



Speakers for Schools

Election Special 2015 – Research Summary

March 2015

As part of the charity's special two-week campaign (#S4SNextGen) to engage the next generation of voters in politics and democracy we have commissioned research with YouGov to see learn more about young people's attitudes, concerns and aspirations are for the UK political system. The campaign is apolitical and designed to inspire and engage young people in the political process, voting and democracy as a whole, using these findings to spur on a conversation between our speakers and young people as they discuss issues important to them.

*The research was carried out by YouGov Plc between 6th - 15th February. The survey was carried out online and the total sample size was 706 people. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all young people aged 16-18. **Please note these findings are embargoed for press and circulation until 00:01, 2nd March 2015.***

Key Survey Findings

- **Young people care: 82%** of 16-18 years olds say they care about politics – only 4% “don't care at all”, alongside **70%** saying they actively want to be involved in the political process.
- **52%** describe the current political system as “out-dated” and “old fashioned”, and just **12%** believe politicians communicate effectively with the next generation of voters
- **70%** of young people understand the political system and how it works (with 72% describing voting as “simple and straightforward”), but 66% say that what is going on in Parliament isn't effectively communicated to young people
- **Three quarters (74%)** say the system needs radical “refreshing and modernising to better reflect society today”
- While better use of technology is important (see below), young people are not satisfied with politicians relying on social media to interact with the public - **with just 15%** agreeing that the way politicians use Facebook and Twitter shows they are “in touch” with them
- The top three words 16-18 years olds chose to describe politics were “**Important**” (**49%**) “**Old-Fashioned**” (**40%**) and “**Inaccessible**” (**39%**)

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On Changing Politics

- **Two thirds (62%)** say voting via online or mobile should be introduced at the next General Election
- **80%** believe that Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) should be interactive, with the public allowed to submit questions online for the Prime Minister
- However, survey responses indicate young people expect more than just better technology engagement. The desire for better interaction between MPs and the public leads to young people calling for a return to traditional campaigning - with **87% saying that MPs need to get into communities and to schools and colleges to explain their policies in person.**
- Despite much political debate on lowering the voting age, young people themselves have mixed views on this topic – **43% would take it down to 16 but 47% would prefer it remains at 18**
- **The group was clear on the most important political issues for them:** with the future of the NHS (45%), tuition fees (40%) and equal opportunities (28%) topping the list
- Many young people want the voting system itself to be reviewed – **with 50% who gave an opinion preferring reforms that would see the number of MPs from each party more closely matched to its national share of the vote, with 33% happy with the current system.**
- **56% of young people don't think compulsory voting should be introduced**

Other interesting facts and stats that could be useful (not YouGov/Speakers for Schools research)

- In the 2010 General Election, just 44% of 18-24 year-olds voted, compared to 76% of those aged 65 and over ([Source](#))
- Turnout inequality between old and young has grown dramatically in recent decades. In 1970, the gap was only 18%; by 2005 it had more than doubled to over 40 points, with only a slight decline in 2010 ([Source](#))



- Polls are currently predicting that 70% of 65+ years olds will vote, compared to only 37% of 18 to 24-year-olds ([Source](#))

About the Campaign & Further Participants

This research comes as Speakers for Schools launches a two-week campaign (#S4SNextGen) to engage young people in politics and democracy - with over 30 of the UK's leading public figures delivering inspirational talks on the subject of 'Why I Vote' in state schools across the country. The campaign launches **Monday 2nd March** with a debate hosted in a Manchester school chaired by Rick Edwards (T4 Presenter), with panellists including Brie Rogers Lowery (UK Director of change.org), Elizabeth Linder (Head of Politics & Government (EMA) at Facebook), Harry *Lambert* (Founder/Editor of May2015.com, the New Statesman's election site) and John Pienaar (BBC Radio 5 Live's Chief Political Correspondent).

Those taking part in the campaign (2nd-20th March) – which is apolitical and designed to engage young people in the political process, voting and democracy as a whole – include party leaders **David Cameron, Ed Miliband, Nick Clegg, Leanne Wood** and **Natalie Bennett**, but also major figures from the business world (including **Carolyn McCall, Helena Morrissey, Martha Lane Fox**), media (including **David Dinsmore, Tony Hall, Jon Snow, Nick Robinson**) and culture (including **Dan Snow, Hugh Dennis, Tanni Grey-Thompson**).

Speakers for Schools is an independent, apolitical charity helping state schools and colleges across the UK access informative, inspiring talks from leading figures, free of charge. For more information please visit www.speakers4schools.org.