

# SHOULD REALITY TV HELP US REFLECT ON UNCONSCIOUS BIASES?

*Light-hearted* conversations and debate following The Traitors finale have been rife across the UK this month, including whether this year's contestants were the most 'faithful' Traitors to date. Earlier in the series, when contestants had to rely more on gut instinct than evidence for each banishment, an important topic was raised about trust, fairness and representation. Namely, does our "gut instinct" reflect deeper social biases? Many viewers started to question how unconscious bias might be shaping both on-screen decisions and audience reactions. We asked young people to weigh in on the debate and consider whether reality TV is a good springboard for these conversations.

*Melanie*  
Data Manager



**58,308**

**TOTAL VOTES**

**11,853**

**VOTES AGE 5-11**

**46,455**

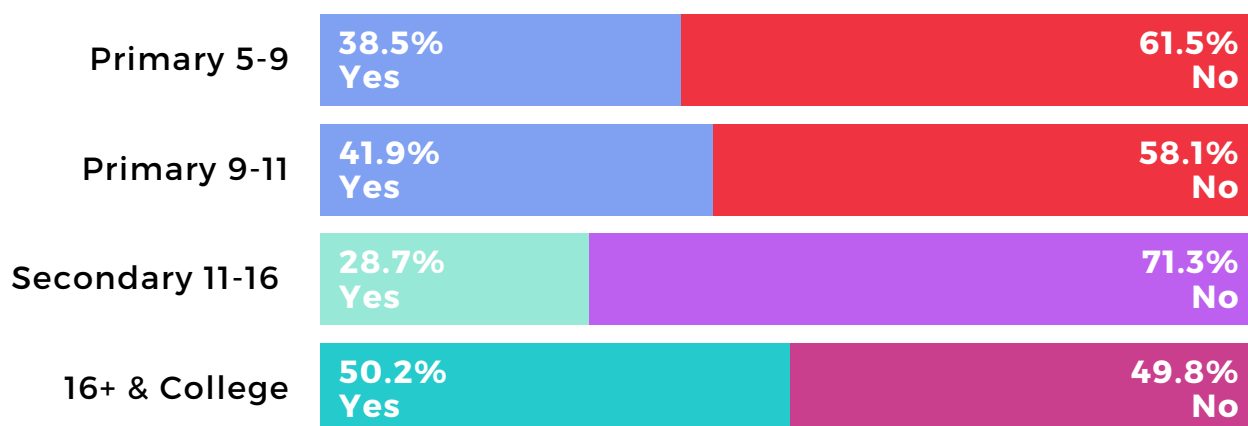
**VOTES AGE 11-16+**

The VoteTopic questions discussed amongst the different age groups were:

**Primary 5-9:** "Is it easy to work out what people are like?"

**Primary 9-11:** "Is it easy to challenge stereotypes?"

**Secondary 11-16, 16+ & College:** "Should reality TV help us reflect on unconscious biases?"



## SHOULD REALITY TV HELP US REFLECT ON UNCONSCIOUS BIASES?

9-11-year olds were considering how easy it is to challenge stereotypes and close to 60% said it was difficult. This was reflected in the arguments they shared, as a common point was that it is hard to prevent something that is so ingrained and prevalent in today's society. Despite the difficulty, many stressed the importance of challenging stereotypes anyway, as change can still happen slowly over time.

Secondary, 16+ and College students were discussing unconscious bias as it appears on reality TV, with the lessons using examples from The Traitors, Strictly Come Dancing and I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! Almost 3 out of 4 Secondary students argued that the small screen isn't a good place to reflect on our biases. However, older voters were much more divided, with a 50/50 split in the votes.

The main criticism was the staged nature of reality shows; students argued that reflecting on society using a medium that is heavily altered, influenced and edited will not yield accurate or fair results. But, Yes voters countered that the decisions people make on shows like The Traitors can highlight unconscious bias, particularly when they are making decisions based on gut feeling over evidence. Some Secondary voters thought that light-hearted TV shows should be watched as entertainment only, and others believed shows that claim to depict reality often reinforce stereotypes to their audiences instead.

*Yes, because for example pink is not always for girls and blue is not always for boys.*

**Primary 'Yes' Voter**

*It isn't easy to change society as if people have been going according to stereotypes for years it would be extremely hard to change society over one year.*

**Primary 'No' Voter**

*Yes because it can show when people are being singled out for being different and people not standing up for them and we judge people without realising we are doing it.*

**Secondary 'Yes' Voter**

*No, because it is not real, we can't use it to reflect on unconscious bias in the real world.*

**Secondary 'No' Voter**