



DEAR SCOTLAND'S FUTURE

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.
BY YOUNG PEOPLE.

SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT
MANIFESTO 2026–2031



Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) is the democratically elected voice of Scotland's young people. We exist to platform the voices of young people in spaces where decision-makers are, at a local, national and international level. We exist to make change in young people's lives, to think differently about issues and to create a meaningful impact to make Scotland the best place to grow up.

We are youth-led and represent young people aged 12-25 from across Scotland. A rights-based approach underpins all of our work.

Find out more about SYP at www.syp.org.uk

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SCOTTISH YOUTH PARLIAMENT MANIFESTO 2026–2031



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LETTER FROM MSYPs

**We are the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP),
the democratic voice of Scotland's young people.**

**As members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs),
we represent young people through Local Authorities
and National Voluntary Organisations.**

The Scottish Youth Parliament manifesto is published before every Scottish Parliament election and sets out the priorities of young people across Scotland.

Previous SYP manifestos have led to key wins like free bus travel for under-22s, progress on mental health and climate action. The UNCRC has now been incorporated into Scots Law, and the UK Government is bringing forward a Bill that will lower the voting age to 16 in UK-wide Elections. As we look ahead for this 2026-2031 Manifesto, we continue to build on these achievements and the difference we can bring to make Scotland the best place to be a young person. Young people's voices are being heard more, but there is still work to be done on the issues young people face.



This manifesto gives decision-makers a starting point to understand the diverse range of issues Scotland's young people are concerned about today, and what we think needs to change to make Scotland the best place to live. It covers a wide range of issues, like the mental health crisis, cost of living, education reform, youth work and youth spaces, tackling gender-based violence, protecting the planet and natural environment, and much more.

It is vital that in the next five years, young people are meaningfully engaged in the decisions affecting their lives. Young people's voices and opinions must be at the forefront of how decision-makers tackle the wide and varied range of issues Scotland's young people face.

Young people want to feel safe and listened to, in ways that work for them. Whether that is through voting, taking on leadership roles and responsibilities in their local communities, or talking to decision-makers about their experiences, we want to be included in the decisions that affect us and our lives.

— Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament



WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A DECISION-MAKER IN SCOTLAND

Through the five main themes of this manifesto, young people across Scotland are telling you what issues matter the most to them.

As a duty-bearer, you have a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil young people's human rights. Young people's right to have their views heard and respected is essential to realise all other rights.

There are lots of steps you can take to ensure young people's views and experiences are reflected in all decisions that affect them. So, first things first:

- **Check out all 31 policies in this manifesto** to see what young people are saying.
- **Meet with the MSYPs in your constituency** to discuss the manifesto.
Find out who your MSYPs are via SYP's 'Find your MSYP' function: www.syp.org.uk/members/find-your-msyp
- **Engage with other young people in your constituency.**
SYP has some great resources available to help you ensure meaningful participation in your work through our The Right Way project: www.therightway.scot
- **Sign up to SYP's stakeholder newsletter** to find out more about our campaigning activities and to stay up to date with the voices of Scotland's young people: www.syp.org.uk/contact-us

WHAT IS SYP'S MANIFESTO FOR?

The manifesto is for everyone who has an interest in young people and their rights, protection, and hearing their voices. It is by young people for young people.

SYP's national campaigns will be selected from this manifesto until 2031. These are also the issues we will take to Executive Takeover and Cabinet Takeover.

Every year since 2017 MSYPs have met with the First Minister and their Cabinet, alongside Members of the Children's Parliament, for the Annual Cabinet Meeting with Children and Young People.

We have also met annually since 2019 with the Scottish Government Executive Team, giving children and young people the opportunity to bring some of the issues most important to them and their peers directly to the most senior civil servants in Scotland, including the Permanent Secretary and Directors-General.

MAP OF RESPONDENTS

Young people in each of Scotland's Local Authorities responded to this consultation.

Total Number of Respondents:

4,889



TIMELINE

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| June 2024 | Asked young people 'What Scotland do you want to see in 2031?' |
| December 2024 | SYP Conveners Group agreed the final policy asks |
| January – July 2025 | National Manifesto consultation with young people across Scotland |
| July 2025 | Analysed the findings with MSYPs |
| September 2025 | Manifesto launch! |
| May 2026 | Scottish Parliament elections |
| 2026 – 2031 | Scottish Parliament term |

ACCESSIBLE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



Our ambition is for an education system that:

- gives young people a positive experience,
- where they are included, safe and their needs are met,
- with opportunities for a wide range of experiences,
- where they can develop skills for life.

For young people with additional support needs, schools should be comfortable and inclusive spaces to go to. Young people should feel confident and supported with the freedom to access the same opportunities and learning as their peers.

Young people see the school experience as holistic, rather than just qualifications and assessments. Young people want to be equipped to learn by having the resources they need to thrive - spaces that are designed with young people, which provide free nutritious food, support mental health, and create a more equal learning environment.

LIST OF EDUCATION POLICIES:

- Reform the national curriculum and assessments
- Financial education
- Invest in additional support needs services
- Universal free school meals
- Barriers to accessing further and higher education
- Multi-year funding for the youth work sector
- Inclusive youth mobility scheme

UNCRC links

GLOSSARY ON PAGE 60

| | |
|------------|---|
| Article 12 | Respect for children's views |
| Article 19 | Protection from violence, abuse and neglect |
| Article 23 | Children with disabilities |
| Article 24 | Health, water, food, environment |
| Article 26 | Social and economic help |
| Article 28 | Access to education |
| Article 29 | Aims of education |
| Article 31 | Rest, play, culture, arts |

The Scottish Government needs to take urgent and radical action to reform the national curriculum and assessments, in line with the views and needs of young people.

73% AGREE — 7% DISAGREE — 19% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us they want their education experiences to build lifelong skills and knowledge that are based on experiential learning and analytical thinking skills to prepare them for their future. Learning about topics like British Sign Language, Braille, LGBTQ+ history, anti-racism and the histories of people of colour, relationship education, health and wellbeing, political literacy and critical literacy skills, is vital to their future.

- Decision-makers must put young people at the heart of designing an education system and a curriculum that creates equality and opportunity, and which supports and enables all young people through their learning.
- The Scottish Government should consider the needs of young people in assessments and exams, and increase relevant, up-to-date and helpful mental health support. Young people with additional support needs should be better supported in line with their individual needs.
- Young people call for expanded choice on the subjects they learn, led by interest, rather than timetabling.

"Education shouldn't just be memorising answers and having surface level understanding. It should teach skills and make young people be able to understand something and answer questions on it."

YOUNG MAN AGED 14-17, EDINBURGH

"Exams are crushing mental health, and the addition of too much content in courses is only adding to the problem."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, SCOTTISH BORDERS

In order to support young people to have their views heard on matters relating to personal finance, tax and the economy, financial education should be available to all young people in Scotland.

90% AGREE — 2% DISAGREE — 8% DON'T KNOW

Young people have told us they deserve better financial education that prepares them for real life and supports them to understand the importance and benefits of financial literacy. Young people shared they are often left behind in national decisions about the economy, setting the budget, and tax-related issues when they have a right to be consulted on all issues, that affect them.

Increasingly, young people use online banking and make transactions online. Financial education should tie into online safety education, so young people learn how to manage their money online and the risks associated with this.

- Decision-makers need to include young people in decisions about them. The Scottish Government should consult with young people when setting the Scottish budget, Programme for Government, and other key policies.
- Financial education needs to start at a younger age. Young people want to be taught about financial literacy in a way that is relevant, diverse, age-appropriate, and that is built into the curriculum as they progress through school.
- Decision-makers need to understand young people's right to information. Young people call for better support to access benefits, student finance, and loans. They want to understand the impact of personal financial decisions on their future, and they call for a review of the current financial education curriculum.

"How can we be expected to vote on who is to be in charge of the economy if we cannot understand it ourselves?"

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, DUNDEE

Young people with additional support needs in Scotland are not receiving the support they require, and therefore, the Scottish Government and Local Authorities should invest in services to support them in schools and other education settings.

70% AGREE — 9% DISAGREE — 21% DON'T KNOW

Young people have a right to an education that meets their needs and is based on principles of support, dignity, and respect.

Young people with additional support needs have told us they want to learn, but the support available in schools is variable. They explained that when they don't get the support they need, it leads to gaps in their education, and they fall behind, making them feel ignored and frustrated.

- Young people call on the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to increase funding and resourcing for additional support needs education that is independent, holistic, and tailored to their needs.
- Young people call on the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to be transparent with funding decisions based on additional support for learning, and to publicly publish data in a way that is understandable for young people and simple to access.
- Decision-makers must increase funding and resources to support opportunities for youth work as an alternative non-formal education programme, tailored to young people's needs.

"As a student with additional support needs, I believe the current exams [...] focus more on memory than on understanding and knowledge. Many children with ASN struggle with remembering information, even though they fully understand the subject matter."

YOUNG MAN AGED 14 – 17, ANGUS

Decision-makers should provide universal free school meals for all children and young people in Scotland.

70% AGREE — 9% DISAGREE — 21% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us that they can't learn when they're hungry. To give them the best start and best opportunity to attain and attend school, many young people believe meals should be offered to all young people, including those not in school. Perceptions of poverty and the cost of the school day can be a barrier to some young people reaching their potential. Ensuring all children and young people have access to nutritious food which sustains them during school days should be more embedded in the curriculum, such as having young people grow food in school.

- Young people call for universal free school meals for all children and young people in Scotland.
- Young people call for free school meals that meet the needs of all children and young people, including those with special diets and religious or cultural beliefs.
- Decision-makers must increase opportunities to learn about food, health and nutrition, and where our food comes from, in a way that is fun, engaging, and safe.

"This should genuinely be for ALL children and young people, including those who are not in school."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 18–21, ORKNEY

"it would be better if schools had gardens where children could grow their own food to eat, as well as learn about nature and where food comes from. It is wrong to give someone something without making them work for it, it will cause them to undervalue food."

YOUNG MAN AGED 18–21, EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE

Finances, housing, or a lack of support services should not be barriers to young people accessing further or higher education and decision-makers should work together to break down those barriers.

91% AGREE — 3% DISAGREE — 7% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us that ensuring equal access to further and higher education should be treated with the same respect and dedication as equal access to primary and secondary education. Serious reform of financial support and how it is offered is needed. The burden should not be placed on young people to overcome barriers, but instead for Scottish Government, universities and further education institutions to work together to improve their support frameworks.

- Young people want to be involved in reviewing skills and careers agencies.
- Young people call for the Scottish Government to take steps to implement the recommendations of The Hayward Review, 2023, The Withers Review, 2023, and The Still Review, 2024. Decision-makers must meaningfully involve young people in the process.
- The Scottish Government must invest more in social mobility schemes to ensure every young person's talent, ambitions, and dreams are supported and achieved, regardless of their background or where they live.
- Free tuition should not be undermined by unaffordable living expenses. Providers of Student Accommodation (including universities and private landlords) must be held to high standards and be accountable for the quality and affordability of student accommodation and the wellbeing of students.

"Education is a fundamental right, every young person should have the opportunity to pursue their dreams and their academic and career goals without having to worry about financial hardships or support systems."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14 – 17,
CLACKMANNANSHIRE

The Scottish Government and Local Authorities must work together and commit to a secure and multi-year funding model for the youth work sector.

76% AGREE — 4% DISAGREE — 20% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us about the importance of youth work in their lives. Youth work is about creating a safe and supportive environment where young people can learn, grow, and reach their full potential through fun and engaging experiences. Many young people feel that youth work offers them a safe space where they can be themselves, spend time with friends, feel comfortable, and speak to a trusted adult. Funding is essential to ensure youth work is high-quality and accessible to all young people, regardless of their background or where they live.

- The Scottish Government must work with young people and youth work practitioners to co-design and publish a National Youth Work Strategy which recognises the value and impact of youth work, puts young people at the centre of decision-making, and promotes a diverse range of youth work opportunities for all young people in Scotland.
- Young people call for the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to commit to long-term, sustainable funding for high-quality, consistent and accessible youth work in every community across Scotland. Funding must support targeted and universal youth work delivered by local authorities, and national and local community-based voluntary youth work organisations.
- Further and higher education providers and employers need to recognise non-formal education and youth work qualifications equally to formal education qualifications.

"Youth work changes and saves lives. If it wasn't for my youth workers when I was in my early teens, I can thoroughly say I would not be alive today. [...] They gave me an escape where I could be myself without fear of judgment."

YOUNG PERSON AGED 22–26, DUNDEE

In Scotland, there should be a diverse and inclusive youth mobility scheme* in order to give young people the opportunity to live, work, and study abroad.

84% AGREE — 5% DISAGREE — 11% DON'T KNOW

***A youth mobility scheme allows young people to work or learn in a different country for a temporary time.**

Young people told us they are excited about youth mobility schemes because they want to have new experiences through different cultures, explore new places and develop their education in new countries. Through youth mobility schemes, young people have the opportunity to learn more about the world around them, grow professionally and personally, and have a unique experience that will last a lifetime.

- Young people call for more opportunities for international social, cultural and educational experiences that support lifelong learning and connections.
- The Scottish Government should work with young people to develop and deliver a youth mobility scheme that is accessible and available for everyone.
- Decision-makers should actively encourage and support opportunities for young people to travel, live, work and study abroad, and create international opportunities that support young people to realise their full potential.

"This would encourage young people to learn a language [...] and expose them to a new culture, which would hopefully help in some to tackle race and nationality-based discrimination, xenophobia and prejudice."

YOUNG WOMAN, AGED 14-17, EDINBURGH

"Definitely. I would personally love to travel outside of Scotland for education, it would be great and you can see how other places do everything and learn."

YOUNG WOMAN, AGED 14-17, INVERCLYDE



SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES



Our ambition is for young people to grow up in communities that are safe and supportive.

Young people want their ideas and solutions to be listened to and acted on in the in the development, reform, and implementation of public services like health care, planning, safety and housing.

Young people want accessible spaces that are designed specifically for them, to know that their mental health is cared for before they reach a crisis point, and to feel safe in knowing that one day they will have access to an affordable home of their own. Young people want a community that guarantees everyone has an equal opportunity in life.

LIST OF COMMUNITY POLICIES:

- Youth-specific spaces in local communities
- NHS protected from privatisation
- Prevention and early intervention for mental health
- Accessible and affordable sports and leisure facilities
- Fast and reliable internet
- Strengthen rent controls
- Investment in social housing

UNCRC links

GLOSSARY ON PAGE 60

| | |
|------------|---|
| Article 3 | Best interests of the child |
| Article 12 | Respect for children's views |
| Article 19 | Protection from violence, abuse and neglect |
| Article 24 | Health, water, food, environment |
| Article 26 | Social and economic help |
| Article 27 | Adequate standard of living |
| Article 31 | Rest, play, culture, arts |

Local Authorities must provide youth-specific spaces in local communities, with investment put towards cultural, social, and artistic activities where young people can gather and spend time together.

83% AGREE — 5% DISAGREE — 12% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us they want safe and secure spaces and places to meet up, socialise, and have fun, where they can access information, advice, and trusted adults outside of school. They have also told us there is nowhere they can hang out without having to spend money, and they are worried about how young people are being portrayed in the media because of this.

- To respect and uphold young people's rights, decision-makers must meaningfully involve young people in designing and developing fun and safe places where young people can hang out with friends, where they have the freedom to choose what they want to do, where they don't have to spend money, and where they feel they belong.
- Young people call for more free access to cultural and art activities and more access to a diverse range of indoor and outdoor spaces, which support their mental health and allow young people with different needs and interests to spend time in places that suit them.

- Young people call for communities that are welcoming for young people. Decision-makers must work to create local communities that are safe, inclusive and welcoming for young people, supporting their increasing independence and belonging.

"Too many times I have been chased out of cafes or public places and parks for trying to spend time outdoors with my friends. Our parents don't want us inside, but nobody else wants us outside. [...] The only place we can reliably hang out is the library, but it's not open often and it's a library. It's not the place for excitable teenagers sometimes."

YOUNG MAN AGED 14-17, ANGUS

The NHS should be protected from privatisation* and remain free at the point of need.

83% AGREE — 5% DISAGREE — 12% DON'T KNOW

*Privatisation would be when private Companies "own" the NHS, and individuals would be responsible for paying for their own health care.

Young people told us that free health care must be modern, respected, invested in, and reliable. Young people trust the National Health Service (NHS) and believe it should be protected and remain free both now and in the future. They said we should be prioritising the NHS, and having suitable investment should be a key priority of the Scottish and UK Governments.

- Decision-makers must ensure that young people can access an equal standard of health care, regardless of where they live in Scotland.
- Young people want to be taken seriously. They want more power to advocate for themselves and their healthcare needs, and to use their voice to challenge stigma and break down barriers to equal access.
- Young people feel there should be a child-friendly complaints system which is accessible to everyone who wants to use it.
- Decision-makers must ensure there is specific investment to enable the NHS to explore and develop the use of new technologies and practices.

"Staying alive should not be a luxury."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17,
EDINBURGH

"[...] The privatisation of health care would only push the people struggling in Scotland deeper into poverty and potentially limit or deter people from having access to the help they need."

YOUNG MAN AGED 14-17, INVERCLYDE

Prevention and early-intervention approaches, including education and community-based mental health services, should be invested in to support young people's mental health.

91% AGREE — 2% DISAGREE — 7% DON'T KNOW

Young people have told us that early intervention and prevention would stop their mental health from reaching a crisis point and becoming unmanageable. Prevention and early intervention come from youth work, community-based mental health services, and support services within schools and other education settings. Equipping young people with the skills, knowledge and support networks helps them feel seen and heard with their mental health, reduces stigma, and enables them to challenge misinformation.

- Young people call for a culture change and consistency across Scotland in which mental health support is promoted, delivered and maintained.
- The Scottish Government and Local Authorities should ensure there is long-term, sustainable funding to improve young people's mental health and save lives across Scotland.
- Decision-makers must invest in school-based and community-based mental health supports and services, which work alongside CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and the NHS to reduce waiting times and make support more accessible.
- Young people want more accessible support and a review of the impact that late interventions have on young people at a crisis point, and for decision-makers to make the system better for everyone.

"Just because we haven't lived as long as our elders, does not mean that we can't have mental health issues too. There is a lot of pressure on young people. Help us."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17,
CLACKMANNANSHIRE

The Scottish Government should make sports and leisure services more accessible and affordable for young people, especially in rural and more deprived areas.

91% AGREE — 2% DISAGREE — 7% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us they are concerned about their physical and mental health, which they link to a lack of affordable and engaging sports and leisure activities and services.

Decision-makers must ensure there are opportunities for young people to participate in accessible and free sports and leisure activities within locally based facilities.

- The Scottish Government must address young people's concerns about their physical and mental health by making sure young people can access free sports and leisure activities in their local communities.
- Young people call for inclusion in sports for all young people, particularly for LGBTQ+ young people, disabled young people, girls and young women, young people from religious backgrounds, Care Experienced young people, and young people affected by poverty. Inclusion must be intersectional, taking into account the overlapping barriers for young people.

"We have many health issues, and at their root is the lack of access to safe, supportive physical activity and healthy food/food understanding."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 22-26, GLASGOW

"Easy access to sports and leisure services allows for the young people of Scotland to have a safe and healthy outlet for their energy and emotions. It also encourages healthy habits and eating which limits the strain put on healthcare."

YOUNG MAN AGED 14-17, INVERCLYDE

Every young person in Scotland should have access to fast and reliable internet and devices to access the digital world, regardless of their geographical location or financial situation.

83% AGREE — 6% DISAGREE — 11% DON'T KNOW

Young people said that they need high-quality, fast, and reliable internet to learn, socialise, share, and engage with their lives. Access to the internet and devices improves many young people's lives, especially those from rural areas and areas of deprivation. Young people have also told us about the challenges of digital exclusion and digital poverty. Young people also recognise that there are many negative effects of social media and emerging technology that need to be explored with young people.

- Decision-makers should meaningfully involve young people in assessing the impact of digital exclusion and poverty on young people's education and improve the infrastructure to provide fast, reliable internet across Scotland.
- Young people call on decision-makers to include them in conversations about safe social media use, and to support them to participate meaningfully in the digital world and with new emerging technologies.
- The Scottish Government must consider the impact on young people before making any decision on restricting their use of social media or digital devices.
- Young people call for increased media and critical literacy skills to be embedded throughout the curriculum.

"the reality is large parts of life, even day to day activities are only accessible online. Maybe that needs to change but right now we can't withhold vital components of our modern world for moral reasons. That increases suffering and targets the wrong people. Young people need the internet."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 18-21, ORKNEY

The Scottish Government must strengthen rent controls for all young people in Scotland, including students and apprentices, and ensure that all young people are aware of their rights in relation to housing.

83% AGREE — 4% DISAGREE — 13% DON'T KNOW

***Rent control is a government policy that limits how much landlords can charge for renting out homes or apartments, and how much they can increase the rent over time.**

Young people expressed concerns over the affordability of private housing, with the high cost of rent impacting their ability to save and invest in housing. Rent control would allow more young people to feel safe and secure in their homes. Furthermore, there is a large power imbalance between landlords and tenants, which rent controls would reduce.

Young people who are studying full-time told us they are forced to work part-time alongside their studies to afford rent. This is affecting their mental health, and causing them to miss classes so they can work enough to pay rent. Some young people who work full-time are still struggling to afford rent. Rent control would help students afford stable housing, helping them focus more on their studies.

- Decision-makers should increase national controls on rent to ensure young people can afford safe, secure and suitable housing.
- Young people call for increased awareness and education for young people and landlords on tenants' rights, rent controls, and housing options that prevent exploitation and protect young people.

"I have been working since 18- full time [...] I still do not feel financially stable enough to go onto the property market with my partner who also has a well-paying trade and has done since 18. I thought working young would have put me ahead of the game."

YOUNG WOMEN AGED 22-26, GLASGOW

"Rent for university students can be upwards of £800 per month resulting in young people having exorbitant debts and requiring them to work whilst studying."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17,
NO LOCATION GIVEN

In order to ensure that every young person in Scotland has accessible, affordable and secure housing*, the Scottish Government should invest in social housing and allocate funding to local authorities – particularly in rural and island communities – to ensure housing is fit for local need.

86% AGREE – 3% DISAGREE – 11% DON'T KNOW

***Social housing is housing paid for from taxes and is often cheaper and affordable for people with lower incomes. It is also often more secure than the private housing sector.**

Young people said they feel social housing would help young people and their families who live in or are at risk of poverty. They suggested that having more social housing would give young people more stability and security, more opportunity to focus on their education instead of needing to work to pay rent, and would enable them to thrive within their communities.

However, young people also said that social housing needs to be diverse and suit each community's needs. They told us that social housing waiting lists need to be shorter, that social housing should be accessible for people with disabilities, and that it should be maintained by local councils to a high standard.

- Young people call on the Scottish Government to invest in new social housing developments that reflect the needs of different communities—including young people, families, care-experienced people, and those facing homelessness.
- Decision-makers should prioritise long-term, secure social housing tenancies for young people and their families, particularly in rural areas and areas of deprivation.
- Decision-makers should uphold minimum quality standards for social housing, addressing issues like mould, structural damage, and accessibility for disabled tenants.



A SUSTAINABLE AND RENEWABLE SOCIETY



Our ambition is for young people to be at the heart of tackling the climate emergency, and for their voices to be central in protecting the environment, as it is young people who will face the consequences of inaction. Young people see a clear link between access to green spaces and nature with their mental and physical health. They want to make sure opportunities to access green spaces are truly available for all young people.

Public transport is a crucial public service for young people, but its benefits are not being seen equally across Scotland. Young people want public transport to be accessible, reliable, affordable and safe.

LIST OF SOCIETY POLICIES:

- **Bold and urgent action on climate emergency**
- **Promote a circular economy**
- **Creation of more nature reserves**
- **Accessible and reliable public transport**
- **Maintain and expand free travel for young people**

UNCRC links

GLOSSARY ON PAGE 60

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Article 6 | Life, survival and development |
| Article 12 | Respect for children's views |
| Article 13 | Freedom of expression |
| Article 15 | Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly |
| Article 24 | Health, water, food, environment |
| Article 29 | Aims of education |

The climate emergency is an issue of climate justice. It is essential that the Scottish Government takes bold and urgent action to meet ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and tackle the climate crisis.

78% AGREE — 9% DISAGREE — 13% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us they are scared of the impact climate change will have on their lives. They worry it will soon be too late to make a difference. Young people want to leave the world a better place for future generations, and they think stopping climate change should be a top priority for decision-makers.

- Young people call on decision-makers to hold large corporations accountable for their role in the climate crisis.
- The Scottish Government must take meaningful action to achieve its climate targets and to reduce Scotland's harmful impacts on the climate.
- The Scottish Government must take action to ensure young people are meaningfully involved in the effective delivery of the Target 2030 Learning for Sustainability Action Plan.
- Decision-makers should take action to guarantee that rural and island communities, and communities furthest from their rights, are not put at further disadvantage by the climate crisis.
- Young people must be recognised as key stakeholders in any decisions made about tackling the climate crisis, as they will live with the consequences of any action or inaction.

"The Government lead our country [...] and we look up to them for guidance, so for real change to happen, then they need to be committed to making that change."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, NO LOCATION GIVEN

The Scottish Government should work with young people to promote a circular economy* and ensure that businesses make improved progress towards reducing waste.

77% AGREE — 6% DISAGREE — 17% DON'T KNOW

A circular economy tackles waste, pollution and the climate crisis by keeping products and materials in use through reusing, refurbishing and recycling them.

Young people told us they want environmental polluters like fast fashion, single-use items, and poor-quality products to be reduced, if not abolished completely. They suggested that collectively, everyone has a responsibility to learn about where and how products are made and to advocate for change to create a greener, more sustainable future.

Young people feel this can be achieved through investment into a circular economy and through decision-makers working together with young people to promote the positive impact of protecting the planet and to increase understanding of a circular economy.

- Young people want to see more initiatives put in place to encourage businesses to reduce waste, and to hold the largest polluters to account.
- Young people want decision-makers to regulate ultra-fast fashion retailers to discourage single-use and poor-quality items, as well as unfair labour conditions.
- Decision-makers should raise awareness and understanding of what a circular economy means and how young people can be involved in promoting a circular economy.
- The Scottish Government and other decision-makers should create opportunities for young people to meaningfully participate in designing and delivering a circular economy within Scotland.

"It's all our responsibility if we live on the land and take from it to take care of it."

YOUNG PERSON AGED 14-17, EDINBURGH

The Scottish Government should create more nature reserves to help protect Scotland's nature and biodiversity.

81% AGREE — 5% DISAGREE — 14% DON'T KNOW

Young people have told us about how their mental health, physical health and emotional wellbeing could thrive by being in safe and protected green spaces. They believe decision-makers must take action to protect our existing resources, green spaces, and the environment, which is unique to Scotland. The Scottish Government must set the example as a climate leader and protect Scotland's natural world.

- Young people call for Scottish nature reserves and green spaces need to be protected and not exploited for profit or sold for privatisation.
- Young people call for a commitment from the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to work with them on planning and designing green community spaces, like beaches, parks, and forests.
- Young people must be involved in co-designing and introducing a curriculum that highlights the importance of biodiversity, informs children and young people on the importance of nature reserves, and promotes the wellbeing benefits of engaging with nature and being outside.
- More information and awareness should be given to young people about the opportunities and career paths available within the green sector.

"Nature [reserves] play a vital role in conserving biodiversity by safeguarding endangered species [...] They also connect communities with nature."
YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, CLACKMANNANSHIRE

"The world is slowly dying, and I know people are starting to realise, but animals and plants are still getting more and more close to extinction."
YOUNG WOMAN AGED 12-13

Transport Scotland and public transport companies should ensure that public transport services are accessible and reliable for young people across Scotland, particularly those living in rural areas.

91% AGREE — 3% DISAGREE — 6% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us that the Scottish Government must invest in public transport to ensure better integration, better technology, and better access across Scotland. Despite free bus travel for under-22s, there are still barriers preventing every young person from having equal access to public transport, with disabled young people and those living in rural communities sharing many experiences about inconsistency and unreliability. Supported public transport is essential for young people to live their lives freely.

- Transport Scotland and public transport companies must take action to make public transport safe, accessible, and reliable, without compromising young people's ability to access and afford it.
- Young people call for public transport to be available consistently across rural, island, and urban communities, with better connections and routes linked up across different public and active transport methods.
- Decision-makers should create improved resources to help all young people, especially young disabled people, accurately plan their journeys and navigate public transport.
- Decision-makers should involve young people in local and national decisions to create a public transport system with equal access for all, reducing geographical inequalities and barriers to young people to access.

"These are our lifelines. It's utterly necessary."
YOUNG WOMAN AGED 18-21, ORKNEY

"Public transport is also awful for accessibility. I have had to have actual arguments with bus drivers for them to let me on a bus in my wheelchair or put the ramp down."
YOUNG MAN AGED 14-17, DUNDEE

The Scottish Government's 'Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel Scheme' should be maintained and expanded to include all young people (up to their 26th birthday) and across all forms of public transport.

87% AGREE — 7% DISAGREE — 6% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us they support the expansion of the Under-22s Free Bus Travel scheme because of the social, financial and educational benefits that free travel across Scotland provides. Through the scheme, most young people can connect with new work opportunities, access more leisure spaces, and take part in education, youth work, and social activities.

By expanding the free public transport out to other modes – such as trains and ferries – and increasing the age young people can access free travel, it will enable even more young people to access the facilities and services they need to succeed in life and realise their full potential. In particular, more equal opportunities will be available for young people furthest from their rights or who have additional responsibilities, supporting them to overcome more barriers to realising their human rights.

- Young people want to see greater investment into public transport for rural and island communities.
- The Scottish Government should protect and expand the existing young people's concessionary travel scheme to include young people up to their 26th birthdays, and to include a broader range of public transport options (such as trains and ferries).
- Young people should be involved in measures to ensure public transport is safe for all passengers and transport staff.

"think this is a good idea because many deaf young people struggle with mental health because of isolation and public transport can help them stay connected."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, DUNDEE





A JUST AND FAIRER SCOTLAND

Our ambition is for a fair and equal Scotland, where all young people can access all opportunities without barriers, and can live safely with the support they need. Young people want a Scotland that brings an end to discrimination and that actively improves their lives. They want a justice system which supports all young people, however they experience it, and that all young people know their voices are being listened to and taken seriously by decision-makers.

Many of these issues disproportionately impact girls and young women, and young people are clear that building gender equality will create safer and fairer lives for everyone in Scotland.

LIST OF JUSTICE POLICIES:

- **Misogyny as a hate crime**
- **Reduce time for prosecution of sexual assault crimes**
- **Close the gender pay gap**
- **Inclusive paid menstrual leave**
- **Implement Bairns' Hoose model**
- **Address prejudice, discrimination and bullying**

UNCRC links

GLOSSARY ON PAGE 60

| | |
|------------|---|
| Article 2 | Non-discrimination |
| Article 12 | Respect for children's views |
| Article 19 | Protection from violence, abuse and neglect |
| Article 34 | Protection from sexual abuse |
| Article 39 | Recovery from trauma |

To protect girls and young women from gender-based violence, misogyny* should be a hate crime in Scotland.

78% AGREE — 9% DISAGREE — 12% DON'T KNOW

*Misogyny is hatred or prejudice against women. It can refer to attitudes and behaviour, like speech or violence.

Young people told us about their experiences of misogyny in their communities and wider society. While some young people feel progress is happening within Scotland to tackle gender inequality, many young people are still experiencing misogyny every day. More unique protections must be put in place to keep young people safe, and everyone should be supported to call out misogyny when they see it.

Boys and young men told us they are also impacted by gender inequality. Therefore, legislation and education must be aimed at informing and protecting all young people, regardless of their gender identity, with specific focus on those young people most at risk of gender-based violence and misogyny.

- Young people call for girls' and young women's specific experiences to be represented and protected through legislation.
- Young people call for gender mainstreaming* to be implemented across all levels of policy-making and decision making, and for the public sector to embed gender sensitivity training in all departments.
- The Scottish Government and local authorities must invest in and promote effective programmes to prevent gender-based violence and misogyny. Existing and new programmes should be co-designed with young people, should be kept up to date to address new and emerging issues, and must be available in all communities across Scotland.

*Gender mainstreaming is about ensuring all decisions consider the specific impacts on different genders. For example, whether a decision would have more negative benefits for women and girls, than it would for men and boys.

"As a young woman i regularly have the fear of going out especially when its dark due to these issues and I don't want to have that fear anymore."

YOUNG WOMEN AGED 14-17, FIFE

The length of time between reporting sexual assault crimes and prosecution should be reduced, so victims are able to access justice without significant delay.

90% AGREE — 2% DISAGREE — 7% DON'T KNOW

Young people have told us that the waiting time between reporting sexual assault and their court hearing is too long, and they want this to be reduced. Reducing the time between reporting a crime and prosecution would go some way to reducing the emotional and mental impact on people harmed by sexual assault. The current system does not achieve justice, with young people feeling that people responsible for sexual assault are often allowed to walk free, which puts both the person harmed and the wider public in danger.

- Young people call for a justice system that goes further in protecting people harmed by sexual assault by offering more all-around support and eradicating inequality and discrimination.
- Young people want the justice system infrastructure to be reformed with resources more equitably distributed to better prevent and respond to sexual assault crimes.
- Decision-makers must protect funding for charities and organisations that deliver prevention and early intervention programmes and that support people harmed by sexual assault.

"The delay in receiving justice or support may, for some, even act as a deterrent for reporting the crime they have been a victim of. Long wait times prolong the weight of the incident(s) riding on a victim's back and leave potential offenders free to do as they please, in other words, many more people are in danger."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, EDINBURGH

Employers should increase efforts to close the gender pay gap* by improving equal opportunity policies; carrying out investigations into equal pay; having flexible working policies; and ensuring equal pay for equal work.

87% AGREE — 3% DISAGREE — 10% DON'T KNOW

***The gender pay gap is the difference between men and women's average earnings**

Young people told us they're surprised to know the gender pay gap still exists in Scotland. They suggested tackling this injustice would come through better education and understanding of gender equality, as well as by implementing direct interventions within the workplace.

- Policies and frameworks that aim to end gender inequality in the workplace must be reviewed, updated and followed up to ensure effective action is taken to protect workers across Scotland. More employers should report on the steps they are taking to reduce gender inequality.
- Young people call for improved education and awareness of their rights in relation to employment, pay, and the economy, and how to take action if those rights are breached.
- The Scottish Government, as an employer and decision maker, must demonstrate from the top-down, what it looks like to dismantle pay inequality in an intersectional manner and ensure equal opportunity for all people at work, including publishing disaggregated data.

"This still shouldn't be an issue today, but we are still having to talk about it and fix it."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17,
SCOTTISH BORDERS

"The glass ceiling must be broken."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17,
INVERCLYDE

"Educating the public to show them that these issues do exist in the first place is a great start, as many still believe the pay gap is a myth."

YOUNG MAN AGED 22- 26, ABERDEEN

Workplaces should have inclusive paid menstrual leave policies in place and decision-makers should support employers to offer this.

66% AGREE — 13% DISAGREE — 21% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us how important a menstrual leave policy would be in helping them manage the mental and physical symptoms of their periods, and other conditions such as endometriosis and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), in their daily lives. They also felt policies which support people who menstruate would enable them to speak more openly about how periods and other conditions affect them. Young people suggested that implementing paid menstrual leave would help to improve their mental and physical health and their productivity.

- Young people call on all employers to implement a menstrual leave policy that is fair, accessible and supportive for everyone, to increase happiness, wellbeing and productivity.
- Alongside a paid menstrual leave policy, the Scottish Government should support employers to provide free and accessible period products, so people who need them do not have to ask for them in their workplaces.
- To create a culture where talking about the effects of periods and other associated conditions is normalised, education establishments must not penalise young people who menstruate for taking time off school, college, or university because of period-related issues or other conditions.

"I suffer from bad period pain, which can sometimes make even walking almost impossible. Nobody should be forced to work when they are experiencing that."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 18-21, STIRLING

"I feel like this could improve women's work performances, as well as reducing their stress."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 12-13,
EDINBURGH

The 'Barnahus' or 'Bairns' Hoose' model should be implemented to support all children and young people through the justice system, giving them a person-centred environment in which to give evidence, and receive medical examinations, counselling and therapy.

69% AGREE — 4% DISAGREE — 28% DON'T KNOW

The 'Bairns' Hoose' is Scotland's approach to the Icelandic 'Barnahus' model that provides support to children and young people who have been harmed by and/or witnessed abuse, and for children below the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused harm to others. It brings together child protection, health, justice and recovery services in one setting.

Young people told us that implementing a child-friendly approach to the criminal justice system is integral to reducing stress, anxiety and long-term psychological impacts experienced by young people. To get this right and be able to offer a variety of critical support services, the Barnahus model must be properly funded and consistently offered to any young person who needs it across Scotland.

- Young people call for the Scottish Government to prioritise implementing the Bairns' Hoose model across Scotland, to ensure all young people who need it have access to integrated healthcare, mental health supports, and police investigations in one place.
- Decision-makers should meaningfully involve children and young people, particularly those with experience of the justice system and those most at risk, in developing the Bairns' Hoose model in a way that best suits what they want and need the most.
- Decision-makers must ensure adults who work with children and young people are aware of and understand the Bairns' Hoose model so that all children and young people experiencing the justice system know what support is available to them.

The Scottish Government should take strong and decisive action to address prejudice, discrimination and bullying experienced by children and young people, in order to ensure that Scotland is a safe place to grow up.

89% AGREE — 3% DISAGREE — 8% DON'T KNOW

Young people have told us that bullying is not being taken seriously and is often overlooked, despite the harm it causes to them, their education and their lives. Young people impacted by bullying feel they cannot attend school and that it is preventing them from being able to learn. They shared experiences of being bullied due to their religion, ethnicity, education and sexuality, and how much worse this bullying has become through wide-spread use of social media. Now, young people don't have any safe space to go because the bullying can reach them at home through their phones and online platforms. They told us that there are no repercussions for this digital harmful language and attacks.

- Young people want to be included in bullying prevention strategies in schools, and for their experiences to be central to school inspection evaluations on this issue.
- Decision-makers should make bullying reporting easier and more accessible, with clear feedback loops and support for affected students.
- The Scottish Government should hold social media platforms accountable for harmful content and invest in safe spaces and youth-led inclusion programmes to protect and empower young people.

"Creating a safe place to grow where all children feel valued is essential for development and wellbeing. Government should implement antibullying policies and promote awareness campaigns that educate young people about inclusion and diversity."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14–17,
CLACKMANNANSHIRE

EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE TO CLAIM THEIR RIGHTS



Our ambition is for young people to be at the heart of decision-making in Scotland. Centring young people's rights enables them to be safe and protected through meaningful engagement on the issues that matter the most, and for decision-makers to be accountable for delivering young people's rights in full.

The impact of decisions on young people must be considered at every level in every budgetary, political and legal decision. This will create a Scotland where young people are truly free to reach their full potential.

LIST OF RIGHTS POLICIES:

- Respect the views of children and young people
- Right to vote for over 16s
- Introduce the Human Rights Bill
- Good quality gender-affirming care
- Independent advocacy for care-experienced people
- Family reunification for refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people

UNCRC links

GLOSSARY ON PAGE 60

| | |
|------------|---|
| Article 2 | Non-discrimination |
| Article 10 | Family reunification |
| Article 12 | Respect for children's views |
| Article 17 | Access to information |
| Article 22 | Refugee children |
| Article 24 | Health, water, food, environment |
| Article 30 | Children from minority or indigenous groups |
| Article 42 | Knowledge of rights |

The Scottish Government and other decision-makers must uphold the right set out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to respect the views of children and young people in all decisions that affect them.

83% AGREE — 4% DISAGREE — 11% DON'T KNOW

Incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is only the beginning, not the end, of realising children and young people's human rights in Scotland. Young people have told us they want to see the UNCRC and their wider human rights upheld by all decision-makers, and for there to be transparency and accountability when these human rights are not being upheld. Young people's thoughts, opinions and voices must be respected and included in all decisions that affect them, and decision-makers should ensure that all engagement and participation is meaningful.

- Decision-makers must recognise young people's lived and living experience for their expertise, and for power to be given to young people when deciding what will make Scotland the best place to grow up.
- Decision-makers should implement accessible, inclusive and meaningful models of participation that ensure young people are involved in the right way, where they are respected, their dignity is upheld, and inclusion is equal.
- The Scottish Government should create more awareness of young people's human rights and how young people can access information about their rights, including how to complain about their rights being breached.

"Nothing about us without us."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 22-26,
GLASGOW

"Why should decisions that young people are capable of making be made by adults? No one knows children and the issues they face better than the children themselves."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17,
EDINBURGH

All over 16's resident in the UK should have the right to vote in all UK elections.

73% AGREE — 15% DISAGREE — 12% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us that voting in elections is an essential way for them to participate in a democratic society and make decisions about their future. They make informed decisions about their lives every day and so want to make decisions about the leaders that shape the country's direction. But to do this, young people recognise that political literacy education must also be improved, and governments across the UK must be doing more to actively tackle disinformation and misinformation. Young people want to learn from political experts and be able to find accurate and up-to-date information easily, without second-guessing its source or validity.

- Young people call for a minimum entitlement to comprehensive citizenship and democratic education that is taught by teachers and youth workers who have received specialist training and support, and who have access to high-quality educational resources.
- Decision-makers must take tangible action against misinformation and disinformation. This means platforms and companies are held accountable to remove false and dangerous information when it's shared online.
- Voter registration should be promoted within schools and community settings to ensure young people are aware of their rights and the voting process in advance of elections, in particular in advance of their first-time vote.

"If we are considered old enough to marry, consent and take exams which change the courses of our lives, we should be allowed a say in our own government."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17

"But with this, education on politics and international relations needs a drastic improvement. It needs to be universally offered, consistent, cohesive and regularly updated to reflect the changing dynamics of politics. It should be taught by practitioners and experts; rather than from a textbook that will go out of date as soon as it is printed."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 22-26, EDINBURGH

The Scottish Government should deliver its promise of introducing the 'Human Rights Bill for Scotland' to incorporate treaties that will better protect disabled people's rights, rights of black and ethnic minority people, women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights.

78% AGREE — 8% DISAGREE — 14% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us how important it is for the Human Rights Bill to be implemented and the difference it will make for protecting communities furthest from their rights. Young people shared their experiences of prejudice and discrimination in Scotland, and reflected on the kind of positive Scotland they could build knowing that human rights are embedded within all decision-making and policy structures. Young people want to know that all human rights are being upheld and enforced in Scotland.

- The Scottish Government must ensure young people are actively and meaningfully involved in the development of a Human Rights Bill for Scotland that creates the kind of inclusive, fair, and equal Scotland young people want to see.
- The Scottish Government and UK Government should work together to successfully ensure human rights on housing, healthcare and food can be fully realised in Scotland.
- Decision-makers should work together to foster inclusion and a culture of respect in Scotland.

"Disabled and Trans people's rights specifically are under massive attack in the UK and need protecting in Scotland. As a trans person with trans and disabled friends, I am worried everyday about which one of my rights is going to be taken away next."

YOUNG MAN AGED 22-26, EDINBURGH

"As a member of the LGBTQAI+ community, I know how hard it is to feel seen."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Trans young people have a right to good quality gender-affirming care and this care should be accessible and consistently available, regardless of where the young person lives.

64% AGREE — 18% DISAGREE — 18% DON'T KNOW

Trans young people told us how critical it is to reduce the waiting times for receiving the care and mental health support that they need, and that location should never be a barrier to accessing gender-affirming care. They shared their experiences of gender dysphoria and the distress this causes without proper support, and how policy developments about trans rights have negatively impacted on their health and wellbeing.

Through good quality gender-affirming care, trans young people can live a healthy life and would have the freedom to be their true selves. Knowing they are supported and cared for is essential in the face of increasing transphobia, misinformation and systemic barriers to accessing support, and will ensure that trans young people's human rights are realised. It will save lives.

- Young people want to see trans young people supported to make fully informed and rights-based decisions regarding the care that is best for them as individuals.
- There should be more investment into education to promote trans-rights and showcase trans people as positive role models, and which tackles transphobia.
- The Scottish Government should take a leading role in ending transphobia and addressing systemic barriers which prevent trans young people from accessing their human rights.
- For trans young people to access the right medical, mental health and supportive care, waiting times need to be reduced.

"It makes no sense preventing someone from being their true selves and causes no harm to anyone doing so whilst the prevention of it causes harm to the individual."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, DUNDEE

The Scottish Government must enshrine a right to independent advocacy for Care Experienced people of all ages, so they can realise their rights.

80% AGREE — 3% DISAGREE — 17% DON'T KNOW

Care Experienced young people told us they want more of a voice in advocating for their rights and in decisions that affect them. Independent advocacy is an important step in realising equal opportunity and rights for every young person, and will ensure Care Experienced Young People are meaningfully listened to.

There is still work to be done on increasing young people's knowledge of independent advocacy and what it means for realising their rights. This is where the Scottish Government must collaborate with experts to ensure all young people understand how to access independent advocacy or how they can support their loved ones to access it.

- Decision makers should ensure all young people understand their right to independent advocacy, especially Care Experienced young people.
- The provision of independent advocacy should be consistent across all of Scotland for anyone who needs it wherever they are.
- The Scottish Government and the public sector must fulfil The Promise.

The Promise is Scotland's commitment to ensure that all children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential.

"Education on all rights is so important."

YOUNG MAN AGED 12-13, NO LOCATION GIVEN

"Independent advocacy is important to ensure that individuals who have been in care can have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. It provides them with the support needed to navigate their right in areas such as health and social services."

YOUNG WOMAN AGED 14-17, CLACKMANNANSHIRE

The UK Government must ensure that all refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people have a right to reunite with their families in the UK.

83% AGREE — 5% DISAGREE — 12% DON'T KNOW

Young people told us that assisting refugees and asylum-seeking children is the right thing to do. They told us this starts by promoting positive attitudes towards people who are seeking asylum. Scotland should be a place where all children and young people can access the resources – housing, healthcare, employment, family support – that they need to live a full and healthy life.

- Young people want to see more opportunities, support and investment put into supporting children and young people who are refugees or seeking asylum integrate into the local community.
- Decision-makers must ensure children and young people are fully informed at all stages of the asylum-seeking process through more consistent and accessible information in a language and format that is accessible for them.

"It is callous to keep refugee families apart when they have already undergone awful circumstances to get here. Children should always have the opportunity to be with their families."

YOUNG PERSON AGED 18-21, DUNDEE

"Immigration is important to our country, they come here seeking a better life for them and their families. That's not a crime."

YOUNG MAN AGED 12-13, NO LOCATION GIVEN

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE MANIFESTO

This manifesto was developed by young people for young people. At every stage, young people's views and experiences were at the forefront of how the policies were decided and interpreted.

SYP actively works to engage young people who are seldom-heard and furthest from their rights, and that has been the case throughout the development of this manifesto.

A total of 4,889 young people were engaged in the manifesto development process.

Establishing priorities

Initially, an open call was made to young people aged 12-25 about their priorities for change in Scotland. SYP approached organisations working with seldom-heard groups to ensure that the call was representative of their views and experiences. SYP staff analysed the data from stage one to present to SYP's Subject Committees for review. With the support of experts, each Subject Committee formed key asks relevant to their subject area. The final wording of the policy asks was decided by the Conveners Group.

Consulting

From January to July 2025, a national consultation was held with young people, with MSYPs leading the consultation efforts. Focus groups, workshops and stalls were held across the country.

Analysing and Writing

The analysis of the data was led by MSYPs using thematic analysis. Across five in-person workshops and one online workshop, MSYPs explored the comments given by young people throughout the consultation stage, deciding codes and overall themes for each of the 31 policies. MSYPs made posters about their interpretation of the findings, including selecting comments that were representative of their themes. The posters form the main basis of this manifesto.

The quantitative analysis includes both individual respondents and focus group responses. The percentages are based on respondents for each question, and have been rounded up to the first decimal point. Not all questions were answered by all respondents.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic questions were optional for individual respondents. Groups were only asked to provide the age range of the young people participating in the group. Therefore, the data below is derived only from the individual respondents unless specified.

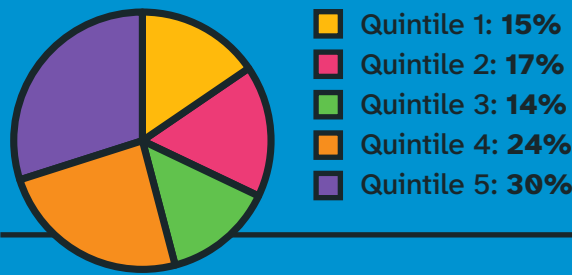
Location

There were respondents* from all 32 local authorities in Scotland, with the largest number of responses coming from Midlothian, Angus, City of Edinburgh, Shetland Islands and Dumfries and Galloway.

*This data combines locations of both individual and group responses where available.

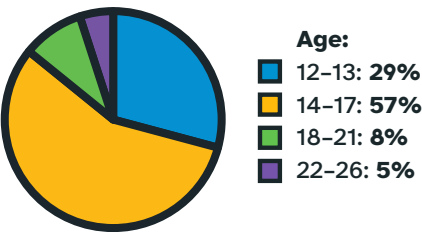
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

Using the postcode data available from the individual respondents, there was a split between all five SIMD quintiles, with over-representation from quintiles 4 and 5, reflective of the local authorities with the most responses.



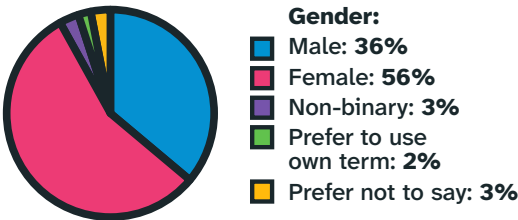
Age

1,298 individual respondents chose to answer this question. A majority of respondents were aged 14-17 years. **75% of group respondents were aged 12-17.**



Gender

1,294 respondents chose to answer this question. Of those, the majority identified themselves as female.



Seldom-Heard Groups

Only 652 young people chose to answer the question on whether they belonged to a seldom-heard group. Although focus groups were conducted to specifically address the gaps in individual respondents, we recognise that the low sample size of the respondents for this question do not reflect the full diversity of Scotland’s young people.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Young carer | 93 |
| Care experience | 48 |
| Young person with a disability | 140 |
| Black or young Person of Colour | 77 |
| LGBTQ+ young person | 180 |
| Young person with experience of the criminal justice system | 23 |
| Another group not listed here | 41 |
| I don't want to share this information | 93 |
| I don't know | 183 |

HELP AND SUPPORT

Anxiety UK

Phone: 03444 775 774 –
10.30am- 4.30pm,
Monday to Friday
Text: 07537 416905

Anxiety UK offers support, advice and information on a range of anxiety, stress and anxiety-based depression conditions.

Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre

Phone: 0808 801 0301 – 10am-4pm, Monday to Friday

Help for women in English, Urdu, Arabic, Punjabi, Bangli and Swahili and, when required, using online interpreting.

Childline

Phone: 0800 11 11 – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Web: www.childline.org.uk

Free and confidential service to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through.

LGBT Youth Scotland

Live chat: lgbtyouth.org.uk/get-support –
4pm- 6pm, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday

Live support for any LGBT young person wanting to talk about any issues on their mind with a dedicated youth worker.

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

Phone: 08088 01 03 02 –
between 6pm and midnight every night or by

Email: support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Free and confidential support and information for anyone, women and men, affected by sexual violence, no matter when or how it happened.

SAMH (Scottish Action for Mental Health)

Phone: 0344 800 0550 – 9am – 6pm, Monday to Friday
Email: info@samh.org.uk

Providing support or offering information about mental health to those impacted and the people that love and support them.

Samaritans

Phone: 116 123 – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Emotional support to anyone in emotional distress or at risk of suicide.

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

Phone: 08088 010 789

Help for self-identifying women aged 16 and over affected by violence and abuse by providing free legal information and advice through helpline, legal surgeries and ongoing casework.

Who Cares? Scotland

Phone: 0330 107 7540 – 12pm – 4pm, Monday to Friday

A helpline for Care Experienced people and those who support them, including support, signposting and advocacy

GLOSSARY

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty that outlines the rights and freedoms of all children under the age of 18. The Articles listed on the following pages are those referred to within this manifesto.

Find out more about your rights and the UNCRC at www.cypcs.org.uk/rights

ARTICLE 2

Non-discrimination

The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

ARTICLE 3

Best interests of the child

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

ARTICLE 6

Life, survival and development

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

ARTICLE 10

Family reunification

Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country.

ARTICLE 12

Respect for the views of the child

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

ARTICLE 13

Freedom of expression

Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

ARTICLE 15

Freedom of association

Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

ARTICLE 15

Access to information from the media

Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

ARTICLE 19

Protection from violence, abuse and neglect

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

ARTICLE 22

Refugee children

If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention. Governments must help refugee children who are separated from their parents to be reunited with them.

ARTICLE 23

Children with a disability

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.

ARTICLE 24

Health and health services

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 26

Social security

Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance.

ARTICLE 27

Adequate standard of living

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

ARTICLE 28

Right to education

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

ARTICLE 29

Goals of education

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

ARTICLE 30

Children from minority or indigenous groups

Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

ARTICLE 31

Leisure, play and culture

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

ARTICLE 34

Sexual exploitation

Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

ARTICLE 39

Recovery from trauma

Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

ARTICLE 42

Knowledge of rights

Governments must actively work to make sure children and adults know about the Convention.

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Scottish Youth Parliament,
57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY

www.syp.org.uk • @OfficialSYP
hello@syp.org.uk

Designed by Kael Onion Oakley