

SHOULD YOUR SCHOOL HELP YOU PREPARE FOR VOTES AT 16?



With the voting age being lowered to 16 for the next general election, the Electoral Commission have recommended extra lessons take place for those aged 14+ to ensure they are prepared for the responsibility of voting. In 2022, we received over 45,000 votes on the question, “Should everyone be able to vote at 16?” and whilst Primary pupils were in favour, Secondary & College students had a majority ‘No’ outcome. This led us to wonder, has opinion changed over the last 3 years or are young people still unsure? In 2022, many said they didn’t feel mature enough to make an informed, responsible decision at 16. Does this mean the Electoral Commission’s recommendation is a welcome one, or are teachers and students already balancing a curriculum that is stretched to capacity?

Melanie
Data Manager



52,935

TOTAL VOTES

11,628

VOTES AGE 5-11

41,307

VOTES AGE 11-16+

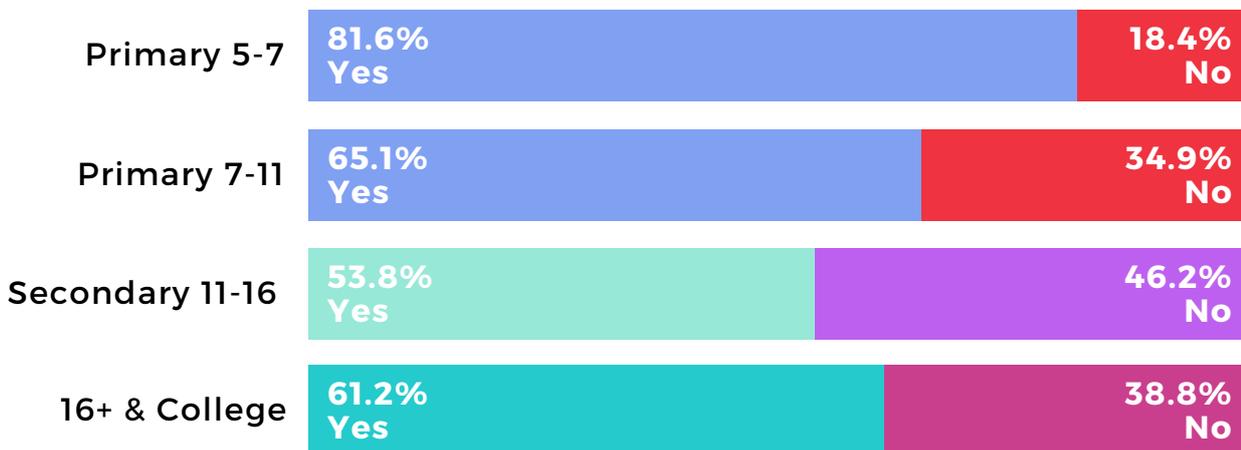
The VoteTopic questions, discussed amongst the different age groups:

Primary 5-7: “Should your school teach you about voting?”

Primary 7-11: “Should your school help you get ready to vote at 16?”

Secondary: “Should your school help you prepare for votes at 16?”

16+ & College: “Should schools help young people prepare for votes at 16?”



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5-7-year olds had the most positive response to voting preparation being added to the curriculum, with 7-11-year olds relatively close behind. Many Primary pupils said they wanted to learn about adult responsibilities, such as voting and stressed that they wanted to make responsible choices when it is time for them to vote.

One of the most common reasons for voting 'No' across all ages was the belief that the vote shouldn't be lowered, as 16 is too young. This sentiment also came across strongly during our 2022 vote, where we asked young people if the voting age should be changed.

Secondary, 16+ and College students voted 'Yes' to having voting preparation introduced to the curriculum, however the vote was close to split at Secondary. Many said that schools could help to combat misinformation and biased reporting online by providing students with an impartial political education. However, some voters were concerned about an already jam-packed curriculum, and argued that this could add stress to young people and teachers, particularly during exam season.

Yes as it will prepare us for when we are older so we will know what to do and make the right decisions. Also it is a great addition to our curriculum.

Primary Yes Voter

I think we shouldn't be able to vote until we are 18 because that's when we become an adult.

Primary No Voter

Yes [it's] important to educate young people to ensure they are able to get the whole picture and avoid being swayed by social media or bias.

Secondary Yes Voter

No - Year 11 have a lot of content to cover and need to prepare for GCSE's so may not have time.

Secondary No Voter

Please contact info@votesforschools.com to find out more about the data relating to this VoteTopic.

UK PARLIAMENT WEEK: VOTESFORSCHOOLS X SHOUT OUT UK

Alongside our weekly debate, VotesforSchools teamed up with Shout Out UK for UK Parliament Week, so that young people could discuss Votes at 16 with the people who can make a difference. They considered our VoteTopic question, "Should schools help prepare young people for Votes at 16?" Members of Shout Out UK's Youth Policy Development Group were able to talk directly with representatives of government.

School children and teachers from across the UK came to watch the event, as well as representatives from VotesforSchools, the Electoral Commission, the youth and democracy sector and guests from First News.

These were some of the key takeaways from those on the panel:

Essential that we hear from those already delivering political literacy.

Peter Hatchard
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

We need an emphasis on skills and values. Making registration automatic could remove hurdles.

Baroness Carmen Smith
of Llanfaes, the youngest member of the House of Lords

Preparation is key but we also need to focus on youth settings, teachers are busy.

Kayleigh Wainwright
Head of Youth Strategy Engagement, Department of Culture, Media & Sport

Students in the audience also shared their thoughts, and some wanted to know specifics: What will a typical lesson look like? How can we stop parents from influencing their children?

Teachers also got involved, sharing similar concerns to those found through our VoteTopic results. Namely, how will this fit into an already overcrowded curriculum?

Creating opportunities for young people to share their thoughts on Votes at 16 is essential to its success. To find out more about our results for this topic, please contact info@votesforschools.com