of the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences.

Results

Document analysis

For all initiatives, the questions based on the research of Cahill & Dadvand (2018), Andersson (2017), the UNCRC (2009) and Lundy (2007) as described in the Method, are answered.

There are no suitable documents found to analyse ‘Praten met de Staten’ and the school visits. That is why these events are not included in this analysis.

Table 4 shows an overview of how each ‘P’ is represented in the initiatives. If a document of an initiative pays attention to a ‘P’ as described in the literature, consciously or unconsciously, there is a check mark (V) in the table. If a ‘P’ gets no attention, there is a cross mark (X). An explanation of these results is given below Table 4. The complete document analysis can be found in Appendix 3.

Table 4*Overview of representation of the 'P's'*

Initiative	Documents	Purpose	Positioning and power relations	Perspective	Protection	Place	Process
The Provincial Youth Debate	Website 'Provincial Youth Debate' Letter to members of Provincial Council	V	V	V	X	V	V
Op weg naar het Lagerhuis	Website 'Op weg naar het Lagerhuis'	V	X	X	X	V	X
Model European Union	Website 'Model European Union'	V	X	V	X	X	X
GrunnMUN	Website 'GrunnMUN'	V	X	X	X	X	X
Youth Advisory Council	Memo on the functioning of the Youth Advisory Council Statute for the Youth Advisory Council + regulations	V	V	X	X	X	V
Stem van provincie Groningen	Website 'Stem van provincie Groningen'	V	V	V	V	V	V

Purpose

This aspect has six check marks, so all initiatives organized in the province of Groningen seem to have a specific and unique purpose. However, no information is found on whether or not young people get involved in the formulation of the goal.

Positioning and power relations

Young people can be approached by adults as equal in the decision-making process or as people who still have to learn how to be part of this. A check mark is placed in Table 4 if both

contingent and developmental approach are present in an initiative, as the approaches are complementary and should thus be in balance. As a result, positioning and power relations score three out of six check marks. The developmental approach is recognized in the initiatives more than the contingent approach. The developmental approach is detected in the ‘Provincial Youth debate’, ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’, the ‘Model European Parliament’, and ‘GrunnMUN’, as these activities have the design of a model and ‘pretend as though it is real’. Young people are given the opportunity to prepare them for ‘the real world’ and are considered as learners. This approach is also recognized in the Youth Advisory Council and ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’, as young people are positioned as ‘youth’ and thus seen as different from adults: they are asked about their viewpoints, but they do not have the same impact on decisions as adults. The contingent approach is present in the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’, ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’ and the Youth Advisory Council. Motions or recommendations developed by youth during the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’ are occasionally reported or presented to politicians, so *action is taken* with regard to young people’s opinions. In addition, the website ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’ allows young people to voice their opinions and have those opinions considered by decision-makers, just like all other citizens. The Youth Advisory Council is an opportunity for young people to be involved in decision-making as well. In this council, youth are asked for advice by politicians and civil servants. However, it is stated in a document on the functioning of the Youth Advisory Council that the Provincial Council and the Provincial Executives should enter more into a dialogue with the Youth Advisory Council (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2019).

Perspective

Perspective has three out of six check marks. Regarding perspective, the target groups of the initiatives are investigated. ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’ is for all high school students, the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’ is for everyone in the age of twelve till eighteen, the ‘Model European Parliament’ is for the highest classes of HAVO and VWO, and ‘GrunnMUN’ is for students of (applied) universities. For ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’ and the Youth Advisory Council no restrictions are found. In the document about ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’ is stated that they strive for an inclusive competition (Op weg naar het Lagerhuis, 2018). This refers to potential financial and practical limitations. Also the organization of the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’ aims that all young people can make their voice heard. The organization tries to achieve this by coaching young people (Dutch National Youth Council, n.d.). It is possible for youth to sign up for this event even though they do not attend school. ‘GrunnMUN’ states that all students, regardless of their experience, background or field of

study, are welcome to sign up for the ‘TEIMUN conference’ (GrunnMUN Conference, 2022). Information regarding the distribution of genders, as well as the cultural or ethnical groups that the province of Groningen reaches, is lacking.

Protection

Protection has one out of six check marks. Information regarding this aspect is lacking most in the documents and websites analysed. ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’ states one sentence about protection, namely that a debate should not go beyond the limits of respect. Only the ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’ has actively taken measures to protect their users: people can respond anonymously on the platform (for example as ‘Ooievaar’), while the organization knows who is the person behind an account and can therefore intervene if necessary. There is no information in the documents about how young people can take protection measures.

Place

Place has three out six check marks. All internal and external organized activities take place in the city of Groningen and the Youth Advisory Council meetings are held there as well. However, half of the Youth Advisory Council exists of members from outside the city of Groningen. Besides that internet access is necessary to voice one’s opinion via ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’, this website is accessible for all (young) people and everyone can make an account and give their opinion on this website within five minutes. There was no information found about the cultural/social context in the documents.

Process

Process has three out of six check marks. As mentioned before, the Youth Advisory Council wants to have a more permanent spot in the decision-making cycle (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2019). Many of the events do not have a content-related sequel on what is discussed. Only the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’ occasionally brings conclusions or proposals to politicians, but this is not ensured and thus there is lacking a transparent process here. Regarding voluntariness, the events ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’ and the ‘Model European Parliament’ are not strictly voluntary as schools have to sign up their pupils. The other initiatives are voluntary. No information is found in the documents about training of the people or politicians that work with youth.

Survey

In this part, all theories from the literature review are analysed separately (see Table 3, p. 16). The complete survey can be found in Appendix 1. Demographical information about the sample can be found in Table 6 up to Table 9 in Appendix 2. The mean score of the survey is first determined in order to be able to examine the survey's findings (see Table 10 in

Appendix 2). The mean score is 3.82 on a six-point scale. This rating serves as a benchmark for analysing the other scores. Even though it is not an aim of the research, it is decided to conduct t-tests to investigate whether politically active youth rated statements significantly higher than not politically active youth. This information helps to interpret the results.

Motivation for/engagement in political participation (Shier et al., 2014; Ryan and Deci, 2002; Zani and Barrett, 2012)

Statements about motivation for politics in general (S2.7, S2.8, S2.9 and S2.10) get a mean score of 4,37 and score higher than the mean score of the survey. Statements about motivation for provincial politics (S3.5, S3.6, S3.7 and S3.8) get a score of 3,16 and score lower than the mean score of the survey. This score is also lower than the mean score of motivation for politics in general. Looking at the three aspects of motivation separately, the scores on the statements of *competence* and *relation* score lower than the statements about *autonomy*.

Autonomy scores are even amongst the highest scores of the survey. Additionally, at statement 3.13 about reasons to not engage in provincial politics, nineteen respondents cite a lack of interest as the main reason. Looking at engagement specifically, the scores are 3,78 for politics in general and 2,48 for provincial politics. The score of engagement in provincial politics is amongst the lowest scores of the survey.

Friends and family (Shier et al., 2014)

Respondents give higher scores than the mean score of the survey to statements about talking with family (4,82) and friends (4,63) about politics (S2.2 and S2.3). There are significant correlations between discussing politics with family and believing that participating in politics is important ($p=0,005$). Also between discussing politics with friends and believing that participating in politics ($p=0,009$) and participating in provincial politics ($p=0,006$) are important, significant correlations are found (see Table 11, Table 12 and Table 13 in Appendix 4).

The influence of provincial politics to daily life (De Blok et al., 2018)

The experienced influence of provincial politics on daily life scores a 3,76, while the influence of national and municipal politics score a 4,62 and 4,25. So, the score of influence of provincial politics to daily life is lower than the mean score of the survey, the score of influence of national politics and the score of influence of municipal politics (S2.4, S2.5 and S2.6).

Visibility of provincial political issues (Castenmiller, 2001)

The respondents are asked about their knowledge of provincial issues and whether they see or hear things about provincial politics by statements 3.2 and 3.4. Both statements have a lower

score than the mean score of the survey. However, three quarter of the respondents is successful to think of a topic (S3.3). The most often mentioned topics are public transportation / highways / spatial planning (15 times) and energy / sustainability / gas extraction (14 times).

Impact of provincial political participation (Tisdall, 2017)

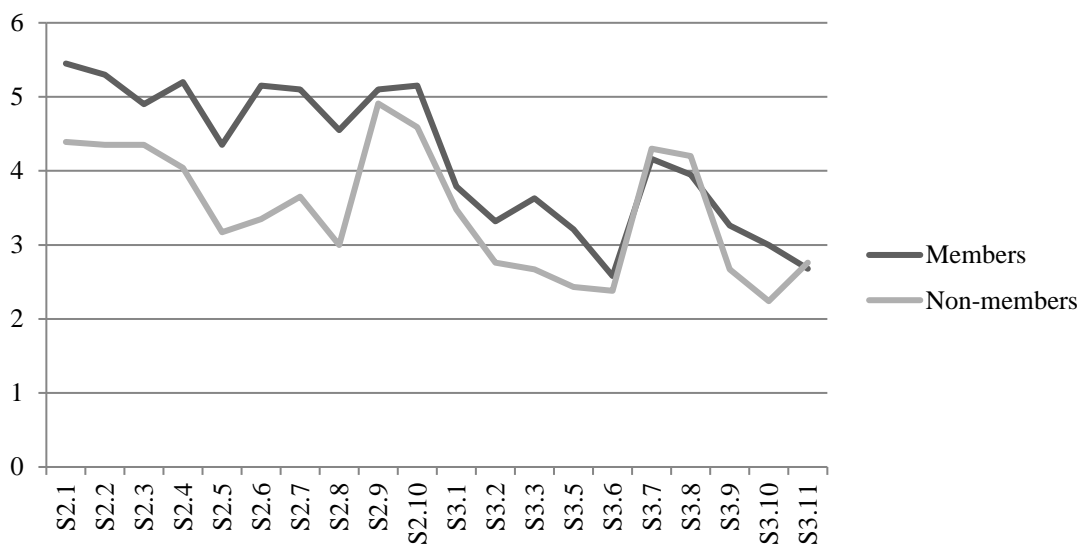
The impact of provincial political participation is another specific factor that is measured. The statements on impact (S3.10 and S3.11) get scores of 2,62 and 2,72 and these are lower than the mean score of the survey and even amongst the three lowest scores of the survey. Three of the respondents have ever engaged in non-voting political activity on provincial level. Even these three respondents, nevertheless, give the statements on impact not a significantly higher score than the other respondents.

Differences between members and non-members of political youth parties

In Figure 3, the scores of members and non-members of political parties are shown.

Figure 3

Visual representation of mean scores of members and non-members of political youth parties



The direction of the lines is roughly the same, but looking at the mean score members of a political party score significantly higher ($p < 0,001$, see Table 5, p. 23). This made it interesting to dive deeper into this. In Table 5, all significant results are shown. As these differences influence the results of this research, they are taken into account by formulating the conclusions. Statements not mentioned in this table are not significantly different.

Table 5*Significance scores difference members and non-members of political parties*

Independent Samples Test		
	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference
S2.1 I think it's important to participate in politics	<,001	1,06
S2.2 I talk about politics with my family	,015	0,95
S2.4 National politics influence my daily life	,001	1,16
S2.5 Provincial politics influence my daily life	,006	1,18
S2.6 Municipal politics influence my daily life	<,001	1,80
S2.7 I feel like I got enough knowledge and am capable enough to participate in politics	<,001	1,45
S2.8 I feel engaged to politics	<,001	1,55
S3.3 I sometimes see or hear about provincial politics	,017	0,97
S3.10 I know that something is done when I give my opinion about provincial political subjects	,027	0,76
Total survey	<,001	13,58
Mean survey	<,001	0,72

Discussion

Implementation of the children's right to participate in decision-making has proved to be a world-wide challenge (Gal, 2019; UNCRC, 2009). In the Netherlands, it is a challenge as well to motivate youth for politics (Jeugdmonitor, 2019) and the interest in *provincial* politics is most problematic (Kiesraad, 2022; De Blok et al., 2018). There seems to be a scientific gap between the issues associated with getting young people involved in politics and the problematic position of provincial politics. The current research does investigate this gap: which focus points should get (more) attention to increase youth participation in provincial politics in Groningen?

Three conditions that influence youth participation (Shier et al., 2014) are investigated by two sub questions. These conditions are conditions regarding organizations supporting or assisting young people's efforts, conditions regarding youth themselves and conditions regarding other actors. The answers to both sub questions answer the research question. A document analysis is done to get insight into the conditions of organizations supporting or assisting young people's efforts. Based on theories of Cahill & Dadvand (2018), Lundy (2007) and the UNCRC (2009), six aspects ('P's') are used to analyse whether initiatives for young people in the province of Groningen are organized properly. The results of this analysis lead to an answer on the first sub question: to what extent are the initiatives in the province of Groningen organized properly? A survey amongst young people living in Groningen is conducted to investigate the conditions of young people and the conditions of other actors. The results of this analysis lead to an answer on the second sub question: what are young people's experiences of (provincial) political participation? The two sub questions mentioned above will now be discussed.

Sub question 1: to what extent are the initiatives in the province of Groningen organized properly?

The purposes of the initiatives organized for young people in the province of Groningen are all clearly described and unique. Central to the purposes of all initiatives is that young people meet each other and together think and debate about solutions to social issues. In all events organized, young people learn to become familiar with debating skills and learn and experience how politics work. Some events focus specifically on provincial politics: 'Op weg naar het Lagerhuis' is a debating competition about provincial issues and young people can experience what provincial politics are about. The Youth Advisory Council advises the Provincial Council and Provincial Executives. Via 'stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl' young people can give their opinion on statements and issues regarding the province of Groningen. In the 'Provincial Youth Debate', conclusions of debates between young people and politicians are connected to provincial policy or upcoming plans. The other events are about issues and politics on European level (Model European Parliament) or even on global level (GrunnMUN). In these two events, young people think about conflicts between national and international ideals and interests. As research of Cahill & Dadvand (2018) and the UNCRC (2009) show, it is important that initiatives are relevant to young people and have a clear purpose. According to Cahill & Dadvand (2018), young people should also be involved in the *formulation* of purposes. The initiatives in the province of Groningen have a clear purpose,

but the province of Groningen should start involving young people in formulating the purpose of an initiative.

All initiatives mainly see young people as ‘human becomings’ (Andersson, 2017), as they are organized for young people to learn and develop themselves. Besides the fact that development of young people is considered, three initiatives also see young people as ‘human beings’ (Andersson, 2017): in the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’, young people work together with politicians to find solutions about provincial issues. The Youth Advisory Council advises the Provincial Council and the Provincial Executives and their opinions are taken into consideration. Via ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’, young people can give their opinion just like all adult citizens. Several researches (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018; Andersson, 2017; Lundy, 2007) indicate there should be a balance between approaching young people as ‘human becomings’ and young people as ‘human beings’. Therefore, the initiatives should focus (more) on young people as ‘human beings’. According to research by Abrahams & Books (2019), in the perception of young people, policymakers see them mainly as a source of income and as children. The young people in this research also appear to have internalised the view that there is little prospect of achieving political changes, precisely because of these dominant constructions (Abrahams & Brooks, 2019). These researches show as well that young people should be considered (more) as ‘human beings’.

The initiatives for youth participation in the province of Groningen strive to be inclusive by welcoming young people of all genders, regardless residence and background. However, in three events merely (highly) educated youth in Groningen are addressed. Only the ‘Provincial Youth Debate’, Youth Advisory Council and ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’ have no requirements for an education level. Furthermore, the document analysis shows there is no insight into the cultural and ethnical groups and genders reached by the initiatives. Research of Cahill & Dadvand (2018) about different perspectives and research of the UNCRC (2009) about inclusion show that all young people should be given the opportunity to participate in politics. Therefore, it is important for the province of Groningen to get more insight into who is and who should be addressed.

According to theory of Cahill & Dadvand (2018) and the UNCRC (2009), it is important for initiatives to ensure safety and be aware of risks for participants. The culture, context, circumstances and methods of the initiatives should be safe for the participants. Most initiatives do not mention any protection measures in the documents analysed. ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’ states one sentence about protection, namely that a debate should not go beyond the limits of respect. Only ‘stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl’ actively protects their

participants: people can respond anonymously on the platform, while the organization knows who the person behind an account is and can intervene if necessary. Receiver and sender are both protected that way. It would be of added value for the initiatives in the province of Groningen to pay (more) attention to protection, for example by highlighting a conduct of behaviour, a complaints procedure or external confidential contact persons. Perhaps the initiatives do have this, but no information about these aspects is found in the documents.

All activities take place in the provincial government building of Groningen and the Youth Advisory Council meetings are held there as well. Youth who are not able to visit the provincial government building for the 'Provincial Youth Debate' or 'Op weg naar het Lagerhuis', can contact these organizations for support to get there. Besides the fact that internet access is necessary to visit 'stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl', young people can create an account and give their opinion on this site within five minutes. According to Cahill & Dadvand (2018), it is important to create accessible venues for all young people. Therefore, a focus on offering support to young people who are not able to come to the events in the provincial government building of Groningen (because of residence, medical reasons, etc.) is important. Also the provincial government building should be accessible for everyone.

As mentioned before, young people mostly *practise* decision-making techniques instead of really make an *impact*. Many of the events do not have a content-related sequel on what is discussed. Only the 'Provincial Youth Debate' occasionally carries conclusions or proposals on to politicians. The website 'stemvanprovinciegroningen.nl' is an initiative that does ensure an on-going conversation, as people react to statements and to each other. However, the impact of this is not clear as politicians are not involved directly. Research of Cahill & Dadvand (2018), the UNCRC (2009) and Lundy (2007) emphasize the importance of a fixed spot for young people in decision-making and the need for an on-going process of youth participation. This challenge is also recognized by Tisdall (2017). Young people in the province of Groningen should thus be included (more) in the cycle of decision-making. Regarding voluntariness, the events 'Op weg naar het Lagerhuis' and the 'Model European Parliament' are not strictly voluntary as schools have to sign up their pupils. The other initiatives can be seen as voluntarily. The UNCRC (2009) states that it is important that youth participation activities should be voluntary. Regarding training for people that work with youth, nothing is found. The UNCRC (2009) however indicates that this is important. The focus for the province of Groningen should thus be on creating a fixed spot for young people in the decision-making cycle, offering possibilities for young people to enrol (voluntary) for an activity and providing training to people that work with youth.

Sub question 2: what are young people's experiences of (provincial) political participation?

The respondents of the survey feel like they do not have much *impact* on decision-making when they give their opinion about provincial political subjects. Also people who take part in activities next to voting do not feel like having much impact. These results are in line with research of Tisdall (2017) about challenges in youth participation, which shows youth have the feeling of limited impact and experience tokenism. As can be expected, members of political youth parties experience a significant higher impact of giving their opinion about provincial political subjects.

Regarding *motivation*, young people in the province of Groningen think it is less important to participate in provincial politics than in politics in general. Moreover, the majority of respondents cite a lack of interest as the main reason they do not engage in provincial politics outside of voting. This lack of motivation and interest is also shown by data of the European Union (2014). Feelings of competence, relation and autonomy increase intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The respondents feel like they have more knowledge and skills (competence) for participating in politics in general than for provincial politics. Young people in the province of Groningen also feel less engaged (relation) in provincial politics than in politics in general. Whether provincial politics is concerned or politics in general, young people feel like they can decide by themselves (autonomy) if and in which way they participate in politics. The study of Ohme et al. (2020) shows that organizing a number of events where young voters can meet and debate with their political representatives seems to be an effective way to foster political engagement over time. The research states that civic education can increase political interest and – to a certain extent – political activity among students (Ohme et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that high levels of confrontation with political topics may also bore students and thereby have a reversed effect (Ohme et al., 2020). According to cognitive mobilization theories, adolescents may not have turned away from politics per se, but found new avenues for political engagement (Binder et al., 2021). Therefore, institutional actors have to relate their efforts more strongly to the lives of adolescents, provide appealing issues and create images and organizations young people can identify with (Binder et al., 2021). This is in line with research of Andersson (2017), that shows a variety of democratic forms and logics should be used for increasing political engagement amongst youth. Research of Jacobsen & Casalaspì (2018) shows that teachers, especially those who teach social studies, can play a key role in motivating students for political participation. Young people say that ‘no one asked’ them to

participate, and that they would participate if they were asked. However, teachers tend to act as ‘rational prospectors’ who selectively recruit certain subsets of students (i.e., advanced students)—something that likely contributes to later inequality in participation (Jacobsen & Casalaspi, 2018). Supporting this, research of Kahne and Sporte (2008) shows that ‘what happens in the classroom’ influences the commitment to political participation later (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial that the province of Groningen concentrates its initiatives on enhancing youths' knowledge and skills and on building relationships with them. Additionally, the province of Groningen should take into account new found avenues for political participation discovered by young people and should encourage or even ask them to participate. It is crucial that the province of Groningen keeps organizing the current variety of activities, as this may foster political engagement over time.

According to the participants, the *influence of provincial politics to their daily lives* is less than the influence of national and municipal politics, which is also shown by research of De Blok et al. (2018). Politically active youth experience significantly more influence of provincial politics to their daily lives. In the province of Groningen, (non-politically active) youth should thus be more aware of the importance and impact of provincial politics.

While participants indicate to not be aware of provincial issues, still three quarters of the respondents are able to mention a correct provincial political issue. Most addressed issues are public transportation / highways / spatial planning and energy / sustainability / gas extraction. As increasing *visibility of provincial issues* leads to more engagement in provincial politics (Castenmiller, 2001), also (other) provincial issues should become more known under young people in the province of Groningen.

The respondents discuss politics with *family and friends*. Discussing politics with family and friends has a significant influence on the level of importance young people assign to politics. This is in line with the research of Shier et al. (2014). Young people identified as political party members, rate discussing politics with their families significantly higher. They do not, however, have a significant higher score on discussing politics with friends. Even though the desire for social affiliation is a fundamental human need, there are individual differences in the need for belongingness (Renström, Aspernäs & Bäck, 2020). The study of Renström et al. (2020) investigates whether a larger part of younger people’s participation is explained by a need to belong, as compared to older people’s participation. Results from the study show that only younger people’s participation is predicted by individual-level belongingness needs. This finding can be connected to the outcomes of the current research. If young people talk about politics with their family and friends, the need for belonging to those

groups can be the factor causing higher interest in politics. Therefore, it is positive that young people in the province of Groningen discuss politics with their family and friends.

Research question: which focus points should get (more) attention to increase youth participation in provincial politics in Groningen?

Before answering the research question, some relations *between* the results of both sub questions are discussed. Young people should be regarded more according to the contingent approach, as equal to adults in decision-making. Young people also do not truly believe their political engagement has an impact. The relation can be that approaching youth the contingent way contributes to a higher feeling of impact amongst youth. Young people are barely involved in formulating purposes of initiatives. This fact can contribute to the result that young people do not feel strongly attached to (provincial) politics. Based on the answers of the sub questions and the relations between them, the research question can be answered. The following recommendations can be formulated for the province of Groningen:

- Involve young people in formulating purposes of initiatives;
- Approach youth more like equal citizens;
- Strive for more inclusion and diversity in events;
- Draw up measures to protect the safety and privacy of participants (for example by a conduct of behaviour, a complaints procedure or external confidential contact persons);
- Create fixed spots for young people in decision-making cycle;
- Provide training to people that work with youth;
- Increase the impact of youth on decision-making;
- Invest in a relation with young people;
- Increase knowledge about provincial politics amongst young people;
- Promote provincial politics and their influence / enlarge the visibility of provincial issues.

Limitations on the research and ideas for further research

There are a few limitations on the research. Considering the document analysis, the documents provide a particular image of reality. There might be a difference between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’. The aspect of tokenism is an example of this. In documents, organizations of initiatives will not write that an activity is tokenistic. Moreover, ‘Praten met de Staten’ and the school visits are activities that do take place for youth, but these are not included in this

research as there are no documents about these events found. This affects the results, maybe these would have been different if these initiatives are included as well. The initiatives 'Model European Parliament' and 'GrunnMUN' are analysed, while these initiatives are not about provincial politics. These initiatives take place for young people in the province of Groningen, but do not really provide information regarding the research question.

Regarding the survey and its analyses, there are some limitations as well. At first, the survey's participants are practically all highly educated individuals and this gives a distorted picture of the real situation of young people in the province of Groningen, which is the research population. For conducting t-tests and tests on Pearson's r , assumptions have to be met. Histograms were constructed for each statement per sub group to check the validity of the assumption for t-tests that data are normally distributed. However, not every statement's data are normally distributed. The assumption of random sampling is not completely met either. However, results of one sample are independent of results of the other sample, and both samples have roughly equal variances. These assumptions thus are satisfied. The calculations for assumptions of the t-tests can be found in Histogram 1 up to Histogram 22 in Appendix 2. The assumptions for Pearson's r are not completely met either, mainly because the data are not continuous. However, this is not that harmful if N is 40 and P is powerful.

Next to these analysis-specific limitations, the timing of the study likely has an impact on the results. Provincial elections were held in 2019, which occurred a long time ago, and the upcoming elections of 2023 are not yet widely covered in the media. The outcomes then might be different, it can be expected that the visibility of provincial issues then would be higher for example.

For further research, since the focus points are still theoretical, it would be interesting to conduct practical research regarding implementation of these focus points. In addition, investigating which approach young people themselves most frequently experience would be intriguing. Now only the documents are used to investigate the way young people are approached, but maybe the experiences of youth are different. Additionally, for future research events can be visited and observed. Perhaps this gives a more complete image of the situation of Groningen. Lastly, future research can be done about budgetary limitations as this research does not address this challenge.

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Documents of document analysis

Memo on the functioning of the Youth Advisory Council

Statute for the Youth Advisory Council + regulations

Public Administration Quality Programme

Initiation Memorandum on Participation Policy

Letter to members of the Provincial Council (Provincial Youth Debate)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

“JONGEREN EN DE DRIE P’S: PARTICIPATIE IN DE PROVINCIALE POLITIEK”

- Ik heb het [informatieformulier](#) over het onderzoek gelezen. Ik heb genoeg gelegenheid gehad om er vragen over te stellen.
- Ik begrijp waar het onderzoek over gaat, wat er van me gevraagd wordt, welke gevolgen deelname kan hebben, hoe er met mijn gegevens wordt omgegaan, en wat mijn rechten als deelnemer zijn.
- Ik begrijp dat deelname aan het onderzoek vrijwillig is. Ik kies er zelf voor om mee te doen. Ik kan op elk moment stoppen met meedoen. Als ik stop, hoef ik niet uit te leggen waarom. Stoppen zal geen negatieve gevolgen voor mij hebben.
- Ik geef hieronder aan waar ik toestemming voor geef.

U heeft recht op een kopie van dit toestemmingsformulier.

Jongerenparticipatie in de provinciale politiek

Alvast heel erg bedankt voor het invullen van deze enquête! Het invullen van de enquête duurt zo'n vijf tot tien minuten. Het eerste gedeelte van de enquête bestaat uit acht algemene vragen. Vervolgens worden er tien vragen gesteld over hoe jij politiek in het algemeen ervaart en de laatste dertien vragen gaan specifiek over hoe je provinciale politiek ervaart.

1.1. Hoe oud ben je?

- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

1.2. Ik voel me

- Man
- Vrouw
- Anders
- Zeg ik liever niet

1.3. Ik woon in

- De stad Groningen
- Elders in de provincie Groningen

1.4. Het hoogste onderwijsniveau dat ik volg(de) is

- Basisonderwijs
- VMBO
- HAVO
- VWO
- MBO
- HBO
- WO

1.5. Ik stem eigenlijk altijd bij de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen

- Ja
- Nee
- Ik mocht nog niet stemmen

1.6. Ik stem eigenlijk altijd bij de Provinciale Statenverkiezingen

- Ja
- Nee
- Ik mocht nog niet stemmen

1.7. Ik stem eigenlijk altijd bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen

- Ja
- Nee
- Ik mocht nog niet stemmen

1.8. Ik ben lid van een politieke (jongeren)partij

- Ja
- Nee

Optioneel

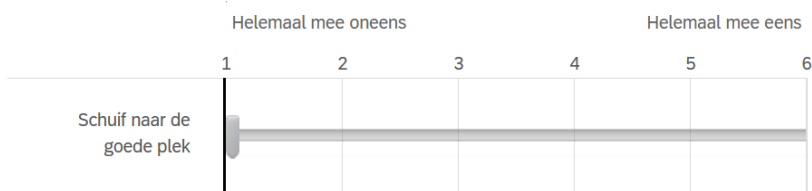
1.9. Van welke partij ben je lid?

- PvdA
- GroenLinks
- CDA
- ChristenUnie
- VVD
- D66
- PvdD
- VV
- SP
- FvD
- Overige

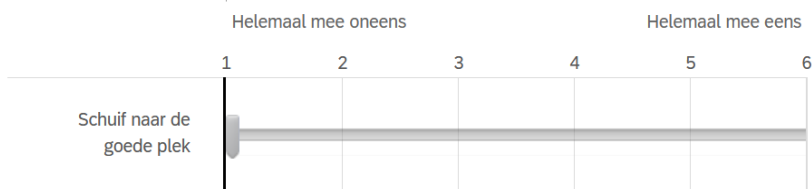
Jij en politiek

De volgende vragen gaan over in welke mate jij ervaart dat deze stellingen van toepassing zijn. Er zijn dus geen verkeerde antwoorden! LET OP: het gaat soms over 'deelnemen aan de politiek'. Hierbij kan je denken aan je stem uitbrengen, een brief schrijven aan politici, een vergadering bijwonen, etc.

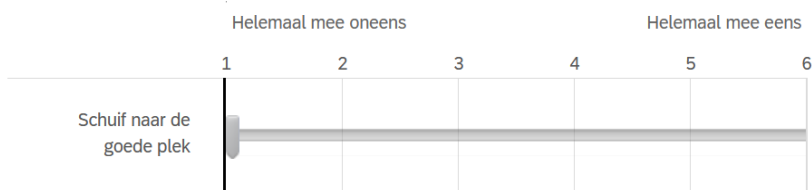
2.1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de politiek



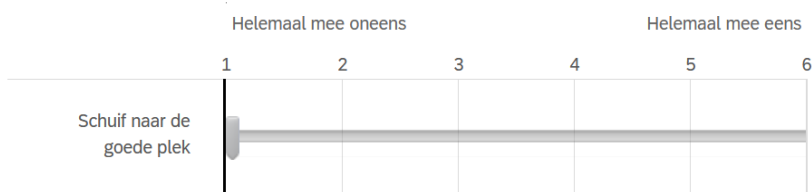
2.2. Met mijn familie heb ik het wel eens over politiek



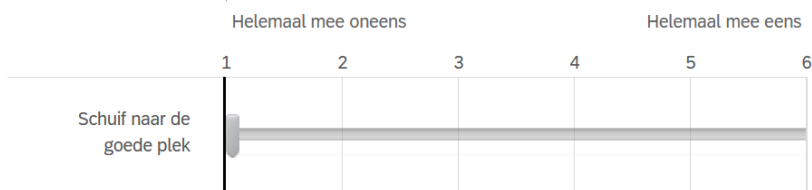
2.3. Met mijn vrienden heb ik het wel eens over politiek



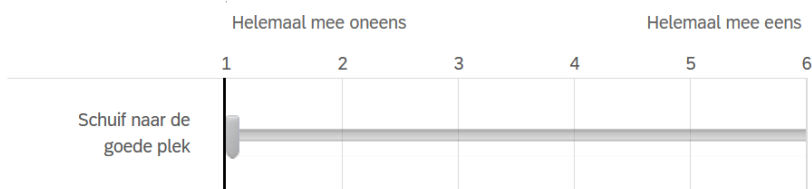
2.4. De landelijke politiek heeft invloed op mijn dagelijkse leven



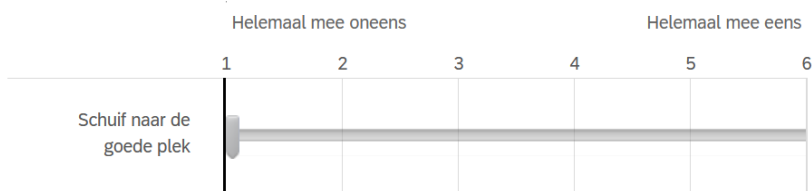
2.5. De provinciale politiek heeft invloed op mijn dagelijkse leven



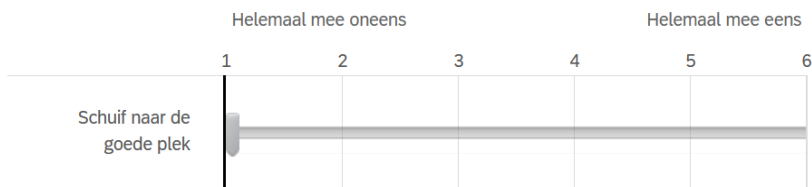
2.6. De gemeentelijke politiek heeft invloed op mijn dagelijkse leven



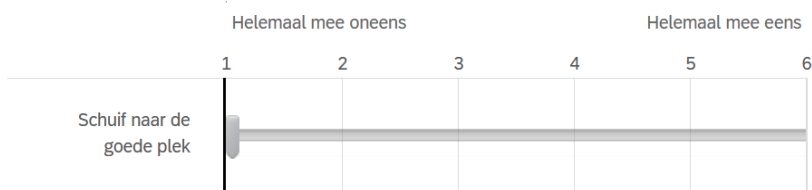
2.7. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik genoeg weet en kan om deel te nemen aan politiek



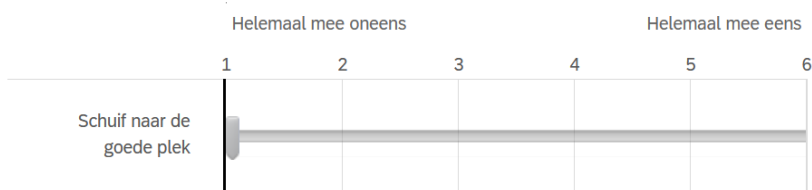
2.8. Ik voel me verbonden met de politiek



2.9. Ik kan zelf bepalen of ik deelneem aan de politiek



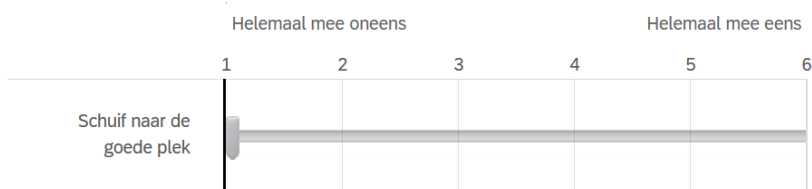
2.10. Ik kan zelf bepalen op welke manier ik deelneem aan de politiek



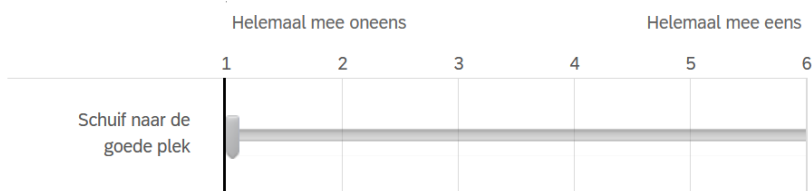
Jij en provinciale politiek

De volgende vragen gaan over in welke mate jij ervaart dat deze stellingen van toepassing zijn, deze keer specifiek over provinciale politiek. Er zijn dus geen verkeerde antwoorden! LET OP: het gaat soms over 'deelnemen aan de provinciale politiek'. Hierbij kan je denken aan je stem uitbrengen, een brief schrijven aan politici, een vergadering bijwonen, etc.

3.1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de provinciale politiek

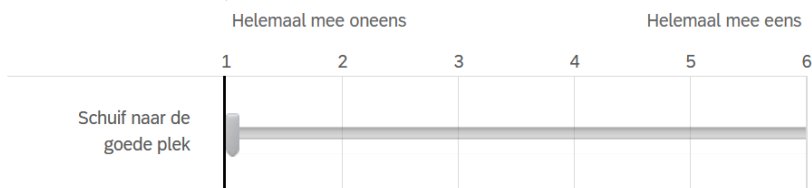


3.2. Ik heb een beeld van de onderwerpen waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is

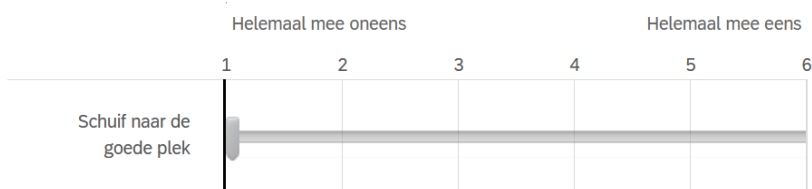


3.3. Kun je een voorbeeld noemen van een onderwerp waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is?

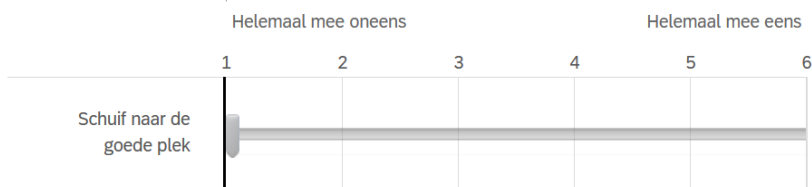
3.4. Ik zie of hoor wel eens iets over provinciale politiek



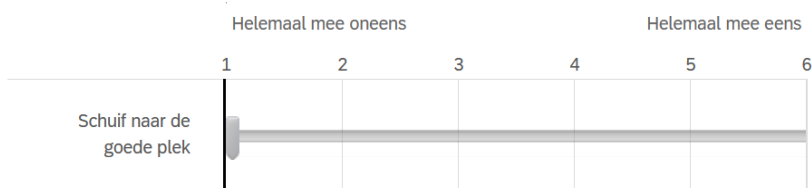
3.5. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik genoeg weet en kan om op provinciaal niveau politiek deel te nemen



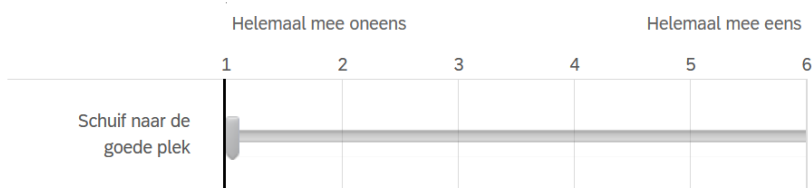
3.6. Ik voel me verbonden met de provinciale politiek



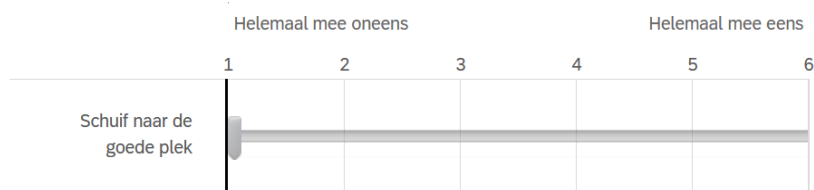
3.7. Ik kan zelf bepalen of ik deelneem aan de provinciale politiek



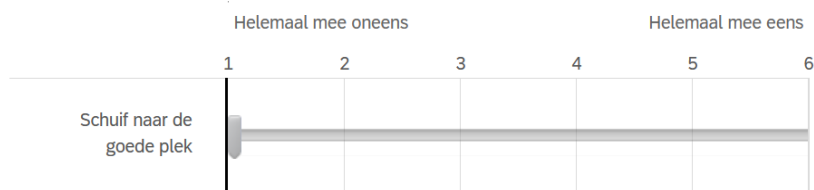
3.8. Ik kan zelf bepalen op welke manier ik deelneem aan de provinciale politiek



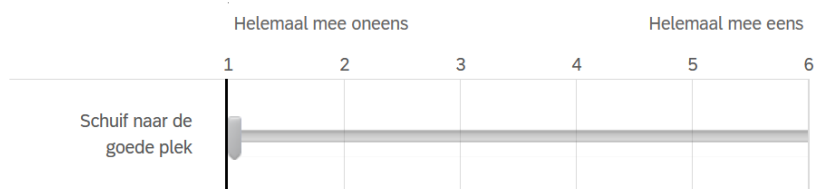
3.9. Ik weet welke stappen ik kan zetten wanneer ik mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen wil laten horen



3.10. Ik weet dat er iets gebeurt met mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen, als ik die zou geven



3.11. Het heeft impact als ik mijn mening geef over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen



3.12. Heb je wel eens deelgenomen aan provinciale politiek, buiten het uitbrengen van je stem (bijvoorbeeld een brief schrijven aan politici, aanwezig zijn bij een vergadering)?

- Ja
- Nee

3.13. Om welke reden(en) neem je niet op die manier deel aan de provinciale politiek?

Or:

3.13. Om welke reden(en) neem je ook op die manier deel aan de provinciale politiek?

4.1. Is er nog iets dat je kwijt wilt over dit onderwerp?

Appendix 2: Data survey

Table 6

Distribution of political youth parties in sample (n=44)

Membership of political youth party		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	42,6
No	24	51,1
Total	44	100,0

Table 7

Distribution of age in sample (n=44)

Age		
	Frequency	Percent
17	1	2,1
19	2	4,3
20	5	10,6
21	5	10,6
22	13	27,7
23	9	19,1
24	5	10,6
25	4	8,5
	44	100,0

Table 8

Distribution of political parties in sample (n=20)

Political party		
	Frequency	Percent
PvdA	2	4,3
GroenLinks	4	8,5
CDA	2	4,3
VVD	1	2,1
D66	3	6,4
PvdD	1	2,1
SP	1	2,1
FvD	1	2,1
Overige	5	10,6
Total	20	100,0

Table 9*Distribution of level of education in sample (n=44)*

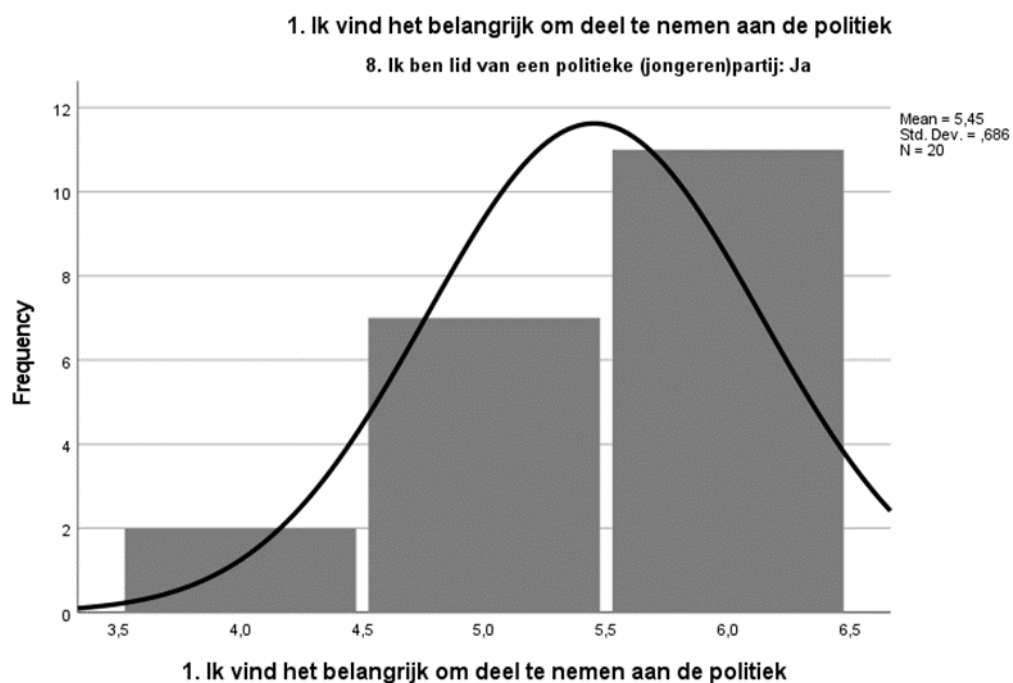
Level of education		
	Frequency	Percent
MBO	4	8,5
HBO	5	10,6
WO	35	74,5
Total	44	100,0

Table 10*Mean scores*

	Mean score (n≈40)
I think it is important to participate in politics (S2.1)	4,88 (std. 1,05)
I talk about politics with my family (S2.2)	4,82 (std.1,18)
I talk about politics with my friends (S2.3)	4,63 (std. 1,08)
National politics influence my daily life (S2.4)	4,62 (std. 1,11)
Provincial politics influence my daily life (S2.5)	3,76 (std. 1,31)
Municipal politics influence my daily life (S2.6)	4,25 (std. 1,26)
I feel like I got enough knowledge and am capable enough to participate in politics (S2.7)	4,38 (std. 1,02)
I feel engaged to politics (S2.8)	3,78 (std. 1,28)
I can decide by myself whether I participate in politics (S2.9)	5,00 (std. 0,99)
I can decide by myself on which way I participate in politics (S2.10)	4,87 (std. 0,97)
I think it is important to participate in provincial politics (S3.1)	3,62 (std. 1,28)
I am aware of the issues being addressed in provincial politics at the moment (S3.2)	3,04 (std. 1,10)
I sometimes see or hear about provincial politics (S3.3)	3,15 (std. 1,17)
I feel like I got enough knowledge and am capable enough to participate in provincial politics (S3.5)	2,82 (std. 1,18)
I feel engaged to provincial politics (S3.6)	2,48 (std. 1,17)
I can decide by myself whether I participate in provincial politics (S3.7)	4,25 (std. 1,32)
I can decide by myself on which way I participate in provincial politics (S3.8)	4,08 (std. 1,12)
I know what steps to take when I want to give my opinion about provincial politics (S3.9)	2,95 (std. 1,08)
I know that something is done when I give my opinion about provincial political subjects (S3.10)	2,62 (std. 1,03)
It has an impact when I give my opinion about provincial political subjects (S3.11)	2,72 (std. 1,10)
Mean score survey	3,82 (std. 0,57)

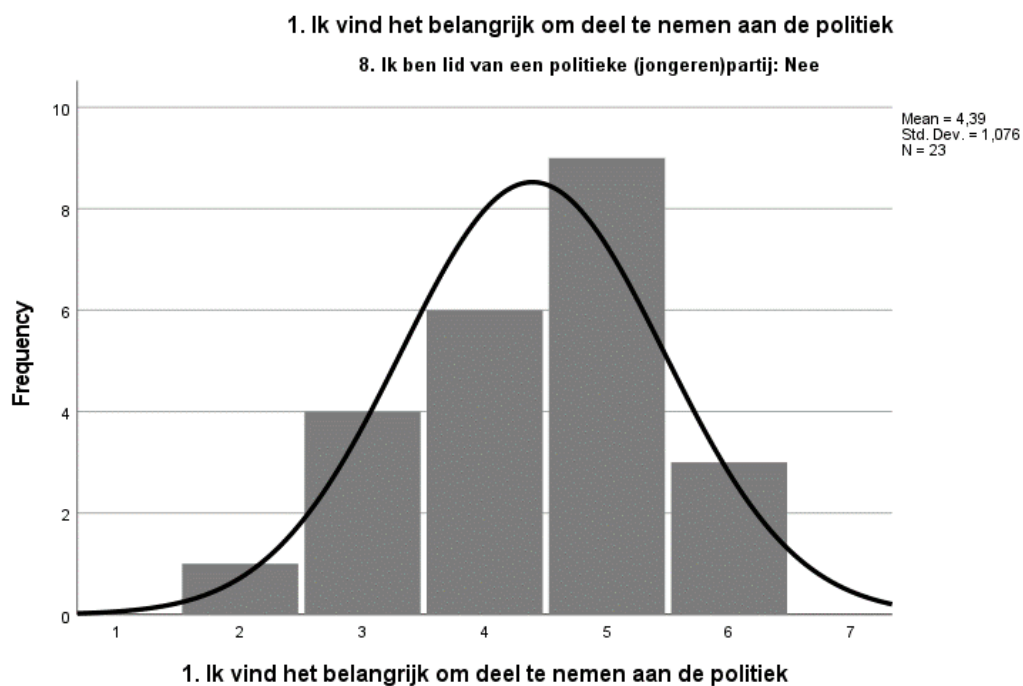
Histogram 1

S2.1 political youth party members



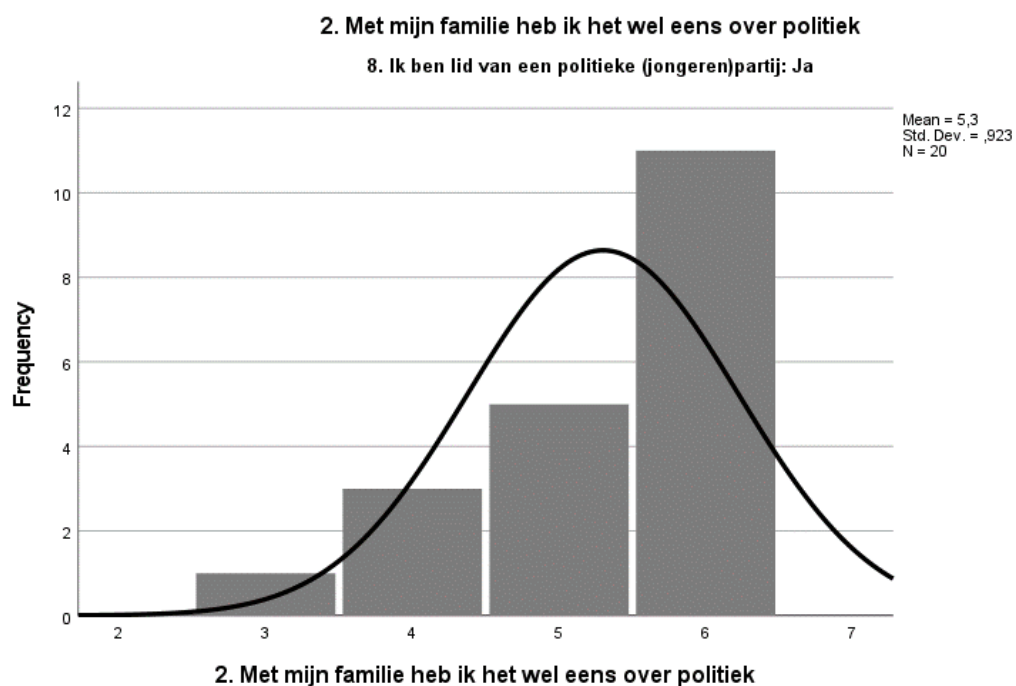
Histogram 2

S2.1 non- members of political youth party



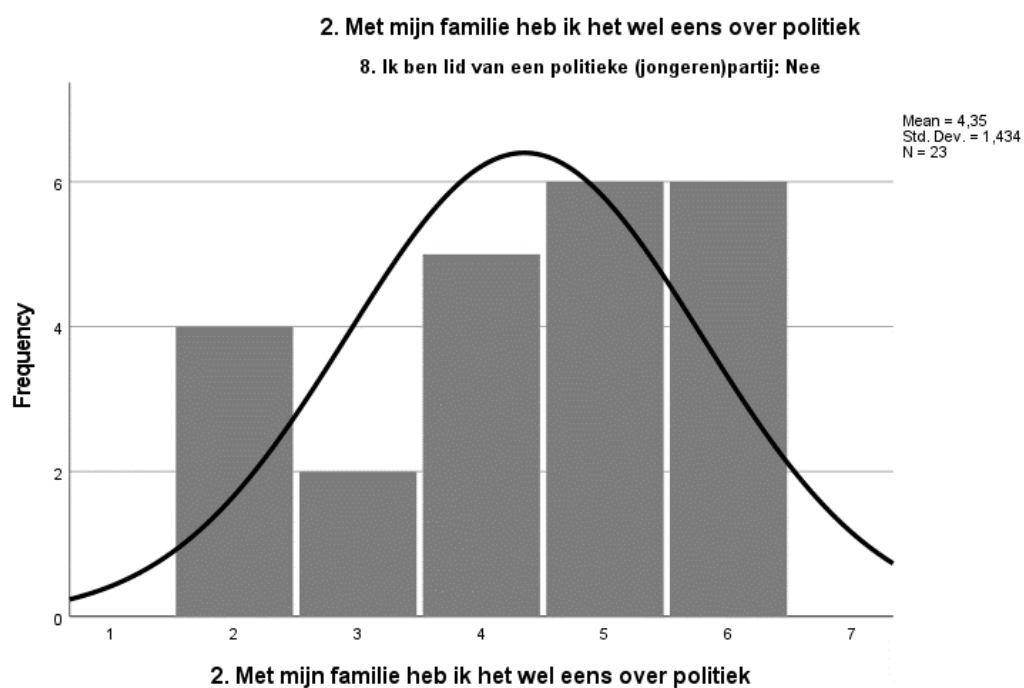
Histogram 3

S2.2 political youth party members



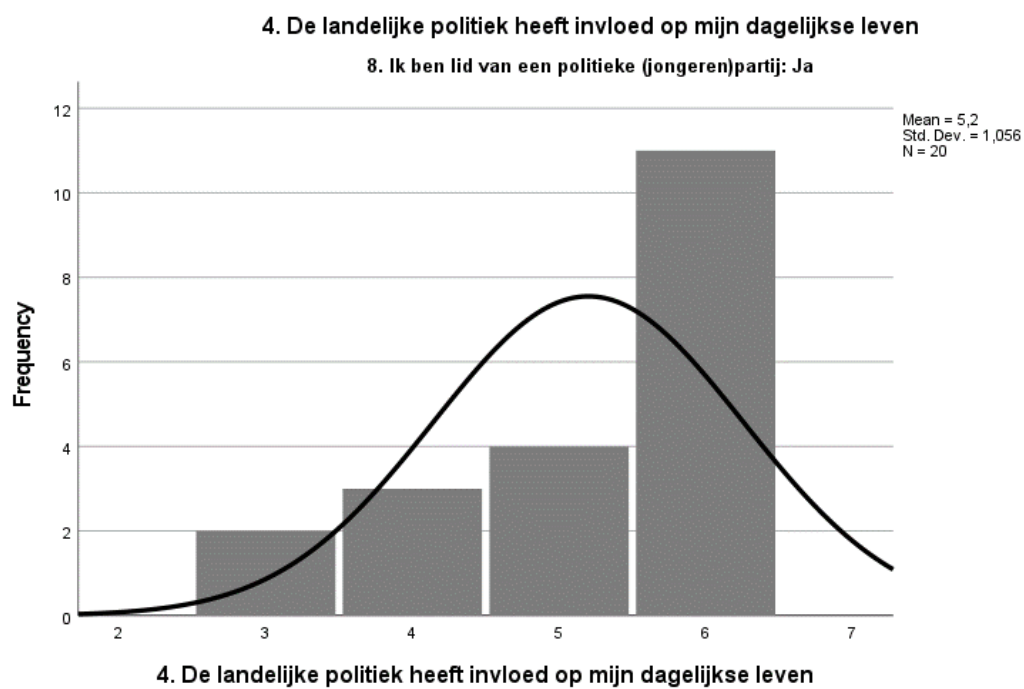
Histogram 4

S2.2 non-members of political youth party



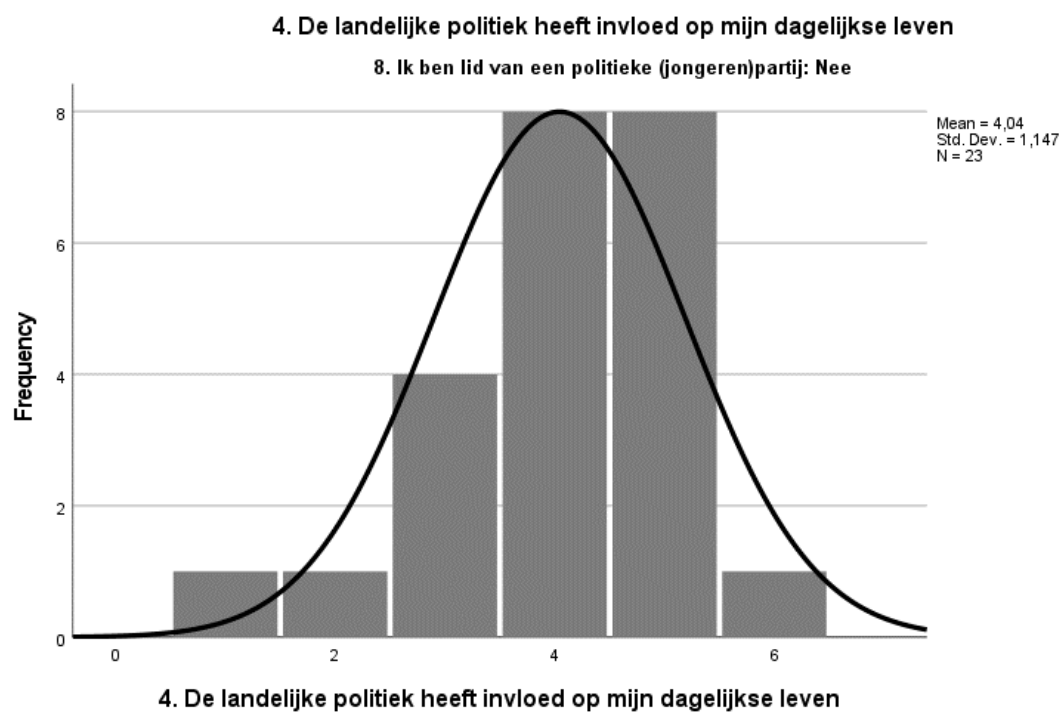
Histogram 5

S2.4 political youth party members



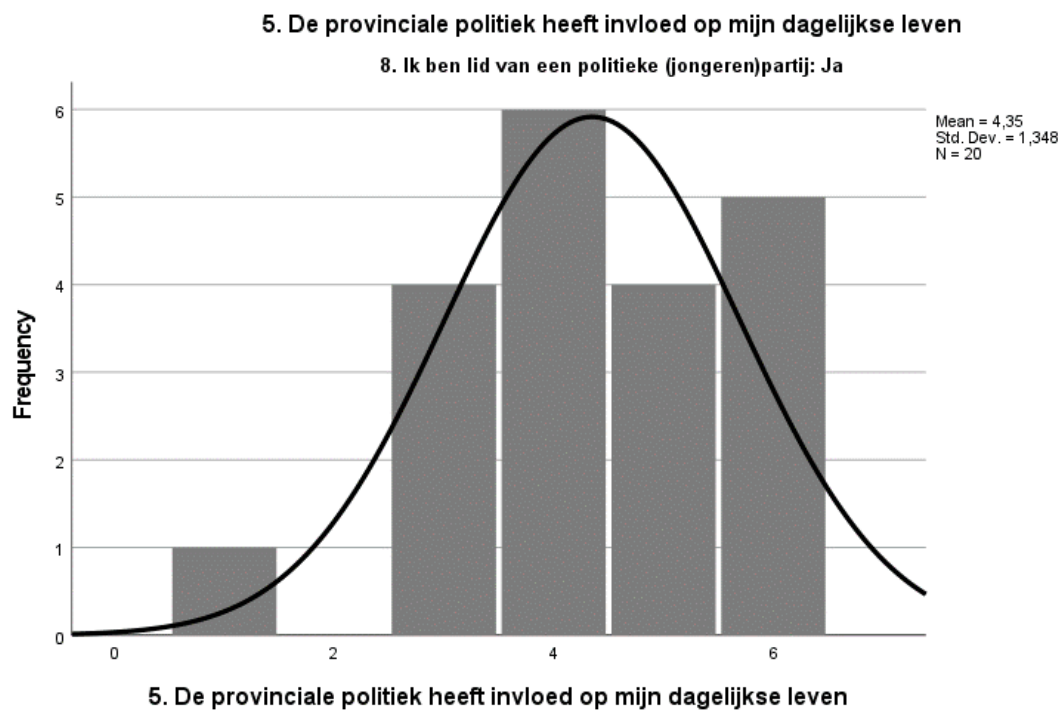
Histogram 6

S2.4 non- members of political youth party



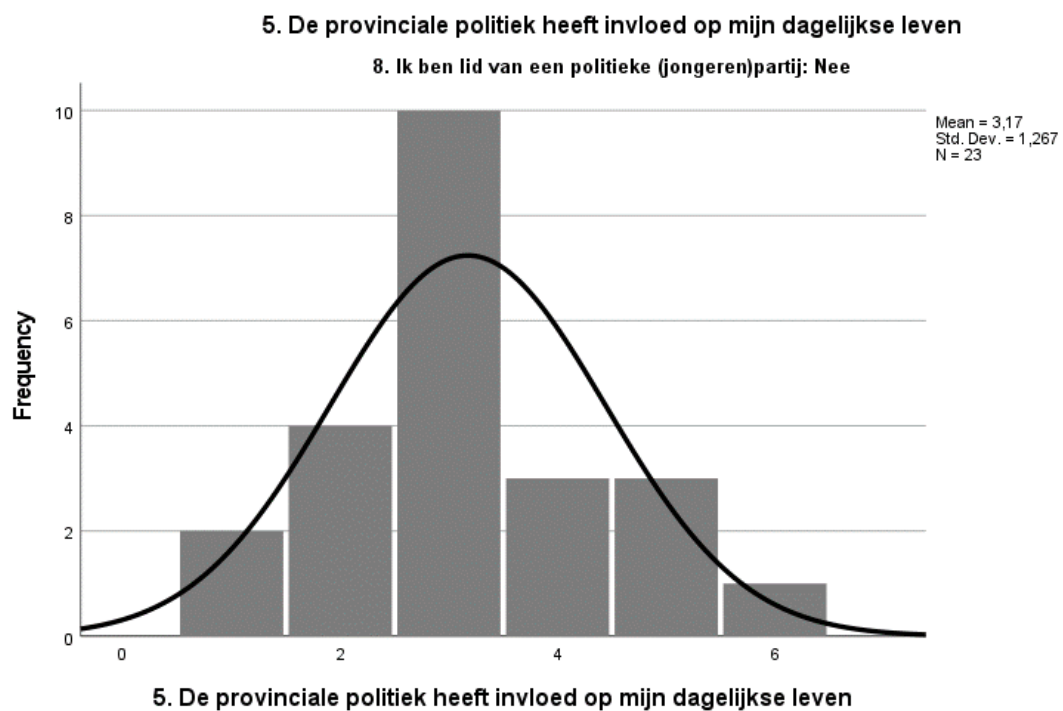
Histogram 7

S2.5 political youth party members



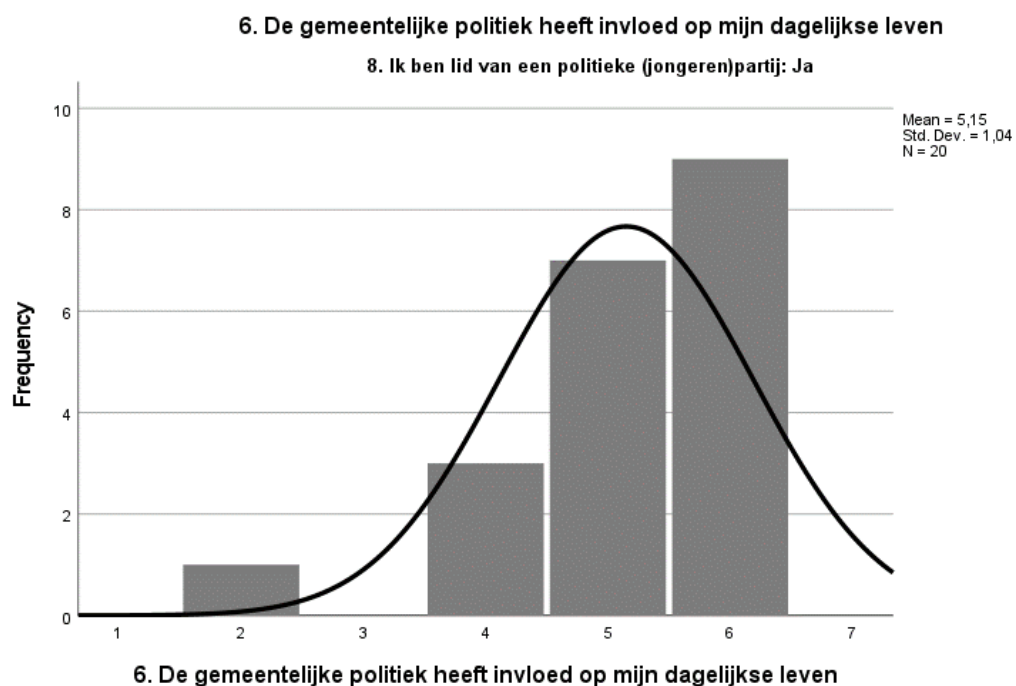
Histogram 8

S2.5 non- members of political youth party



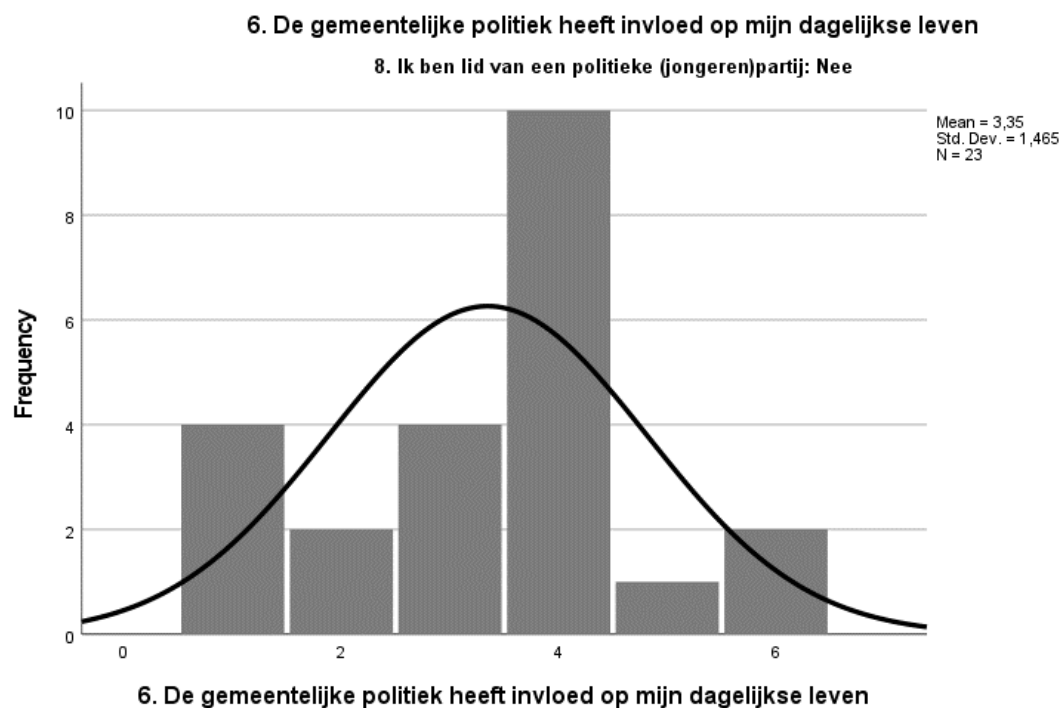
Histogram 9

S2.6 political youth party members



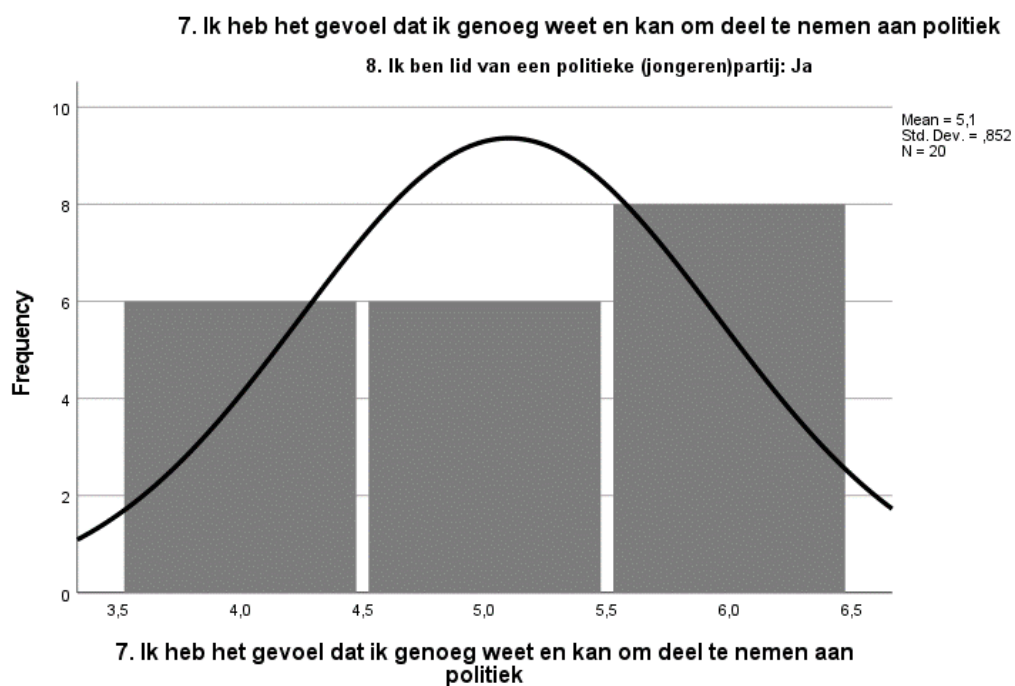
Histogram 10

S2.6 non- members of political youth party



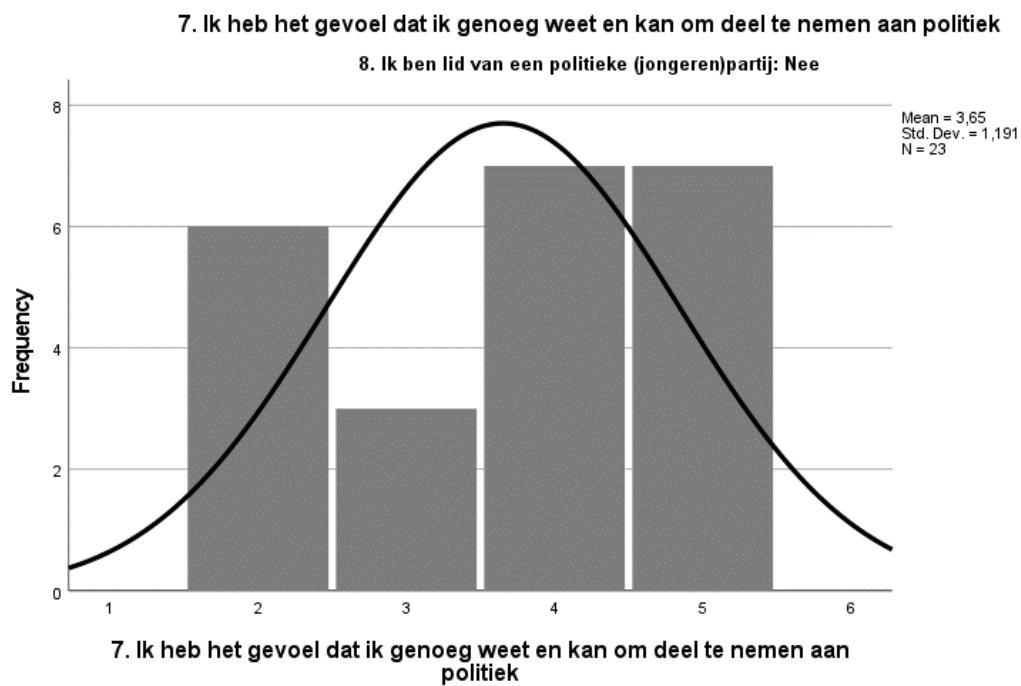
Histogram 11

S2.7 political youth party members



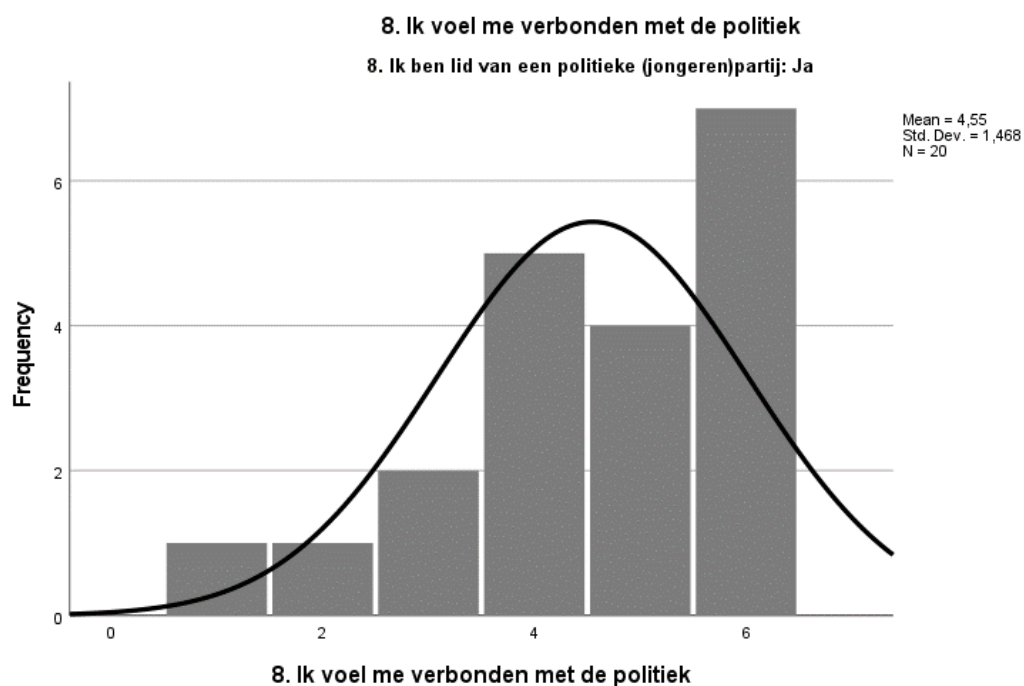
Histogram 12

S2.7 non- members of political youth party



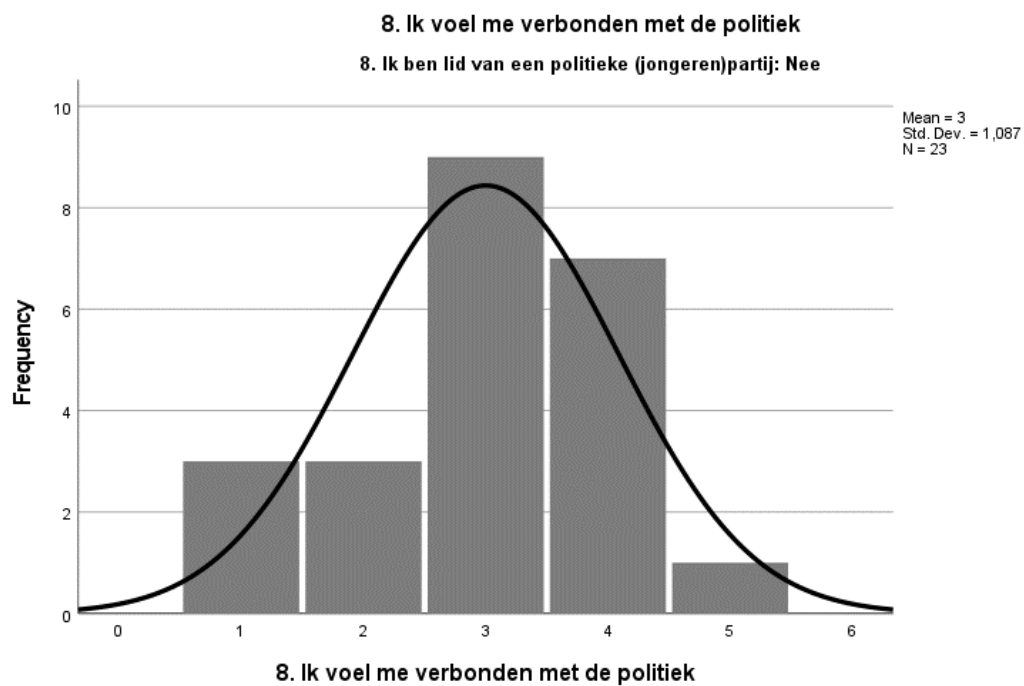
Histogram 13

S2.8 political youth party members



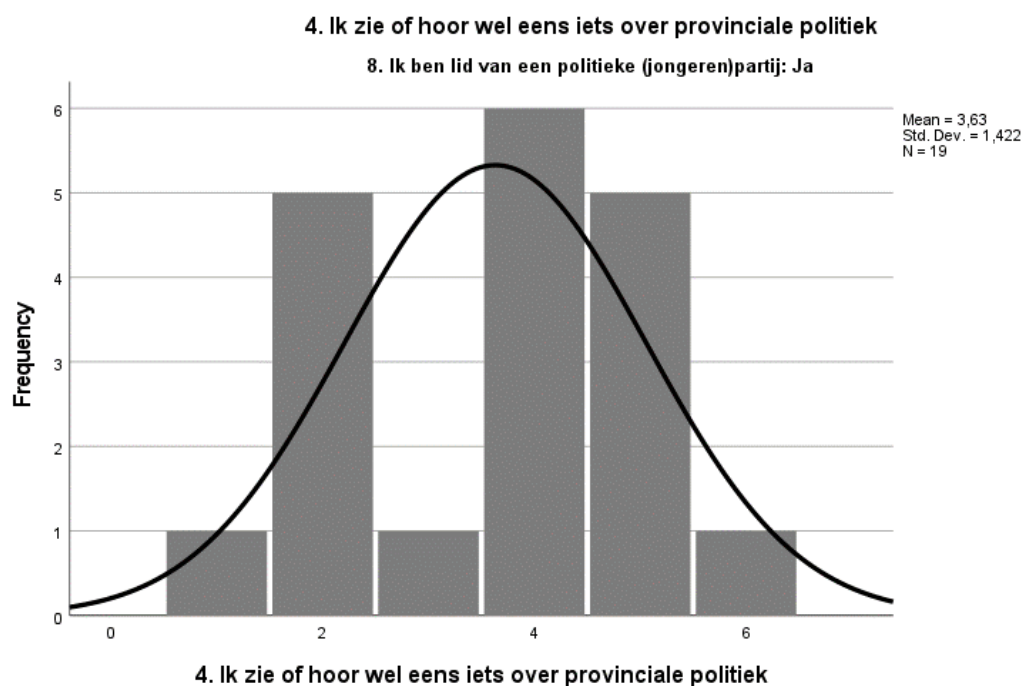
Histogram 14

S2.8 non- members of political youth party



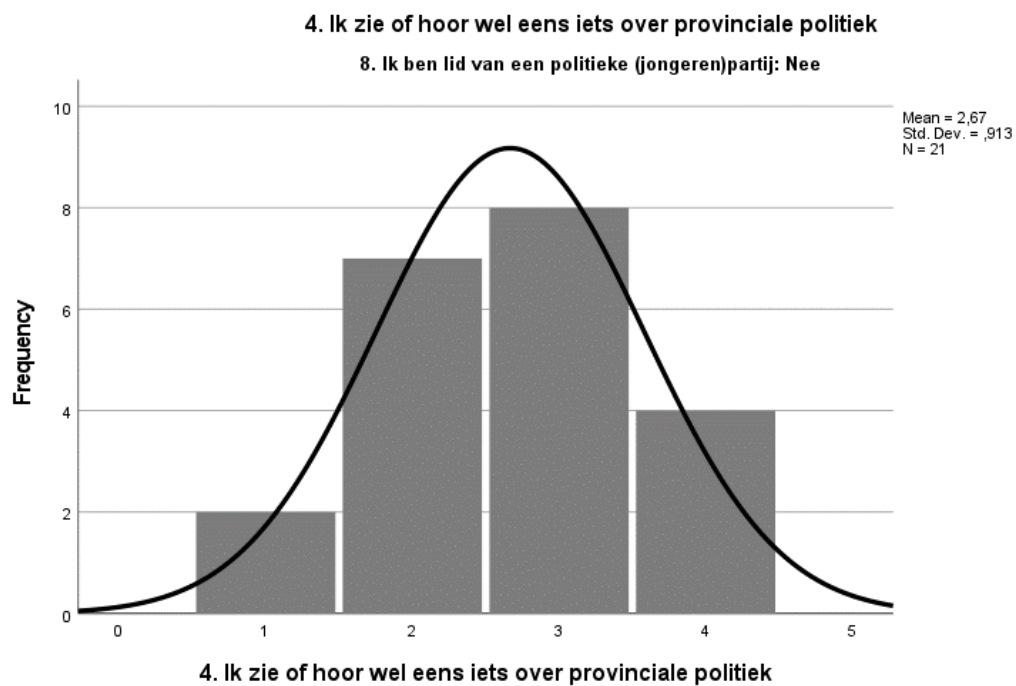
Histogram 15

S3.4 political youth party members



Histogram 16

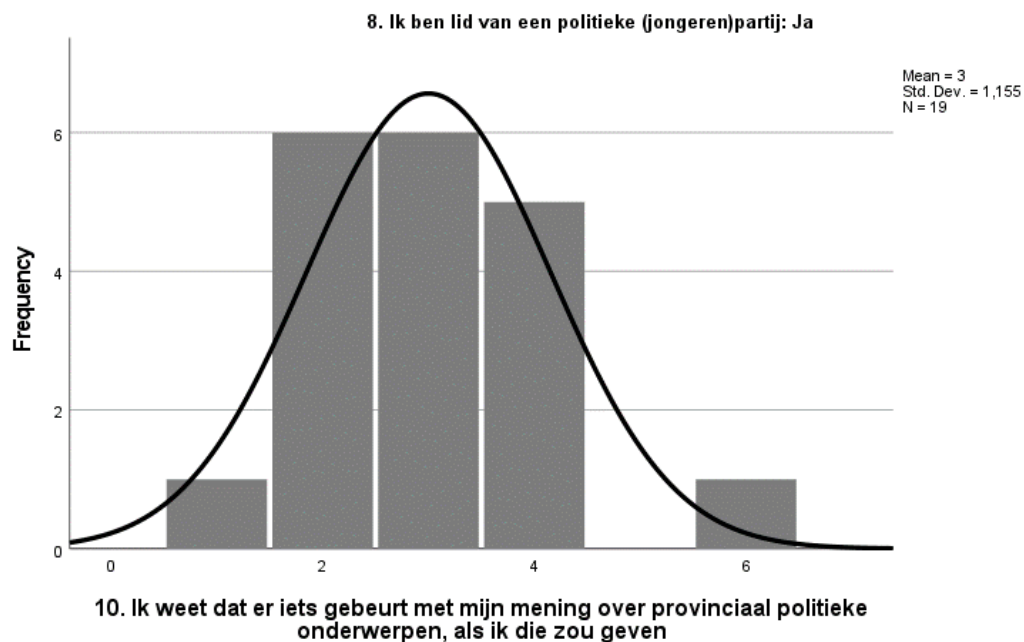
S3.4 non- members of political youth party



Histogram 17

S3.10 political youth party members

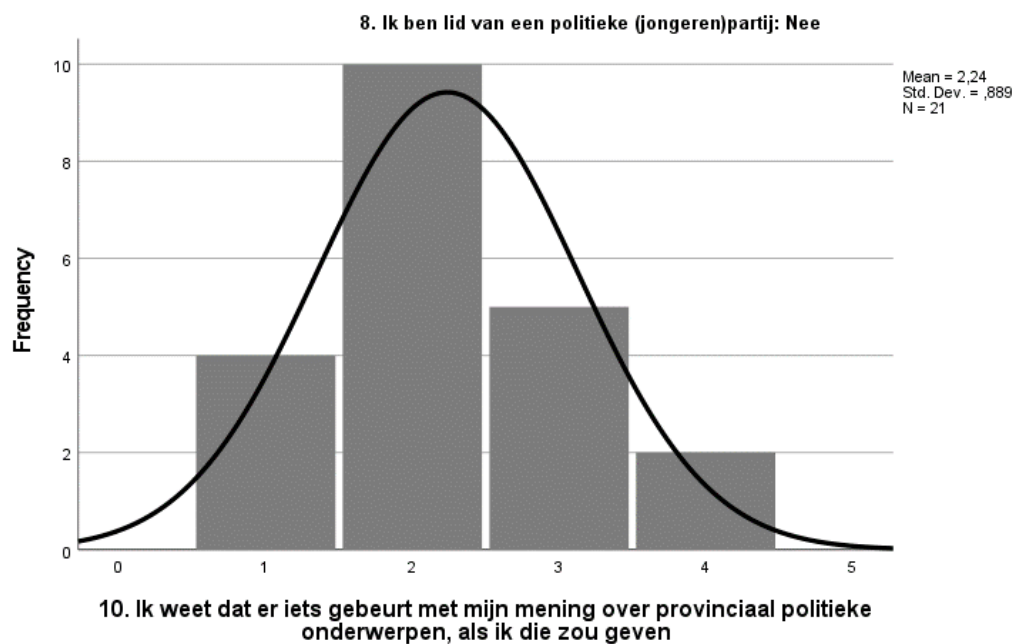
10. Ik weet dat er iets gebeurt met mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen, als ik die zou geven



Histogram 18

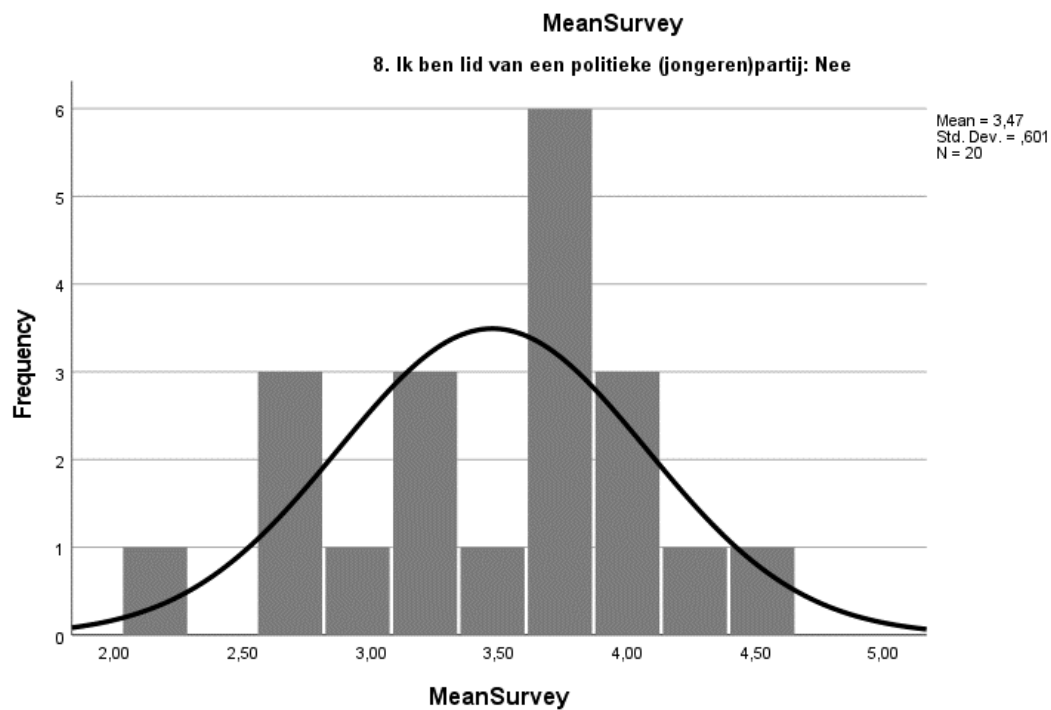
S3.10 non- members of political youth party

10. Ik weet dat er iets gebeurt met mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen, als ik die zou geven



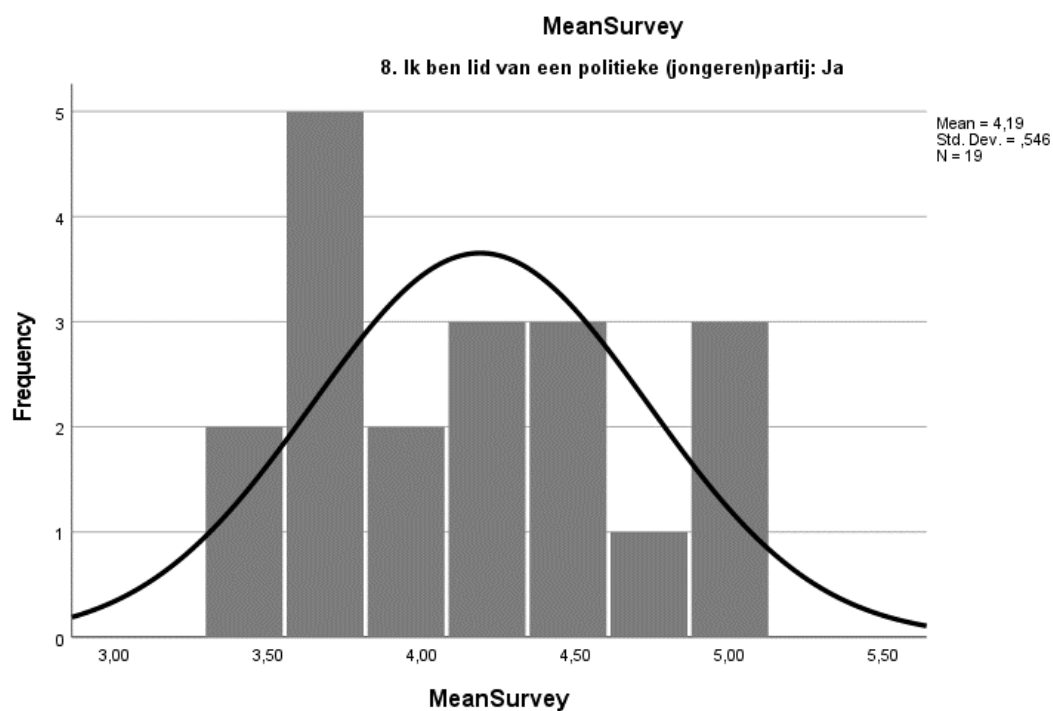
Histogram 19

Mean score political youth party members



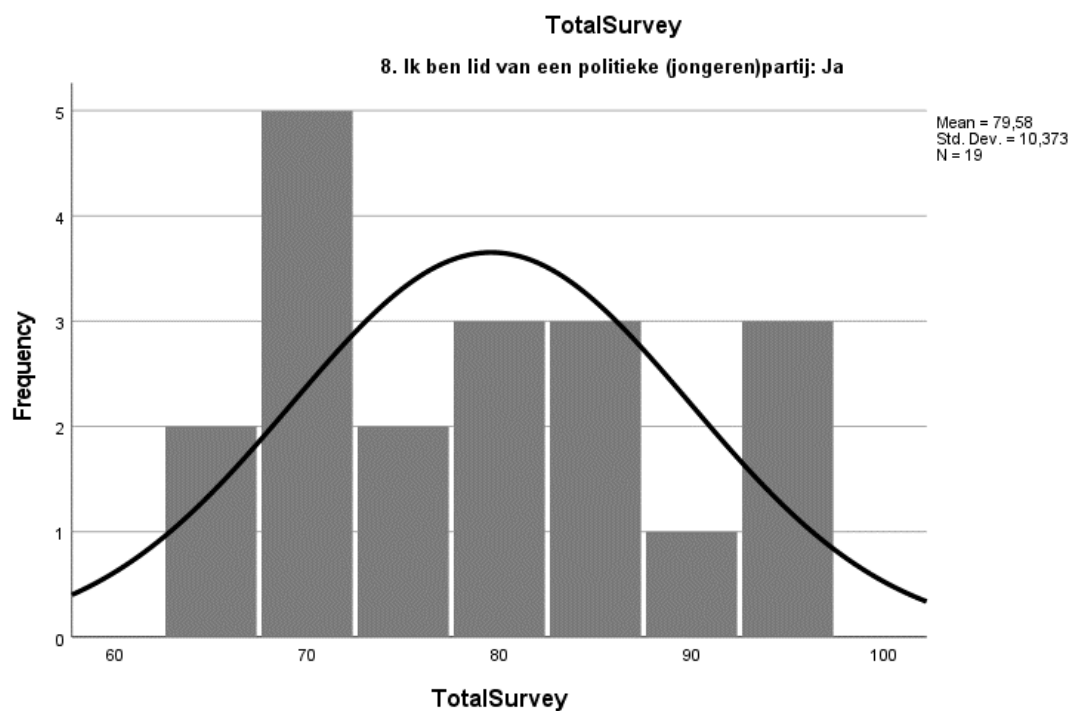
Histogram 20

Mean score non- members of political youth party



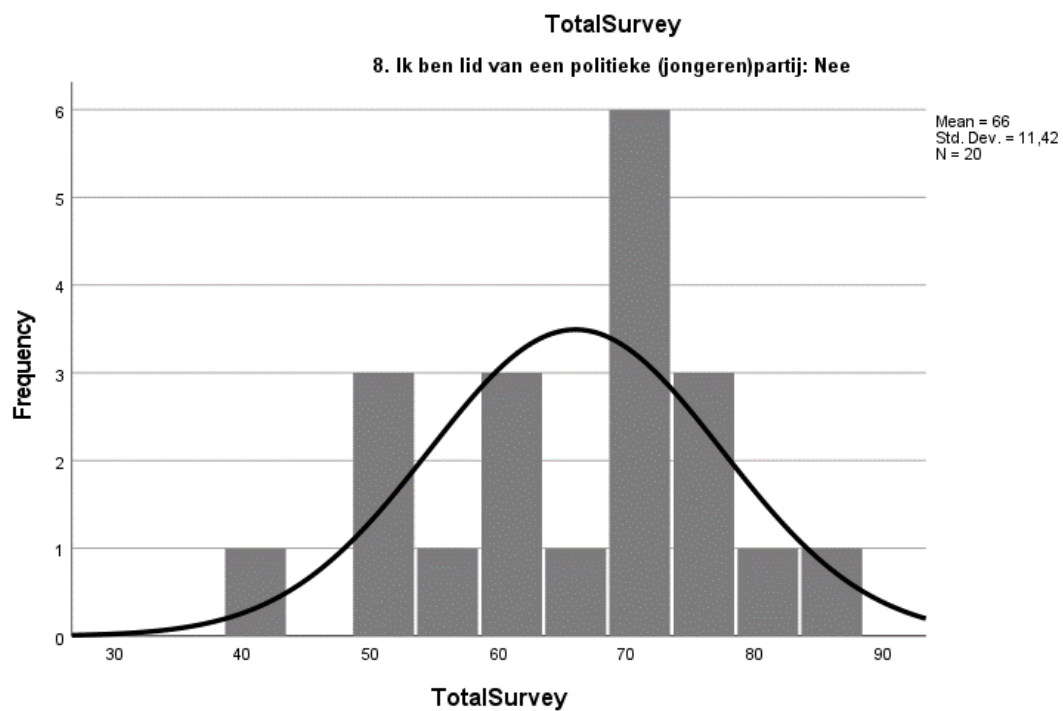
Histogram 21

Total score political youth party members



Histogram 22

Total score non- members of political youth party



Appendix 3: Complete document analysis

The Provincial Youth Debate

Purpose – At the Provincial Youth Debate, youth can tell politicians what they think or what solutions they see. The first sentence on the website is the purpose of the activity. Moreover, the purpose is that the young people think along about social themes, meet peers from the province and become acquainted with politics. In addition, they develop various skills, such as forming an opinion, collaborating, brainstorming and debating. So the purpose of the initiative is clear to as well participants as organizers. However, there is no information about the role of youth in defining this purpose.

Positioning and power relations – there is not very much information to be found about this, except that the young people try to convince the politicians during a debate and the politicians are sent in a letter that the event is an excellent opportunity to get in touch with the young people in the province, to hear what is going on and work together with them to find solutions. During the debate, they can critically question the proposals of the young people and make possible connections with current policy or future plans of the province. The organisation of the Provincial Youth Debate says to hope that by the end of the debate the politicians will be convinced and that they will involve the opinion of young people in commitments regarding the proposal (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2021). So there is a good balance between the developmental approach, as the young people have their own event and can practice debating, and the contingent approach, as their solutions are seriously considered by politicians.

Perspective – Anyone between the ages of 12 and 18 can sign up: regardless of education level, M/F/X, living place or background (*Dutch National Youth Council*, n.d., introduction). Furthermore, it is free to sign up and there is no prior knowledge or preparation required to participate. At last, since this year it is also possible to register independently, without supervision from school being required. This makes it even possible for youth who do not attend school to take part in this activity.

Protection – there is nothing to be found about protection measures.

Place – the provincial youth debate takes place in the provincial government building of Groningen. It is stated that if youth are not able to come to the Provincial Youth Debate, for example because they live in an institution, for medical reasons or because of religious beliefs, they can contact the organisation. This is ‘‘because we like to represent all young people, we would like to see how you can make your voice heard’’ (*Dutch National Youth Council*, n.d., final paragraph). So, there are sincere efforts to make sure everyone can attend.

Process – the members of the Provincial Council are asked the following questions: ‘‘To guarantee genuine youth participation, it is important that the participants receive feedback afterwards. Did you do something with an idea? Or would you like to talk to the young people again? Do you want more input from them?’’ (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2021). This way, there can be something like an on-going conversation even after the event. Some side notes are that the processes are not that transparent and informative that young people can be sure that something will be done with their opinion and the members of the Provincial Council did not have something like a training or preparation before going to the Provincial Youth Debate and debate with youth, which are process factors as well.

Op weg naar het Lagerhuis

Purpose – the purpose is clear, Op weg naar Het Lagerhuis has started to offer young people the opportunity to improve their debating techniques and speaking skills. The aim is also to offer young people the opportunity to experience what provincial politics means. Which topics are discussed in the province and how is decision-making in politics established? (handleiding OWNHL).

Positioning and power positions – no information about this is provided in the document. As the purpose is mostly about experiencing politics and improving debating and speaking skills, youth are mainly approached in a developmental way.

Perspective – this event is for high school students only and teachers should sign up their school and thus students. A youngster thus cannot sign up individually and needs to attend school to be able to be signed up for the event.

Protection – nothing can be found about protection.

Place – schools can contact for support if they experience practical and/or financial limitations that make participation impossible. The organization of ‘Op weg naar het Lagerhuis’ always strives to achieve a suitable solution to make participation possible and can deploy resources for this.

Process – the event is not something that contributes to an on-going conversation. Youth are given a place where they can speak, but it is not really about making impact.

Model European Parliament

Purpose – students simulate sessions of the European Parliament. This way, students experience how European cooperation works in practice. Another aim of these simulation sessions is to make the participants aware of a European identity.

Positioning and power positions – in this event, young people are seen as persons that have to develop themselves. They experience what it is like to be a European citizen, but nothing is

really done with their conclusions. The developmental approach is thus used in this event and there is no balance between the developmental and contingent approach.

Perspective – only students from the highest grades of HAVO and VWO can participate in this event, so they do not reach as many young people with different perspectives as possible.

Protection – nothing is said about protection measures.

Place – the event takes place in the province building of Groningen. There is no information found on how to make the event as accessible as possible.

Process – after the provincial conference, winners of the provincial round go to the national round and after that even to the European round. However, there is not something like a process after these events. So, politicians do not really do something with the results.

GrunnMUN

Purpose – during GrunnMUN, students come together to simulate councils of the UN, the EU and NATO. It brings together young students to discover new solutions to conflicting international ideals and national interests.

Positioning and power positions – just like at the Model European Parliament, young people are seen as persons that have to develop themselves instead of as full citizens. So, here as well only the developmental approach is observed.

Perspective – it looks like everyone can sign up, but there is no information about this.

Participants need to pay €5 to participate, so this can be a stumbling block for some youngsters.

Protection – none is being said about this.

Place – it takes place in the Province government building, and last year (2022) there was also a possibility to attend online via Gathertown. However, it is unknown whether this was purely because of Corona measures or that it was to make the event optimal accessible.

Process – the event is not something that contributes to an on-going conversation. Youth are given a place where they can speak, but it is not really about making impact. There are no politicians involved in the event.

Youth Advisory Council

Purpose – in the statute, the aim of the Youth Advisory Council is included in Article 2. The purpose is thus clear for everyone within the organisation of the province of Groningen.

Positioning and power positions – the Youth Advisory Council gives advice to the Provincial Council and the Provincial Executive. This can be solicited and unsolicited advice, so youth can also initiate this. Moreover, they represent the interests of young people in the province of Groningen at other organizations and institutions. So the young people are mostly approached

contingent, as the young people are taken seriously and their opinions are taken into consideration.

Perspective – about the composition of the council is not much being said, except for the amount of people that should be in there. Everyone can apply for the Youth Advisory Council, but there are no known measures to involve as many perspectives as possible.

Protection – there is nothing to be found about protection.

Place – the meetings of the Youth Advisory Council take place in the Province government building, but there is no information found on how to make Council meetings as accessible as possible.

Process – the Youth Advisory Council can give advice always and that ensures an on-going conversation between the Youth Advisory Council and the adult politicians. However, the 'Memo on the functioning of the Youth Advisory Council' stated that according to the Youth Advisory Council, advice is now mainly requested from the civil service and insufficiently from the Provincial Council and Provincial Executives (Province of Groningen, personal communication, 2019).

Stem van provincie Groningen

Purpose – the aim is clear, namely that young people enter into a dialogue, respond to statements and share ideas about topics that they find important.

Positioning and power positions – on the website are special statements for youth to respond to. This implies that they have another position than adult people on one hand, but on the other hand this can be even a benefit as they are seen as connoisseurs on those topics.

Moreover, young people can also react to the other statements and question if they would like to. So, mostly the contingent approach is seen here as their input is really taken into account.

Perspective – everyone that creates an account can give input on this website, so in fact all perspectives could be seen.

Protection – participants can vote, respond to ideas, and offer ideas only if they have an account. This is to prevent anonymous feedback. However, on the website it is seen that the name on the screen can also be 'ooievaar' for example. So, the participants can be anonymous towards each other. This way, protection on this website is considered by not allowing users to respond to each other anonymously because the province of Groningen knows who the account belongs to, but also by allowing users to alter their names to something fictitious for the other users.

Place – the website is only available to people with internet access, but beyond that it is very easy to share your opinion. In three steps and within five minutes, youth can share their opinion.

Process – there will be new statements on the website, so the opinion of (young) people is being asked consistently. This causes an on-going conversation. Also after an opinion is given, (young) people can react to each other.

Appendix 4: Correlation calculations

Table 11

Correlation family and importance of politics

Correlations			
		1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de politiek	2. Met mijn familie heb ik het wel eens over politiek
1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de politiek	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 43	,417** 43
2. Met mijn familie heb ik het wel eens over politiek	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,417** 43	1 43

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 12

Correlation friends and importance of politics

Correlations			
		3. Met mijn vrienden heb ik het wel eens over politiek	1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de politiek
3. Met mijn vrienden heb ik het wel eens over politiek	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 43	,394** 43
1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de politiek	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,394** 43	1 43

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 13*Correlation friends and importance of provincial politics*

Correlations			
		3. Met mijn vrienden heb ik het wel eens over politiek	1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de provinciale politiek
3. Met mijn vrienden heb ik het wel eens over politiek	Pearson Correlation	1	,427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,006
	N	43	40
1. Ik vind het belangrijk om deel te nemen aan de provinciale politiek	Pearson Correlation	,427**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,006	
	N	40	40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 14*Correlation visibility of provincial political issues and knowing which steps to take*

Correlations			
		2. Ik heb een beeld van de onderwerpen waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is	9. Ik weet welke stappen ik kan zetten wanneer ik mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen wil laten horen
2. Ik heb een beeld van de onderwerpen waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is	Pearson Correlation	1	,512**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	40	40
9. Ik weet welke stappen ik kan zetten wanneer ik mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen wil laten horen	Pearson Correlation	,512**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	40	40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 15*Correlation visibility of provincial political issues and attachment in provincial politics*

Correlations			
		2. Ik heb een beeld van de onderwerpen waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is	6. Ik voel me verbonden met de provinciale politiek
2. Ik heb een beeld van de onderwerpen waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 40	,506** <,001 40
6. Ik voel me verbonden met de provinciale politiek	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,506** <,001 40	1 40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 16*Correlation visibility of provincial political issues and feeling of competence to participate in provincial politics*

Correlations			
		2. Ik heb een beeld van de onderwerpen waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is	5. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik genoeg weet en kan om op provinciaal niveau politiek deel te nemen
2. Ik heb een beeld van de onderwerpen waar de provinciale politiek momenteel mee bezig is	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 40	,592** <,001 40
5. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik genoeg weet en kan om op provinciaal niveau politiek deel te nemen	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,592** <,001 40	1 40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 17

Correlation seeing and hearing about provincial politics and competence to participate in provincial politics

		Correlations	
		4. Ik zie of hoor wel eens iets over provinciale politiek	5. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik genoeg weet en kan om op provinciaal niveau politiek deel te nemen
4. Ik zie of hoor wel eens iets over provinciale politiek	Pearson Correlation	1	,766**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	40	40
5. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik genoeg weet en kan om op provinciaal niveau politiek deel te nemen	Pearson Correlation	,766**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	40	40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 18

Correlation seeing and hearing about provincial politics and attachment in provincial politics

		Correlations	
		4. Ik zie of hoor wel eens iets over provinciale politiek	6. Ik voel me verbonden met de provinciale politiek
4. Ik zie of hoor wel eens iets over provinciale politiek	Pearson Correlation	1	,626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	40	40
6. Ik voel me verbonden met de provinciale politiek	Pearson Correlation	,626**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	40	40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 19*Correlation seeing and hearing about provincial politics and knowing which steps to take*

Correlations			
		4. Ik zie of hoor wel eens iets over provinciale politiek	9. Ik weet welke stappen ik kan zetten wanneer ik mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen wil laten horen
4. Ik zie of hoor wel eens iets over provinciale politiek	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 40	,584** 40
9. Ik weet welke stappen ik kan zetten wanneer ik mijn mening over provinciaal politieke onderwerpen wil laten horen	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	,584** ,<,001 40	1 40

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).