

# Role of Youth in the Voice of the People Party’s Success

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## Abstract

The Voice of the People Party (VPP) was established in November 2021 in Meghalaya with its party President being Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit who was elected to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly from Nongkrem constituency in the 2013 elections and again in the 2023 elections which marked the entry of the party into Meghalaya’s politics. The party contested 18 seats in the legislative elections in which they have won 4 seats. The party had put up one candidate from Shillong Lok Sabha constituency in the 2024 MP elections and won, beating veteran Congress leader and three-time MP, Vincent Pala by a huge margin of 3,71,910 votes. Tremmi Lamare, in his article “Trends in Meghalaya Politics After the Victory of the Voice of the People Party (VPP) in the Lok Sabha 2024 Election” (May-June 2024), attributes the party’s success to a carefully crafted grassroots mobilisation strategy that was a cornerstone of its electoral victory. The party’s emphasis on clean governance, anti-corruption measures and transparency appears to appeal to the growing section of the electorate who are frustrated with the stays quo and yearn for change. The polls of the two elections indicate a shift in the regional politics of Meghalaya based on the growing popularity of the party.

Youth make up 40% of India's population, and in Meghalaya, 74% of the total are under the age of 35, which is above the national average. The political parties in Meghalaya have been focusing more on youth-oriented issues and the youth play a major role in determining electoral outcomes. The Voice of the People Party (VPP) has given top priority to youth issues in its 2025 district council election manifesto, with a specific promise of a job recruitment policy for staff recruitment in the District Council.

A survey was conducted among 50 youths to assess their contribution to the success of political parties, with a particular focus on understanding the issues that concern them, their level of satisfaction with both the current and previous governments, their perspectives on regional parties, their views on Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) and their role in the Voice of the People Party’s (VPP) success. The results of this survey are expected to provide valuable insights into the youth’s political engagement and the factors influencing their support for regional parties, especially the VPP. The distribution of the survey respondents is detailed in the following table:

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
18-20	1	3	4
21-25	17	21	38
26-30	2	6	8

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents age wise**

The survey was conducted in all three major regions of Meghalaya namely Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills and 44 out of 50 votes in elections. This shows that the youth actively participate in political processes aiming to make their voices heard.

Education	Number	Percentage
Higher Secondary	2	4%
Graduate	35	70%
Post-Graduate	13	26%
Total	50	100%

**Table 2: Education Level of Youth**

The table above takes into account the education level of the youth to help determine the impact of their views on governance and politics in Meghalaya. In the study, youth with higher secondary education is 4% (2 respondents) graduates are 70% (35 respondents) and postgraduates constitute 26% (13 respondents).

The survey also considers the employment status of the youth to better understand their priorities in selecting a government. The pie chart below illustrates the employment status of the youth participants. It shows that 68% (34 respondents) of the youth are students, 16% (8



students) are employed, 10% (5 respondents) are self-employed, and 6% (3 respondents) are unemployed. About 88% of youth vote in elections while 12% do not vote in elections. This makes it clear that the youth actively participate in the electoral processes of the state but only 40.4% of the youth feel that their votes influence political outcomes. The political leaders only sometimes consider the concerns of young people when making political decisions according to 58% (29 respondents) in the survey while 38% (19 respondents) believe that their concerns are rarely taken into consideration. According to the 2% (1 respondent), the government does take into serious consideration the concerns of the youth while the other 2% (1 respondent) are of the opinion that the government never consider the youth's concerns.

A table is also given below to take into account the primary concerns of the youth. The chief concerns are employment opportunities followed by education and student debt, economic opportunities, social justice and equality, healthcare and climate change.

Issues	Number	Percentage
Employment Opportunities	44	89.8%
Education and Student Debt	36	69.4%
Economic Opportunities	28	57.1%
Social Justice and Equality	26	53.1%
Healthcare	26	53.1%
Climate Change	21	42.9%

**Table 3: Issues most important to the youth**

The study found that about 8% (4 respondents) always engage with political content, 50% (25 respondents) of the youth often engage with political content, 20% (10 respondents) occasionally engage with political content but only 32% (16 respondents) have actively participated in political activism. This indicates the increased role of the media in Meghalaya’s political landscape. The motivation behind their active participation is their personal belief in a cause, education or school programs, influence from family and friends and social media campaigns. The youth also do not believe to have enough representation in the state as indicated by 54% (27 respondents) in the survey. This is true in terms that the state does not have many young leaders in the Legislative Assembly or the District Councils. There is however a shift in this notion in contemporary times with the 2025 ADCs election where a number of youths from the VPP have been elected as representatives.

The youth are of the opinion that their political decision-making influence is limited to moderate at best, possibly because of high job losses and a falling education index. With the unemployment rate at 6.0% in Meghalaya and 12.3% in urban districts, much higher than the national average of 5.4%, and on top of the poor performance of the state in the Ministry of Education's Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2024, it is clear as to why so many youths feel disconnected. In spite of all these setbacks, the young people are optimistic that their engaged activism in political movements, such as the efforts of the Khasi Students Union in organising protests around causes such as the application of railways within the state and against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019, will ultimately result in real policy change.

As per the youth, in order to enhance political decision-making participation by the youth, there is a need to develop organised platforms and opportunities that enable young people to actively participate in governance. This can be done through setting up Youth Policy Labs in political parties, where young party members study, prepare, and bring forward policies. Also, placing young members as "shadow policymakers" to veteran leaders will enable them to learn and directly contribute to decision-making. By fostering grass root participation, having youth advisory councils in districts and states, and generating forums like state Youth Parliaments, the political system becomes more responsive to the needs of youth and can be made inclusive. Online engagement, through the internet and social media, has the potential to facilitate youth participation by simplifying political content so that it becomes easily understandable

and more accessible. In addition, establishing mentorship and internship programs in governance, providing leadership training, and incorporating youth representatives into policymaking institutions will give them practical experience and guarantee their voices are heard in decision making. Efforts need to be undertaken to engage the marginalised groups of youth like women and non-tribals in political activism and leadership positions. Through imparting political education, awareness creation, and inducing active participation in elections by youths, the political system can become more representative of the aspirations and demands of the young generation. Finally, giving the youth a role in political decision-making will improve governance and ensure that the policies put in place reflect the changing priorities of the state. The study also found that the best ways to influence political decisions according to the youth is through educating others and raising awareness. Other ways include voting, engaging in social media campaigns, participating in protests and joining political parties and organisations.

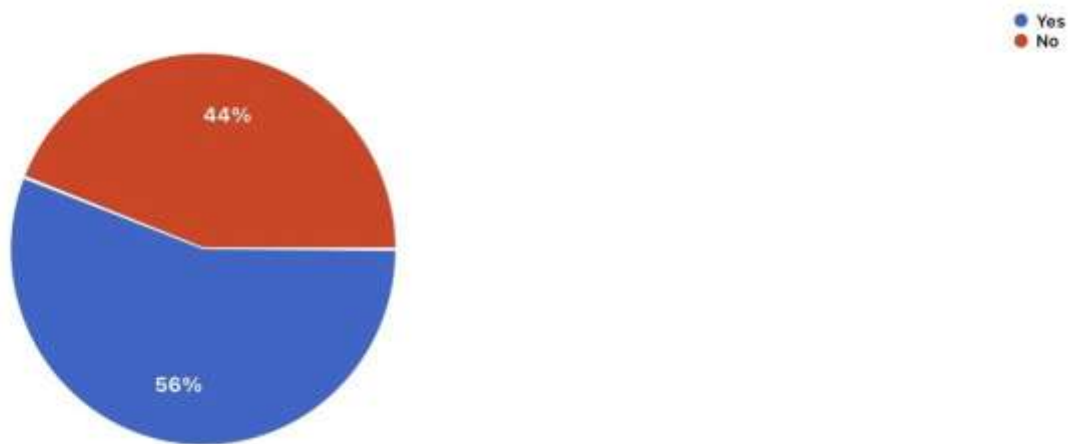
Methods	Number	Percentage
Educating Others and Raising Awareness	40	81.6%
Voting	33	67.3%
Engaging in Social Media Campaigns	23	46.9%
Participating in Protests	21	42.9%
Joining Political Parties and Organisations	20	40.8%

**Table 4: Methods to influence political decisions**

Apparently 80% of the young people in the survey are of the opinion that the District Councils have a crucial role to play in determining the state's development. It has an important role in self-governance, preservation of culture, preservation of indigenous identity, protection of land rights, addressing ground issues that have a direct impact on the community, filling the gap between tradition and modernity, propelling socio-economic development, protecting minority rights, rural development, and taking measures against the grievances of the people. It is also viable in making laws that protect forests, agricultural, mining and other issues to prevent exploitation. It has a deep understanding of the needs, concerns, and aspirations of their communities and can influence policies on urban planning, local infrastructure, education, health services. It also plays a crucial role in regulating trade and economic policies. The newly elected Executive Committee of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) 2025 has decided not to issue any new trading licenses in areas which the Khasi people are capable of undertaking on their own.

The study finds that 56% of the youth find a regional party more desirable than a national party because of reasons such as better understanding of local culture, tribal rights, and specific state issues. Differing from the national parties that are weighed down with wider national agendas, the regional parties only work on the special needs of their state and can therefore easily handle local affairs. The Meghalaya-

based Voice of the People Party (VPP) is more in touch with what matters locally, promotes stronger bonding at the grass root level, and has wider independence in terms of decision making. This regionalised focus enables regional parties to be more sensitive to the demands of small communities, and policies are shaped to meet the state's unique needs. In addition, regional parties arise because of the inability of national parties to address regional issues, hence being more concerned with promoting the distinct cultural, social, and economic interests of their constituents. Thus, regional parties are preferred due to their capability to address local issues as priorities, foster state autonomy, and develop policies directly benefiting citizens of the state.



The pie chart above gives the overall sentiments of youth for desired political parties that show how the majority of the youth prefers regional parties as a sign of support for political parties that are more responsive to local issues and cultural matters.



The pie chart above indicates that 60% of the youth in the study believe that it would be more effective if both the District Council and the Legislative Assembly were governed by the same political party. The reasons provided for this preference include to ensure better coordination, faster decision-making, and smoother implementation of policies. This congruence would minimise political tensions, declutter governance, and ensure the effective implementation of development schemes and projects. As the goals and objectives are the same, there would be more harmony and oneness in decision-making, resulting in a more stable and efficient system of governance. Just like in the idea of a "Double Engine Government," this strategy can bolster policy priorities and communication between the district and state levels.

However, it is crucial that such alignment is managed responsibly, as the absence of opposition or accountability could lead to potential misuse of power. Ultimately, a unified government would likely foster better cooperation and accelerate progress, provided it is carefully monitored.

The study identifies that 58% (29 respondents) of the youth are dissatisfied with both current and past governments, stating that their expectations have not been met. The majority of the respondents in the study are also of the opinion that a regional party is more desirable than a national party for many reasons. The recent ADCs elections have provided the youth, disillusioned with the current government, with a chance to vote for politicians who they believe will bring effective change. In this regard, the Voice of the People Party (VPP) has been a top force, as they have made a range of holistic promises to address the diverse issues confronting both the youth. With its emphasis on addressing these issues, the VPP emerges as a party that speaks to the hopes of these demographic constituencies, placing itself as a possible force for constructive change in the region. Hence, it can be deduced that the youth definitely played a positive role in bringing success for the Voice of the People Party (VPP) in an effort to bring changes in the development of the state as well as in addressing their issues.