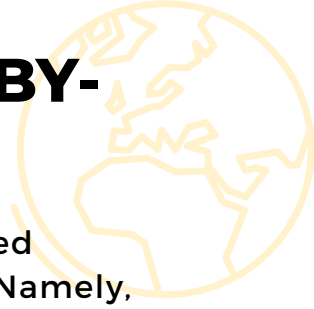


SHOULD A DEFECTION MEAN A BY-ELECTION?



Recent defections across UK political parties have triggered discussions around honouring voter choices at the ballot box. Namely, whether MPs have a duty to remain loyal to the party they won their seat with and if not, should “crossing the floor” lead to an automatic by-election? With the voting age being lowered to 16 at the next General Election, it’s more important than ever that young people have a voice in debates like these. They considered voter intentions, including whether party or candidate popularity has more influence over outcomes, as well as the struggle MPs face when they stop believing in the party or political leader they represent. Primary pupils discussed whether loyalty is part of an MP’s job description, while Secondary and College students debated what the implications of defection should be.

Melanie
Data Manager



50,746

TOTAL VOTES

12,342

VOTES AGE 5-11

38,404

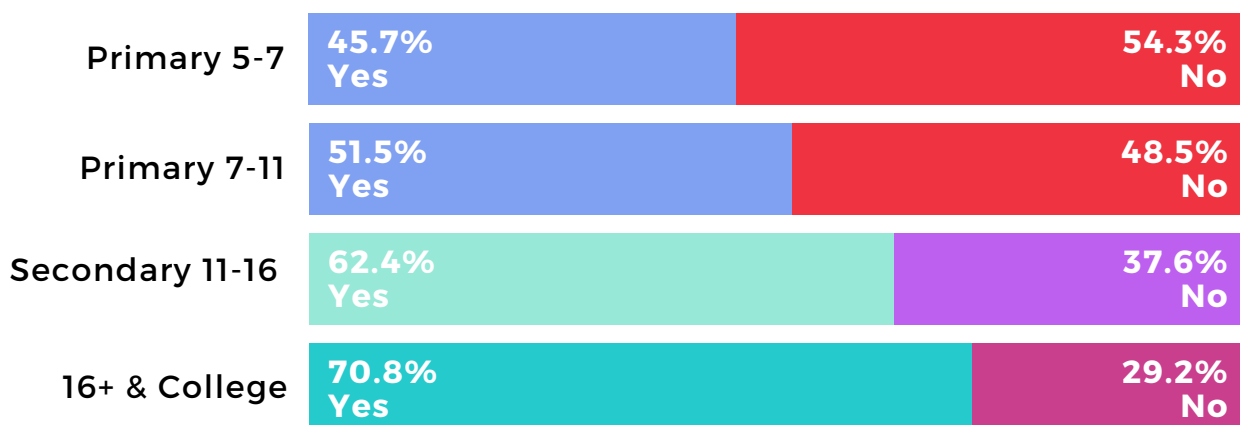
VOTES AGE 11-16+

The VoteTopic questions discussed amongst the different age groups were:

Primary 5-7: “Is it easy to be loyal?”

Primary 7-11: “Should MPs stay loyal to their political party?”

Secondary 11-16, 16+ & College: “Should a defection mean a by-election?”





SHOULD A DEFECTION MEAN A BY-ELECTION?

There was a clear sense of disengagement and uncertainty from Secondary students in regards to politics and the recent bout of defections across the UK. Some said they didn't feel any party or MP represented their beliefs and they felt unsure what the implications of "crossing the floor" would be for them or their communities. Previous VoteTopics that explored the voting age being lowered to 16 showed that young people don't feel prepared or confident enough to take to the ballot boxes, and the results of this vote displayed a similar sentiment.

Amongst the majority who voted 'Yes', many highlighted voter priorities and stressed that it is often the party and not the individual who they vote for.

With that in mind, a by-election would be the fair solution. One student noted the expense of this, and suggested banning defections once an MP is in power.

Primary pupils were discussing whether defections should happen in the first place, and on the whole they had much more strongly held beliefs. Whilst there was a slim 'Yes' majority, there was an almost equal split between 'Yes' and 'No' arguments, with many stressing that MPs shouldn't be beholden to a party that they no longer identify with. Others claimed that political strength comes from working collaboratively and overcoming obstacles when they arise, rather than jumping ship.

I think MPs should stay loyal because if people have voted for them and they go and join a new political party the people that have voted for them could feel really sad because they could have trusted them to be respectful and loyal.

Primary Yes Voter

MPs shouldn't have to stay loyal as parties make promises [...] but they never happen. This may let down the MP and get them to start looking [elsewhere]. This is totally reasonable.

Primary No Voter

Most times you don't know much about the individual and are voting for what they represent - if this changes - it's not what you voted for.

Secondary Yes Voter

The ideas and plans stay the same, regardless of a defection taking place so there is no need for a by-election.

Secondary No Voter