



Young People and Politics

A report on young people's information literacy and political engagement in Scotland

January 2026



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- Organisations who invited the Scottish Youth Parliament to attend stalls and facilitate focus groups.
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We would like to thank the young people who took part in this piece of work by completing our online survey and sharing their views at stalls and events.

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Recommendations

The recommendations in this section are informed by the views and experiences of over 500 young people across Scotland, as well as insights from practitioners working on information and political literacy.

These recommendations aim to address the challenges young people identified through our research, to strengthen young people's ability to meaningfully participate in democratic processes, and to ensure young people can confidently access information they can trust.

Action should be taken to challenge misinformation, hate and polarisation in politics

Information and digital literacy education programmes should include information about recognising media bias, mis- and disinformation, and AI-generated content, and should help young people to develop critical thinking skills to build their confidence to access information they can trust.

Accessible and easy-to-understand guidance and resources on fact-checking and how to stay safe online should be co-designed by young people for young people.

Decision-makers, including parliaments, governments, and social media companies should take action to improve verification systems and transparency, to help young people stay safe online.

Political parties and campaigns should encourage respectful dialogue and empathy online to reduce hostility and bring people together. By focusing on understanding rather than conflict, these campaigns can make online spaces safer and more positive for everyone. Actions could include using relatable voices to share stories, creating content that shows the benefits of respectful debate, and giving clear advice on how to respond to hate or misinformation calmly.

Promote positive representation and visibility of young people in formal and informal politics

Action should be taken to address the perception that politics is 'for adults' by showcasing positive examples of a diverse range of young people's

involvement and impact in formal and informal politics. This promotion should be linked to promotion of opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes and local youth voice mechanisms, to make sure young people are able to access opportunities, regardless of their age, ability, or where they live.

Provide standardised political literacy, information literacy and citizenship education for all young people from an early age

Unbiased and accessible political and information literacy and citizenship education should be embedded into the school curriculum for all young people in Scotland, regardless of their age, background, or where they live.

This should include practical information on the everyday relevance of politics; simplifying complex political structures, systems and roles within politics; critical literacy skills and how to identify trustworthy information; and opportunities for young people to participate in formal and informal political engagement.

Educators and adults working with young people in non-formal education settings such as youth work should receive training, support, and guidance, to help them feel confident delivering impartial and accurate education.

Develop unbiased, accessible, and youth-friendly political information resources to help young people make informed decisions

Political information for young people should be unbiased and accessible for all young people. It should use language which is accessible for everyone and avoid jargon or terminology which is unfamiliar to young people.

Young people should be involved in co-designing and developing information resources using formats young people prefer, such as short videos, infographics, and interactive quizzes. Resources should be engaging and tailored to different age groups.

Information resources should include practical information on the everyday relevance of politics; simplifying complex political structures, systems and roles within politics; critical literacy skills and how to identify trustworthy information; and opportunities for young people to participate in formal and informal political engagement.

Increase opportunities for young people's meaningful participation in decision-making locally and nationally

To respect and uphold young people's UNCRC Article 12 right to be listened to and have their views considered in issues affecting them, decision-makers should move beyond tokenistic consultation by embedding meaningful participation principles into local and national decision-making processes. Decision-makers should receive training on how to uphold UNCRC principles and how to meaningfully involve young people in their work. Decision-makers should also close the feedback loop to ensure young people understand how their participation has influenced outcomes, and to increase accountability for young people's participation in decision-making.

Local Authorities should provide safe and accessible spaces and resources for young people to learn about and discuss politics, through formal and non-formal education settings such as youth work, and in community spaces such as libraries. Opportunities and information should be available for all young people, regardless of their age, to build confidence and reduce barriers to their political engagement.

The Scottish Government and Local Authorities should commit to long-term, sustainable funding for high-quality, consistent, and accessible youth work in every community across Scotland to ensure young people have access to opportunities to learn about and participate in politics. Alongside this, youth voice mechanisms such as youth councils or forums, and peer-led campaigning initiatives should be supported and expanded to build young people's confidence and understanding of decision-making processes.

Ahead of key elections, targeted information and support should be provided for young people which is co-designed by young people

Campaigns and resources, co-designed by young people, should be created specifically for young people ahead of all Scottish Parliament elections, Local Council elections, and UK Government elections, and promoted through channels young people are most likely to access, including through trusted influencers and organisations. These campaigns and resources should provide unbiased information and support for young people to enable them to make an informed decision on how to vote and to understand why voting is important.

Targeted information and resources should be available for first time voters, including 16-and-17-year-olds, and for young people who are not old enough to vote, to help them understand what the elections are all about and how they can get involved in politics regardless of their age. This will help younger young people feel more confident and better informed about politics and will help them to find out how to get involved in politics before they're old enough to vote.

Carry out further research to explore gendered differences and inclusion gaps highlighted in this report

Further research should be carried out to understand the apparent gendered differences between the views of boys and young men and those of girls and young women outlined in this report. Additionally, targeted research should be carried out to understand the views and experiences of non-binary young people and people of marginalised genders.

The outcomes and recommendations from this and any future research should inform interventions which encourage and promote equal participation in politics while reflecting young people's intersectional experiences.

Introduction

Young people in Scotland have had the right vote from the age of 16 in Scottish Parliament and local government elections since 2015, and in July 2025 the UK Government announced its intention to extend the right to vote to all 16-and-17-year-olds across the UK before the 2029 General Elections.

As digital media continues to influence how young people consume information, it is more important than ever to understand how they form political views and make decisions.

Understanding how young people understand politics and access and engage with political information helps ensure they are equipped to take part in democracy confidently and meaningfully.

With misinformation and disinformation on the rise, it is vital that support for political and information literacy keeps pace with how young people consume content online.

The Scottish Youth Parliament and Young Scot are working together to better understand how young people access news, information and political content. We are exploring what politics means to young people today, and how this shapes their understanding of key issues, influences their choices, and affects their participation in local and national democracy.

This report outlines the results of a consultation with over 500 young people aged between 11 and 25 which was carried out between June and September 2025 and makes recommendations to improve young people's political and information literacy in Scotland.

This work will help shape future activity, including targeted support ahead of the Scottish Parliament Elections in 2026 and longer-term efforts to strengthen young people's democratic engagement.

Our approach

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) and Young Scot use participatory methodologies to ensure meaningful engagement with young people.

SYP's Participation Framework is underpinned by the Lundy Model of Participation and [The Right Way](#), which outlines the key components of meaningful participation. We design spaces to create conditions for meaningful youth voice, and work to bring together the decision-making audiences to create conditions for genuine influence.

Young people's views and experiences were gathered through a three-stage approach, as outlined in this section.

Following the engagement with young people, we co-hosted a roundtable event to bring together practitioners who work on information and political literacy, to discuss the findings from our research, and to explore a way forward. Details about this event are also outlined in this section.

Focus groups and stalls

Through summer 2025, the Scottish Youth Parliament hosted stalls and facilitated short discussion activities at a range of events across Scotland, including:

- The Young Women's Movement 100th Birthday Party, Glasgow
- Highland Youth Parliament Conference, Inverness
- Young Women and Democracy Summit Co-design Group Residential, near Edinburgh
- The Scottish Youth Parliament's 83rd National Sitting, Paisley
- Marine Conservation Society #VoicefortheOcean youth event, Glasgow
- Scottish Young Carers Festival, Fife
- Young Women and Democracy Summit, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh

At these events, we asked young people to draw or write their answers to two key questions:

1. What does politics mean to you?
2. Where do you get information you can trust?

Around 100 young people took part in this research through focus groups and stalls. The results from these events were used to inform the development of the online survey, by highlighting areas where more information was needed to understand young people's views and experiences, and identifying information sources young people might use to find out about politics.

Online survey

Between June and September 2025, Young Scot hosted an online survey of young people aged 11 – 25 across Scotland.

The survey was promoted through SYP and Young Scot social media channels and newsletters, at stalls and events (including those outlined above), and Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) and their Support Workers shared the survey link within their communities.

In total, 426 young people responded to the survey. A summary of participant demographics is shown on pages 41 - 44.

The survey included the following questions:

1. Where do you usually find out about what's going on in the world? For each source below, please tell us how often you use it. (Tick one per row):
 - a. Social media
 - b. Family
 - c. TV or radio
 - d. News websites (e.g. BBC)
 - e. Friends
 - f. Teachers or youth workers
 - g. Other websites (e.g. blogs)
2. Please let us know which social media accounts, news channels, or other sources you use to find out what's going on in the world.
3. If you've ever seen or shared news or information online that turned out to be fake or misleading, what was it, how did it make you feel?
4. What do you think about politics? Please rate how much you agree with the following statements (Tick one per row):
 - a. I feel involved in politics
 - b. I feel comfortable talking about politics
 - c. Politics has an impact on my life
 - d. It is important for young people to be involved in politics
 - e. I know how to get involved in politics
 - f. I want to be more involved in politics
 - g. I know where to find information about politics that I can trust
 - h. It is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics
 - i. I can make a difference in local or national decisions
5. What does politics mean to you?
6. What would help you feel more confident talking about or getting involved in politics? Would it help to have better information, support, learning from others, or something else

Survey results were reviewed and analysed by Scottish Youth Parliament staff, using statistical and thematic analysis methods.

Where survey responses are separated by age, they are presented in three categories. These categories have been chosen because young people aged between 11 and 15 do not have the right to vote in any Scottish or UK elections; 16- and 17-year-olds can vote in Scottish elections; and 18-25-year-olds can vote in all Scottish and UK elections. These categories also represent a roughly equal number of participants:

- 11-15-year-olds – 186 respondents
- 16-17-year-olds – 121 respondents
- 18-25-year-olds – 106 respondents

Data interrogation

After initial analysis of the survey results, some of the findings were interrogated by six young people from East Lothian at an in-person workshop, and one young person from the Highlands.

This interrogation focused on understanding young people's interpretation of the quantitative data gathered through the survey.

The workshop started by asking participants to answer the question 'what does politics mean to you' using Lego to create a model which represented their views. Participants shared their models and then considered the key themes emerging from their discussion.

Following this, participants split into two groups to review young people's responses to the following questions:

- Where do you usually find out about what's going on in the world? For each source below, please tell us how often you use it.
- What do you think about politics? Please rate how much you agree with the following statements

For each question, groups reviewed the overall responses. One group then looked at the responses separated by gender, and the other group looked at the responses separated by age groups.

Participants made notes and discussed their views on the results. These reflections are outlined through this report to provide context to some of the survey findings.

At the end of the workshop, participants wrote seven-word stories outlining the actions they thought need to be taken to address the research findings. Their stories have been used to inform and prioritise the recommendations outlined in this report.

Practitioner Roundtable

On Wednesday 10th December 2025, the Scottish Youth Parliament and Young Scot hosted 'Be Part of the Conversation: Strengthening Information and Political Literacy for Scotland's Young People' – a roundtable for practitioners working in the fields of information and political literacy in Scotland.

This event was attended by over 25 stakeholders, including representatives from Ofcom, The David Hume Institute, The Royal Society of Edinburgh, The Ferret, Napier University, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, LGBT Youth Scotland, and Youth Scotland.

The event explored how young people engage with politics and information literacy. It began with a presentation of the key findings from this research, and was followed by small group discussions structured around four questions:

- What findings from our recent research surprised or resonated with participants.
- What effective political and information literacy should look like in practice.
- What initiatives organisations are currently delivering.
- What collective actions could strengthen this work.

Our Findings

This section outlines young people's responses to the online survey, and then highlights the key themes discussed at the practitioner roundtable.

Comments from young people who took part in the data interrogation workshop have been incorporated throughout the survey results section to help contextualise the findings.

Survey Results

This section outlines young people's responses to the online survey. It begins by outlining young people's views and experiences of politics, before considering where young people are getting information about politics.

This section includes quotes from young people who responded to the survey. Where demographics information was provided, each quote includes the young person's age range, gender, and the Scottish Parliament region in which they live, based on the postcode they provided.

What do you think about politics?

Key findings:

- Although young people tend to agree that politics has an impact on their lives and that it is important for young people to be involved in politics, most young people do not feel they can make a difference in local or national decisions.
- Young people aged between 11 and 15 tend to feel less comfortable talking about politics; are less likely to feel involved in politics or that they can make a difference in local or national decisions; and are less likely to know how to get involved in politics than older young people.
- 16 –and 17-year-olds tend to feel more involved in politics and more comfortable talking about politics than older and younger young people. This might be because there has been more attention on increasing 16 and 17-year-olds' political literacy since Votes at 16 was introduced in Scotland.
- Girls and young women are more likely to agree that it is important to be involved in politics than boys and young men. However, boys and young men are more likely to agree that they know how to get involved in politics than girls and young women.
- Boys and young men tend to agree more than girls and young women that they know where to find information about politics they can trust, whereas girls and young women are more likely to agree that it is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics.

This question asked young people to rate a series of statements about politics. During the analysis, their responses were separated by age and by gender to explore whether there are any significant differences between these groups.

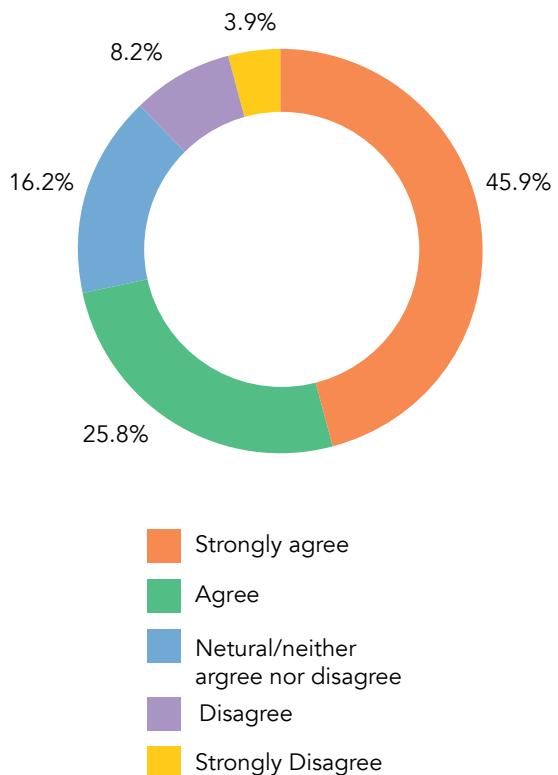
Politics has an impact on my life

Nearly three quarters of young people agree or strongly agree politics has an impact on their lives.

When separated by age, this increased to 85% of 18-25-year-olds agreeing or strongly agreeing, whereas only 62% of 11-15-year-olds agree or strongly agree that politics has an impact on their lives.

The young people who reviewed the survey findings felt this may be because older young people are more likely to be aware of things like the cost of living, rent and energy prices, and other ways politics affects young people's lives.

There is no significant difference between the extent to which young men and young women agree or strongly with this statement. However, more boys and young men strongly disagree (7.7%) with this statement than girls and young women (2.0%).



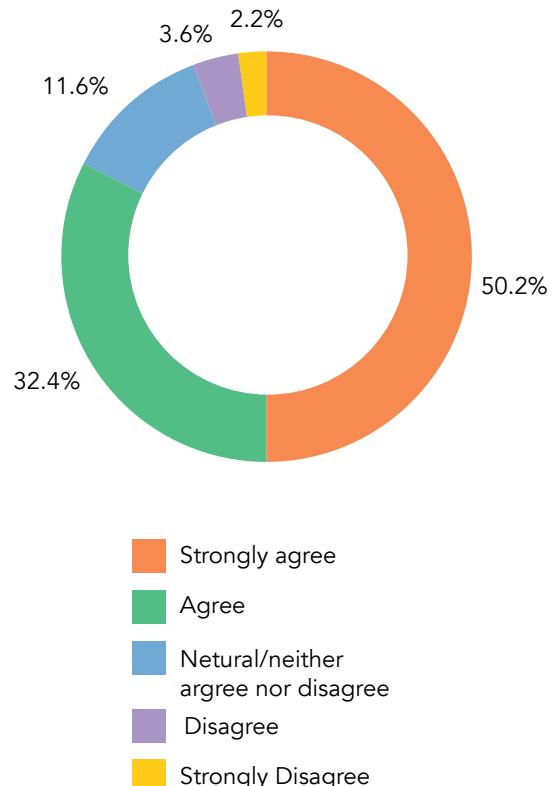
It is important for young people to be involved in politics

82% of young people agree or strongly agree that it is important for young people to be involved in politics.

Over half of girls and young women (52.4%) strongly agree that it is important for young people to be involved in politics, while only 43.0% of boys and young men said the same.

The young people who reviewed the survey findings suggested this might be because boys and young men feel more disenfranchised than girls and young women.

We also saw some significant differences when these results were separated by age. While 66% of 18-25-year-olds strongly agree that it is important for young people to be involved in politics, only 39% of 11-15-year-olds strongly agree.



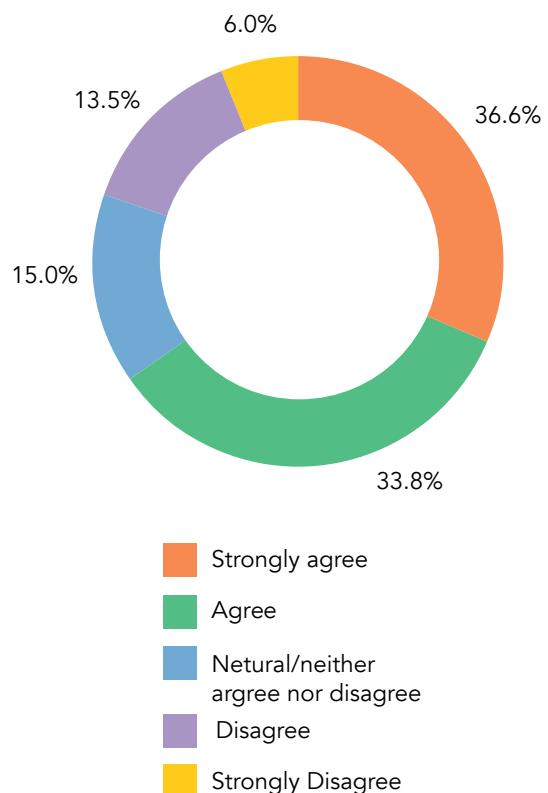
I feel comfortable talking about politics

Two thirds of young people strongly agree or agree that they feel comfortable talking about politics.

When separated by age, a third (36.7%) of 16-17-year-olds strongly agree that they feel comfortable talking about politics, whereas around 29-30% each of 11-15-year-olds and 18-25-year-olds strongly agree with this statement.

The young people who reviewed these findings suggested 16-17-year-olds might feel more comfortable talking about politics because this age group has been given the right to vote relatively recently, and there might be more information and support available for them to talk about and get involved in politics than for younger or older young people.

A slightly higher proportion of boys and young men agree or strongly agree with this statement (69.7%) than girls and young women (63.7%).



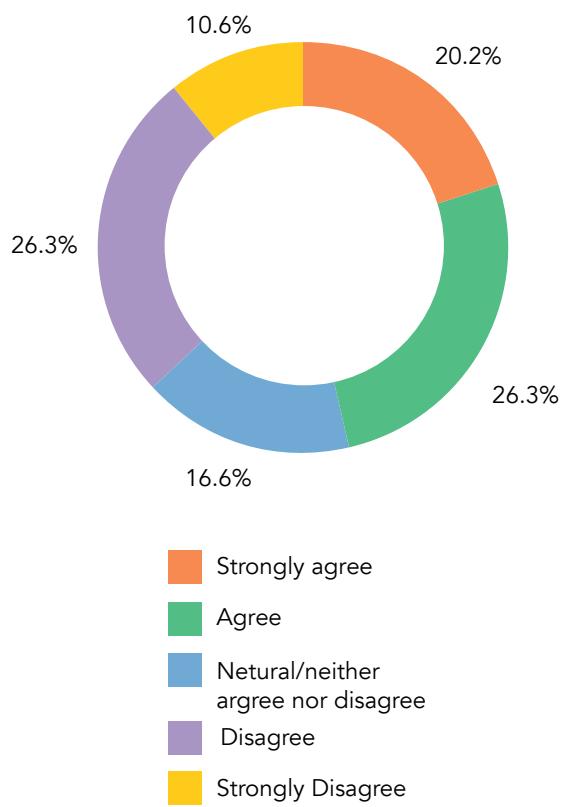
I feel involved in politics

Less than half of young people agree or strongly agree that they feel involved in politics.

Younger young people were less likely to say they feel involved in politics, although 16-17-year-olds were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree than older or younger respondents.

The young people who reviewed these findings suggested this might be because there has been more attention on 16- and 17-year-olds since Votes at 16 was introduced in Scotland. They also suggested that 11-15-year-olds might feel less involved in politics than older young people because they can't vote so have less access to formal politics and might be more likely to learn about politics from their parents.

There were no significant differences in young people's responses to this statement when separated by gender, although a higher proportion of boys and young men strongly disagree (16.9%) than girls and young women (7.7%).

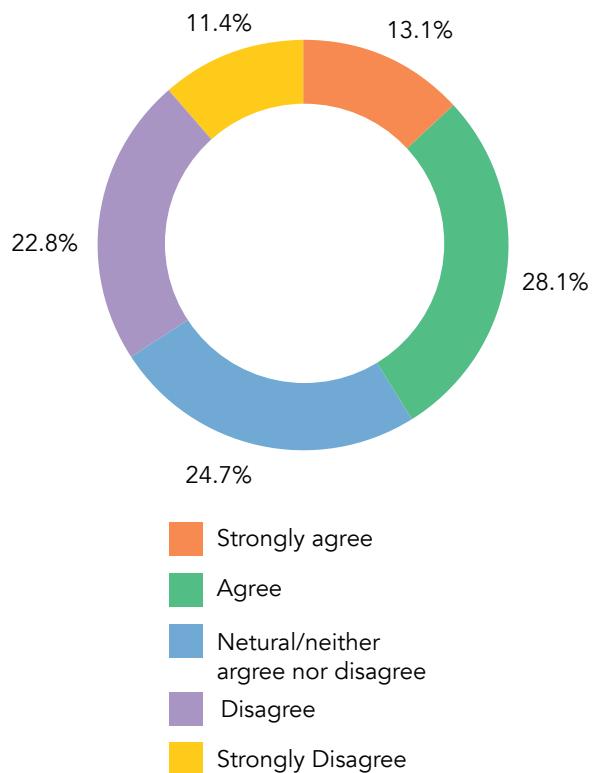


I can make a difference in local or national decisions

Although young people tend to agree that politics has an impact on their lives, only two-fifths of young people feel they can make a difference in local or national decisions. Older young people are significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree they can make a difference than younger young people.

30.1% of 11-15-year-olds agree or strongly agree with this statement, compared with 50.9% of 16-17-year-olds and 48.6% of 18-25-year-olds.

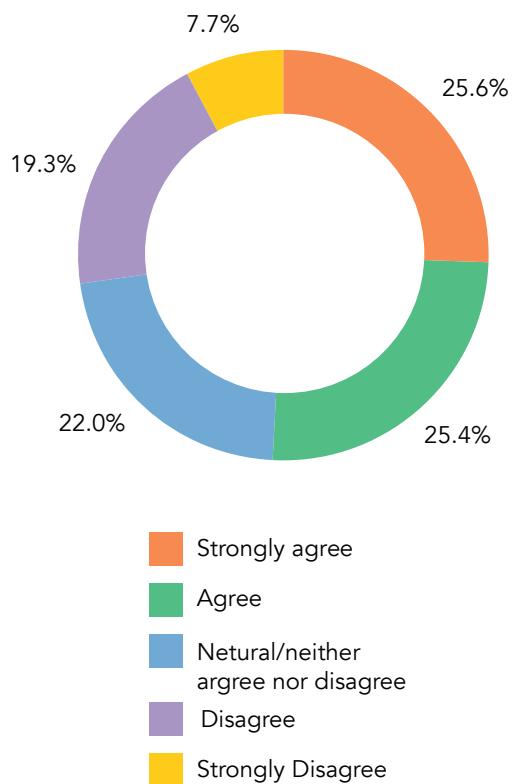
There were no significant differences in young people's responses to this statement when separated by gender, although a higher proportion of boys and young men strongly disagree (15.5%) than girls and young women (8.9%).



I want to be more involved in politics

Half of the young people who responded to this question agree or strongly agree that they want to be more involved in politics.

There were no significant differences between responses to this statement from boys and young men or girls and young women, or between different age groups.

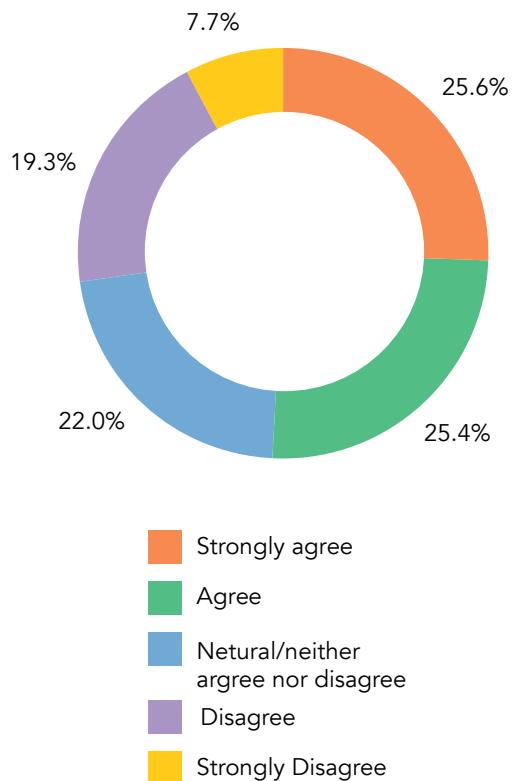


I know how to get involved in politics

Just under half of young people who took part in our survey agree or strongly agree that they know how to get involved in politics.

When separated by age, only 38.5% of 11-15-year-olds agree or strongly agree with this statement, compared with 54.2% of 16-17-year-olds and 55.7% of 18-25-year-olds.

50.7% of boys and young men agree or strongly agree with this statement, compared with 45.5% of girls and young women.

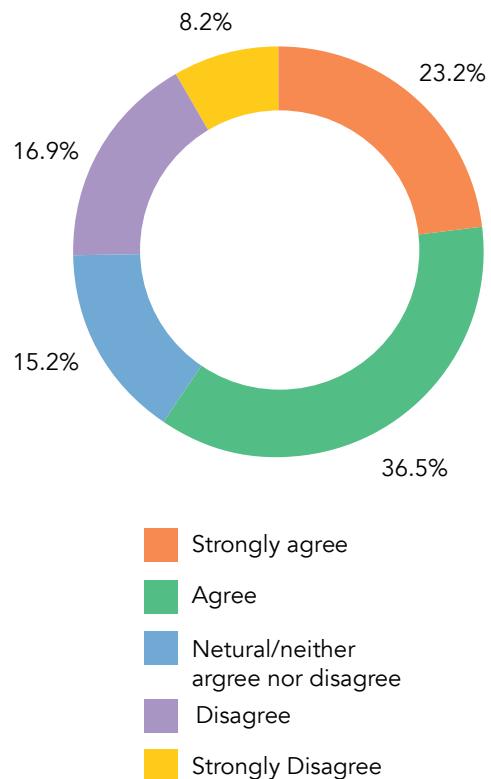


I know where to find information about politics that I can trust

Three fifths of young people (59.7%) agree or strongly agree that they know where to find information they feel they can trust.

Just over half of 11-15-year-olds (54.1%) agree or strongly agree with this statement, compared with 66.7% of 16-17-year-olds and 61.5% of 18-25-year-olds.

65.5% of boys and young men agree or strongly agree that they know where to find information about politics they can trust, compared with 56.0% of girls and young women.

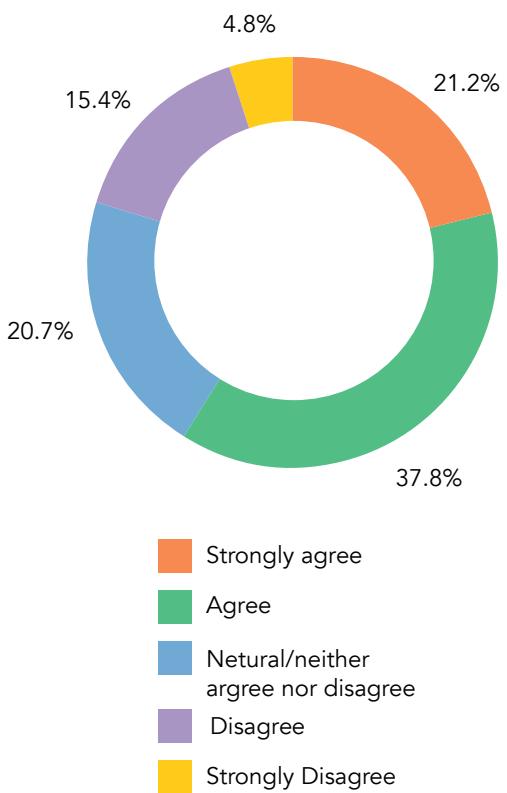


It is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics

Three fifths of young people (59%) agree or strongly agree that it is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics.

There was a significant difference in the responses when separated by gender. 65.7% of girls and young women agree or strongly agree with this statement, compared with 50.7% of boys and young men.

Just over half of 16-17-year-olds (52.5%) agree or strongly agree with this statement, compared with 59.0% of 11-15-year-olds and 65.7% of 18-25-year-olds.



What does politics mean to you?

Key findings:

- Young people want opportunities to be involved, want decision makers they can trust, and they want to know where they can access reliable information.
- Young people recognise politics has an impact on their lives, although some young people feel politics is dominated by adults in positions of power, and others are worried or scared about the impact politics has on their lives or on their rights.
- There appears to be a difference in how young people perceive politics depending on their age. Younger young people tend to see politics as something which is for adults, that they feel they don't know enough about, and that they can't get involved in until they are old enough to vote. Older young people tend to be more aware of political systems, processes, and institutions, and are more likely to see politics as a way to have their views heard and to influence decisions.

Survey respondents were given an open text box to respond to this question. Responses were sorted by theme, as discussed in this section.

Young people recognise politics has an impact on their lives, now and in the future

Young people spoke about the impact politics has on issues they experience in their daily lives, such as education, transport, healthcare, employment, and the economy. Some young people shared personal examples of how politics affects them and their families.

Many young people suggested politics is important for their personal future, the future of the society they live in, and for the future of the world. Young people shared examples of how politics impacts the climate, the global economy, and international relations.

Some young people gave responses which indicated a positive attitude towards politics. These young people highlighted a sense of hope and optimism that by participating in politics they could contribute towards positive changes in their lives and their wider communities.

However, other young people indicated they feel scared or fearful about the impact politics has on their lives and the lives of the people around them. Comments suggest young people feel powerless and unable to influence decisions, or that they see the impact politics has on people in their lives which sometimes worries them.

"Politics changes lives: it influences how businesses work, workers' rights and thus our standards of living, how we get about, our schooling, our career prospects, our health. You name it, politics is part of it."

– young man, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"It changes the way I see society as a whole because political changes can change those around me"

- young woman, aged 16-17, West Scotland.

"Politics is everything, it is about who gets what, when, where and how. Even if people don't realise it, politics affects everything in their lives, from what they learn in school to when the bins get collected."

– young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

"Politics for me means having a choice to decide my future and the world I will grow up in"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Central Scotland.

"Politics means a lot to me, my peers and my community as a whole. Decisions taken within politics can shape public services and policy that affects us every day!"

– young man, aged 16-17, Mid Scotland and Fife.

"For me, politics is an integral part of life. It determines whether I, my friends, loved ones, and family will be alive tomorrow. It affects all areas of life and relationships with people. Therefore, politics is literally life for me. To be honest, I would like to be less immersed in the news and be more free, but unfortunately, as a Ukrainian, this is not likely to happen anytime soon."

– young woman, aged 18-25, North East Scotland.

Lots of young people see politics as adults in positions of power making decisions that lead to changes.

Many young people who responded to the survey used words such as 'politicians', 'members of parliament', 'governments', 'adults', and 'older people' to describe what politics means to them. Young people also used words relating to power, such as 'important people', 'leaders' and 'people in charge'. This suggests some young people view politics as something in which adults in positions of power make decisions which affect other people's lives.

Although some positive responses were given in relation to this theme, most of the responses suggest young people feel the power imbalance between adults who make decisions and young people and wider society has a negative impact. This appears to have given some young people a negative view of politics and politicians overall.

Notably, a lot of the comments within this theme came from younger young people, particularly those aged between 11 and 15, and from girls and young women.

"It means the way our or other politicians represent themselves and impact our country. We hear about politicians who do things that they shouldn't being a representation of their country and maybe not making the best choices on important issues that affect us or another group of people. What it should mean is a group of highly trained and competent individuals with good morals running our country in the most efficient and best way possible with our decisions being represented."

- young woman, aged 11-15, West Scotland.

"A small group of older people decide what is 'right' for the country even though us children are the ones that will grow up in that world that they did not create."

- young woman, aged 11-15, Lothian.

"People that have a lot of power"

- young man, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"It's about the decisions that people with power make, how they can be held accountable and who their decisions benefit"

- young man, aged 16-17, Lothian.

"It means people in power creating this world and although they all try to create good it ends up all being about their party which ruins it all"

- young woman, aged 16-17, South Scotland.

Young people think it is important to know what is going on in the world

Some young people suggested it is important for young people to be aware of what is happening in the UK and across the world because of the impact on individuals and on society.

Others told us they think it is important to learn about injustices and how they can get involved in influencing decisions and making change.

“I love learning about politics because it’s important to learn about injustices and what I can do to help. I boycott and donate to help people struggling around the world.”

- young woman, aged 11-15, Lothian.

“I find it means a lot to me since I am a very future-focused person and when the government or local council make a decision that will affect my future or chances at a good life negatively, it means a lot to me and I research the changes until I fully understand.”

- young woman, aged 16-17, North East.

“I think it is so important that everyone is aware of the politics in the country as it affects everyone and the more involved you are the more likely your voice will be heard”

- young woman, aged 16-17, Central Scotland.

“Any issues decided on by politicians effects my everyday life, so I feel like I should know what is going on.”

- young woman, aged 18-25, Highlands and Islands.

“Politics is very important to me as it is what drives the world and I want to stay as up to date as possible with what is happening especially in the UK.”

- young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

Some young people see politics as a route to having their views heard and to influence decisions

Many of the responses to this question focused on having a voice and being able to inform decision-making. Young people shared examples of a range of formal and informal ways to have their views heard and to influence decisions. Examples of formal political engagement focused primarily on voting, whereas examples of informal political engagement included participation in protests and

boycotts; joining organisations and groups such as the Scottish Youth Parliament or trade unions; volunteering in the community; and fundraising or donating to charity.

Most of the young people whose comments fit within this theme were aged between 16 and 25.

"I love politics, I think it's great that I can have a voice in how my country is ran. I like having parties that I can vote for and mostly trust that aligns with my views."

– young man, aged 11-15, Central Scotland.

"Getting the opportunity to voice your political opinions and vote on decisions that affect you and the country you live in."

– young woman, aged 16-17, South Scotland.

"Politics to me means having a view and being able to share it and understand and receive other people's views to widen the accessibility and involvement for my local area and community"

– young man, aged 16-17, West Scotland.

"It is really important to use our voice to speak out for what is right, and politics are a great way to communicate our chosen morals and leaders."

– young woman, aged 18-25, West Scotland.

"Having my voice heard" – non-binary young person, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

"It means my right and ability to have a say in the world, state, neighbourhood, and community I live in. I believe in democracy and the way it lets me, and the humans I share this world with, shape our reality. It is the basis of everything we know, do, believe is right and wrong. Politics is power, and with power the people should have a say in how it is wielded."

– young woman, aged 18-25, Lothian.

Some young people feel scared or worried about the power politics has over their rights and their lives

Young people suggested they see a lot of hatred, discrimination, and 'othering' in politics, which makes them feel scared or worried about the impact this will have on their lives. Young people gave examples of feeling excluded from debate around issues such as gender, sexuality, race, and disability, and that decisions are made without

including people with lived and living experiences of these issues. Some young people feel their rights are not being respected or upheld as a result.

Most of the young people who made comments relating to this theme were young women, particularly those aged between 18 and 25.

"I get quite scared about politics" – young woman, aged 11-15, Central Scotland.

"I wish it was about what's best for everyone but it's just racism right now."

– young man, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"It's the thing that can decide whether me, my friends, and my family can live peacefully and without hassle or not" - young woman, aged 16-17, South Scotland.

"I find politics to be scary, as a disabled woman I feel as though decisions are made without the best in mind"

– young woman, aged 18-25, Highlands and Islands.

"It means a lot to me as a human being, politics encompasses the rights that we are given as people, and in some categories, my rights are easy for people to vote against and take away. For example, I have female reproductive organs, and my reproductive rights can be easily taken away by people who have no idea what it is like to live with these organs. I'm also LGBT+, again, these rights can be taken away at any moment, often by people who are not part of that community, and have no idea about the lives we lead. Even outside of those, for communities I'm not a part of, I can see how easily their rights can be removed, or changed, and it's not fair to just sit and watch as these things happen. Politics is ingrained in everyone's lives, even if they can't see it or are too privileged to have thought about that."

– young woman, aged 18-25, North East Scotland.

"Well considering the fact I'm both queer and neurodivergent, and the politicians with any power in this country are trying to make life difficult for me and others like me, it's an unavoidable part of my life that I have to deal with every single day against my will."

– young woman, aged 18-25, Central Scotland.

Some young people highlighted political systems, processes, or institutions

Some young people expressed a general interest in how political systems, processes, or institutions operate, while others raised concerns about perceived 'failings' within these systems, processes, and/or institutions. These concerns tended to be raised by older young people.

Additionally, the young people who reviewed the findings from this research in our data interrogation focus group felt young people are more aware of American politics than what's happening in the UK. This came out strongly in the survey results, where we saw more reference to specific US politicians, policies, and institutions than to those from Scotland or the UK. When they were asked why this might be the case, focus group participants

suggested American politics seems simpler than UK politics, and that there are lots of different roles in UK and Scottish politics and they don't know who's who, whereas the US President and Vice President are more prominent. They felt UK politics is more transparent but the process for creating legislation seems more complicated than in the US.

During the focus group discussion, young people said they regularly see social media posts about politics from the USA. One participant said they watch Tik Toks about US politics when they're upset because they think it is funny, and they reflected this might be why young people are more attracted to US politics. However, all the participants said they find this worrying because it detracts or distracts from serious issues.

"Politics is the process by which groups make collective decisions, typically involving the governance of a country or community. It includes the activities of governments, politicians, and citizens aimed at influencing laws, policies, and leadership. At its core, politics is about the distribution of power and resources within a society."

– young woman, aged 11-15, North East Scotland.

"I am more interested in how institutions function rather than party politics. I find democratic processes very interesting and I know the impact they can have on people."

– young man, aged 18-25, West Scotland.

"It is a broken cumbersome system that needs massive overhaul and I wish I knew how to help bring the change it needs. There is too much fake news if you want an alternative and too much tedious waffle if you go to source that dictates you accept the way our current (broken) society functions. It needs to be more openminded"

– young woman, aged 18-25, Highlands and Islands.

"Politics feels like a broken system in our world today; people often talk about having to choose between 'the better of several evils'. It is the way decisions are made for countries/areas, so it's very important, but it feels very draining."

– young woman, aged 18-25, Lothian.

"Politics is the abstraction of the systems in place to produce decisions. Despite or perhaps due to the systematisation of power to a parliamentary structure in the UK. I think politics means little to me and yet has a profound impact on my life as decisions that I cannot influence in London will have repercussions for me."

– young man, aged 18-25, Lothian.

Some young people don't feel they know enough about politics

Most of the young people who said they don't feel they know enough about politics were aged between 11 and 15. They said they don't understand how politics works, how it affects their lives, or how to get involved.

Despite not feeling they know enough about politics, some young people recognised politics is important and has an impact on their lives and they want to be more involved in politics because of this.

"I'm not sure, things that clearly have been brought up and need to be changed but I don't know if just a policy does that"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Central Scotland.

"I don't really get involved in politics as I'm not the best when it comes to that stuff, but I see the way the decisions of leaders affect my peers therefore I want to be more involved."

– young woman, aged 11-15, Mid Scotland and Fife.

"That it controls our lives, but we don't understand it"

– young woman, aged 11-15, South Scotland.

"I don't know much about politics it's not very well taught. Yea I hear good thing about politics, but I hear a lot of really bad things about it including on corruption!"

– young woman, aged 16-17, West Scotland.

"Don't know much about it"

– young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

Some young people think they can't get involved until they're old enough to vote

All respondents who said they can't get involved in politics until they're old enough to vote were younger young people aged between 11 and 15. Young people suggested politics is something you can get involved in through voting, and therefore that politics is for adults.

This suggests some young people are not aware of other opportunities to get involved in politics at a younger age.

"For me politics is big decisions and debates that impacts everyone in a country, you can get involved with politics once you are old enough to vote."

– young woman, aged 11-15, Mid Scotland and Fife.

"It means when you get older you can vote"

– young man, aged 11-15, Highlands and Islands.

"Voting eventually on who leads the country and who makes laws that affect our life"

– young man, aged 11-15, Highlands and Islands.

Some young people don't think politics affects them

Most young people who suggested politics doesn't affect them were younger young people aged between 11 and 15. Responses were based around

a lack of knowledge or interest in politics, or the perception that politics is for adults.

"I don't really know, I don't think it affects me at all."

– young woman, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"It doesn't mean much as it hasn't really impacted my life"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"Not much really, it's for adults"

– young man, aged 11-15, Lothian.

"Nothing really, not really interested in politics"

– young man, aged 18-25, Lothian.

What would help you feel more confident talking about or getting involved in politics? Would it help to have better information, support, learning from others, or something else?

Key findings:

- Young people want support to make informed decisions and want to be meaningfully involved in decisions affecting their lives.
- Young people want to learn and understand more about politics from a younger age.
- Young people want to see action to challenge misinformation, hate and polarisation in politics.

Survey respondents were given an open text box to respond to this question. Responses were sorted by theme, as discussed in this section.

Clearer, accessible, and reliable information about politics which is specifically targeted at young people

Young people would like more information about politics which is reliable, easy to find, and easy to understand. Many of the young people who responded to this survey suggested there should be targeted adverts or websites which explain what politics is, what different political parties believe in, and how young people can get involved in formal and informal politics. Some young people suggested news sources should have a recognisable system for verifying the information they share.

“More widely available information would be great as information can be hard to find and often vague, particularly when it comes to direct involvement with politicians like surgeries as compared to less direct involvement such as signing petitions”

– young woman, aged 11-15, West Scotland.

“I think more information on where to access information you can trust would help a lot of people including me feel more comfortable getting involved in politics and talking about it.”

– young man, aged 11-15, North East Scotland.

“Maybe more information. I wouldn’t know where to start with politics.”

– young woman, aged 16-17, Central Scotland.

“Better information as well as learning from others. Learning many different perspectives is important as well so a well-rounded knowledge is had in order to make better judgements”

– young woman, aged 18-25, Highlands and Islands.

“In a time where so much fake information is being widely believed, I think if more news sources had a better verifying system more people would be involved in politics.”

– young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

Standardised political and citizenship education from a young age

Many young people who responded to the survey would like to learn about politics at school, college, and university, and some suggested this should be taught from a young age. Young people suggested political education should include how to get involved in formal and informal politics; what voting means and how to vote; what different political parties stand for; how to identify trustworthy information; and information about other organisations that represent young people, such as the Scottish Youth Parliament and local youth voice mechanisms.

A small number of young people suggested teachers and other educators are scared to teach about politics because it is 'too sensitive'. This suggests there should be clearer guidance and resources to help teachers and other educators to talk to young people about politics in an accessible and unbiased way.

"Getting taught more in school about Scottish politics and having resources that are unbiased and truthful online"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"Having more involvement in a school environment."

– young man, aged 11-15, Central Scotland.

"Making Politics mandatory in schools from S1-S3."

– young woman, aged 16-17, Lothian.

"I'm fairly confident about it already as I'm an MSYP, but it would be great to have SYP brought up more in schools maybe even mentioned as part of democracy education in Modern Studies so that other young people can realise there are people that understand and listen to them, when MP's and MSP's feel so distant."

– young woman, aged 16-17, North East Scotland.

"More information in schools and universities how to actively become involved in external political groups."

– young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

"A lot of information isn't discussed in an educational setting because it's deemed too sensitive but I think that those topics shouldn't be avoided."

– young woman, aged 18-25, Highlands and Islands.

Support to make informed decisions and to participate in politics

Some young people told us that having better information about politics would support them to make informed decisions about their political engagement and would help them to understand how to participate in politics.

Young people suggested local youth voice projects and activities for young people would support them to understand politics and to get involved from an earlier age.

“Better information would be amazing, I know a lot about politics but it’s hard to make an informed decision for many people when the information is either fake or distorted”

– young woman, aged 11-15, Highlands and Islands.

“It would help to get informed more about political action I can take.”

– young man, aged 16-17, Central Scotland.

“Judgement-free, and non-biased support and information so that people are able to learn and make their own informed decisions.”

– young woman, aged 18-25, Lothian.

“Better information from my local council. Support for young people to make a resource about how to get into politics like a youth participation project, learning from peers about how to get into politics.”

– young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

Action to challenge misinformation, hate and polarisation in politics

Many young people felt politics is divisive, and action to challenge misinformation, hate, and polarisation would help them feel more confident getting involved in politics, although some young

people suggested they have a negative view of politics and never want to be involved in or talk about politics as a result.

"If people weren't so full of hate and the stuff like sexism, racism that type of stuff maybe politics would be the slightest bit better, but I will always hate politics I never want to hear anything about them."

– young woman, aged 11-15, North East Scotland.

"Division is rife right now, and far too often are we stuck in meaningless arguments that descend into threats and that can't be allowed. Better debate is a start, because it feels like two immovable objects just bashing off each other until they both disintegrate - it's a doom spiral."

– young man, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"Politics itself being less divisive and toxic is probably the biggest help, but general learning and information about things like voting, how to hold representatives accountable."

– young man, aged 16-17, Lothian.

"Less toxicity/negativity. We all want what's best for our country, why can't we all just acknowledge that and go from there rather than fighting about it?"

– young man, aged 18-25, Highlands and Islands.

"In a time where so much fake information is being widely believed, I think if more news sources had a better verifying system more people would be involved in politics."

– young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow

Decision makers should meaningfully involve more young people in politics

Young people want to be meaningfully involved in politics and in decisions that affect their lives. Survey respondents suggested they should be asked for their opinions, and that there should be more support for young people to take part in formal and informal politics locally and nationally.

Some young people suggested decision-makers should receive training on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and on how to involve young people in their work, to ensure young people's participation is meaningful and not tokenistic.

"If we got asked for our opinions, I think that we would be more involved and if there was fun activities we could do at school."

– young man, aged 11-15, North East Scotland.

"Children actually having a say in politics, not all children are immature and some actually have good ideas."

– young person, aged 11-15, Lothian.

"All decision-makers having genuine involvement from young people. At the moment, involvement is often infrequent and irregular. When we are used it often feels like a tick box exercise. Rather than having more support or information for young people, I would like to see decision-makers given training on how to genuinely uphold the UNCRC"

– young man, aged 18-25, North East Scotland.

"I think local government, and national government has repeatedly let young people down and failed to enact meaningful change that young people need and have repeatedly advocated for. Youth Voice has been a tokenistic afterthought, and whenever broad consultations are done, they're never youth friendly - adults/authorities never close the feedback loop nor demonstrate how they've used our voice to inform decisions and then they wonder why young people have no faith in the system or desire to engage.

In short - they need to do better and actually make an effort to work with us!"

Nothing should be decided about us without us."

– young man, aged 18-25, Mid Scotland and Fife.

Seeing other young people participating and influencing politics

Some young people suggested seeing other young people participating in politics and seeing the impact other young people have made on politics would help them feel more confident talking about or getting involved in politics.

“More young people involved”

– young woman, aged 11-15, North East Scotland.

“Seeing other young people online interested”

– young woman, aged 16-17, Lothian.

“Seeing examples of where the public have had an impact in politics would make me more confidence in my ability to get involved”

– young woman, aged 18-25, North East Scotland.

Where do you usually find out about what's going on in the world?

Key findings:

- Over three-quarters of young people use social media every day or a few times a week to find out about what's going on in the world.
- Less than a third of young people find out what's going on in the world every day or a few times a week from trusted adults such as teachers or youth workers.

Young people who responded to the survey were given a list of information sources and were asked to select how often they use each of these sources to find out about what is going on in the world.

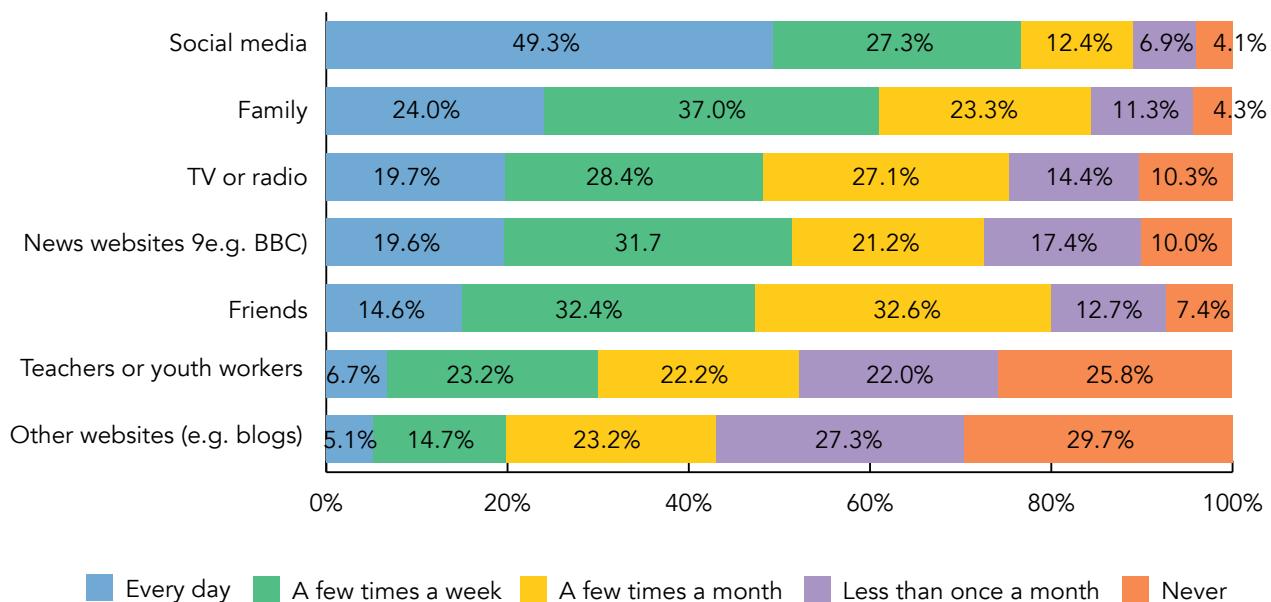
As shown in the graph below, social media is the most popular information source used by young people, with half (49.3%) of all survey respondents saying they use social media every day, and a further quarter (27.3%) saying they use social media a few times a week to find out about what is going on in the world.

On the other hand, less than a third of young people said they find out what's going on in the world every day (6.7%) or a few times a week (23.2%) from trusted adults such as teachers or youth workers.

The young people who reviewed these findings were not surprised by the results, but they were worried that so many young people are using social media so regularly to find out what's going on in the world. They highlighted concerns such as algorithms, AI, and fake news, but they also said it can be hard to find information about politics and other world issues because reliable news outlets share headlines but don't give detailed information in their social media posts. These young people wondered if this is because news outlets don't think young people care about important things that are happening in the world.

When sorted by gender, the responses show there are very few differences between where girls and young women and boys and young men find out about what's going on in the world. However:

- A higher proportion of boys and young men responded that they use news websites every day (25.7%) than girls and young women do (15.2%).
- Slightly more boys and young men use TV or radio every day (21.5%) when compared with girls and young women (18.1%).
- Slightly more young women find out about what's going on in the world every day from family (26.1%) than young men do (22.4%).



There are more differences in the results when sorted by age:

- Fewer 11-15-year-olds find out what's going on in the world from social media every day or a few times a week than young people aged between 16 and 25. The young people who reviewed these findings suggested this might be because younger young people might have less access to smartphones or might have more parental restrictions on their devices and access to online spaces.
- Only 10.8% of 11-15-year-olds use news websites to find out what's going on in the world every day, compared with 30.0% of 16-17-year-olds and 24.8% of 18-25-year-olds. More 16-17-year-olds use news websites a few times a week (35.8%) than younger or older young people.
- Older young people (aged 18-25) tend to find out what's going on in the world from family less regularly than younger young people, but are slightly more likely than younger young people to find out what's going on in the world from friends.

Please let us know which social media accounts, news channels, or other sources you use to find out what's going on in the world

Key findings:

- Most young people use mainstream news sources and social media platforms to find out what's going on in the world.

Survey respondents were given an open text box to respond to this question. Responses were sorted by theme, as discussed in this section.

Mainstream news sources

BBC News was mentioned by 185 respondents, making it by far the most frequently mentioned across all sources of information.

Other mainstream news sources included:

- ITV / STV News (33 mentions)
- The Guardian (23 mentions)
- Sky News (22 mentions)
- CNN (10 mentions)
- Al Jazeera (6 mentions)
- Channel 4 News (4 mentions)
- Reuters (4 mentions)
- Other mainstream news sources mentioned at least once included: Financial Times, The Times, The Independent, New York Times, Daily Mail, The Sun, Metro, The Scotsman, and The National.

Twelve young people said they listen to the radio. Most of these respondents said they listen to BBC radio stations, although a small number mentioned local radio stations. Additionally, four young people said they listen to podcasts.

Eleven young people specifically mentioned they watch Newsround or read the Newsround website to find out what's going on in the world.

“I use BBC most of the time and I also talk to my friends about the news as we have all often heard different parts of the same stories.”

– young man, aged 11-15, Lothian.

“I usually use the BBC and the guardian, and my family and I like to discuss articles through WhatsApp (when we can't talk in person of course) so I suppose you could say I use a little bit of social media”

– young woman, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

“BBC news is my main source, I like to have a read of their website every morning but I also follow them on Instagram. Since I often look at their account and like their posts, they are usually the first posts to pop up when I open the app, which keeps me well updated.”

– young woman, aged 16-17, North East Scotland.

“I personally watch the BBC News every night so that I can stay on top of political and economic events”

– young man, aged 16-17, West Scotland.

Social media platforms

Many respondents use social media platforms to find out what's going on in the world.

TikTok was mentioned by 104 respondents, making it the most mentioned social media platform, followed by Instagram (77 mentions) and YouTube (37 mentions).

23 young people mentioned X (Twitter), although the majority of these referred to it as Twitter rather than X.

Snapchat (7 mentions), LinkedIn (4 mentions), Reddit (3 mentions), Pinterest (3 mentions), and Bluesky (2 mentions) were mentioned by small numbers of respondents. Two young people said they use Wikimedia sources.

"TikTok accounts of the BBC, STV etc. Short snappy videos help me understand what's going on rather than reading it."

– young woman, aged 11-15, Highlands and Islands.

"TikTok especially certain accounts that read if the news so that it's faster and not as boring as the news eg "everything that's happened in the world today" or this month or week or something or its videos about stuff like the Southport incident and things in the USA especially trump"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Central Scotland.

"In terms of social media, I don't really follow any news accounts, but big world events pop up on my page due to the algorithm usually from the BBC, sky news etc."

– young man, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

Social media influencers and content creators

A small number of respondents named specific social media influencers and content creators, including:

- Dylan Page (7 mentions)
- Simple Politics (3 mentions)
- News Daddy (2 mentions)
- ASB (2 mentions)

The Scottish Youth Parliament (@OfficialSYP) was mentioned by two respondents, while Young Scot was mentioned by one respondent. Four young people said they follow official Scottish and/or UK Government channels on social media.

Friends and family

A small number of respondents said they find out what's going on in the world from friends (5 mentions), family members (4 mentions), teachers or at school (4 mentions). Only one of these young people mentioned Modern Studies classes.

Avoidance of news

A small number of young people said they avoid reading or listening to the news, or actively seek out positive news sources, primarily because of concerns for their wellbeing.

"I purposely try to avoid most news, basically everything, it's all sad ...and it really affects my mental health. Why live in a world where EVERYTHING is bad, when no matter where you look, you can't find a happy story, so I avoid it. So, I know very little is going on in the big, wide world. However, recently I have loved getting the 'Positive News' ... it sends only positive news... I do talk to friends and family which sometimes means that I check the BBC to better understand what they are talking about, otherwise I don't really engage."

– young person, aged 11-15, Highlands and Islands.

"I don't use social media, it's too much negative energy.

Same goes with reading the news."

– young man, aged 18-25, Highlands and Islands.

If you've ever seen or shared news or information online that turned out to be fake or misleading, what was it, how did it make you feel?

Key findings:

- Young people who have seen or shared news or information online that turned out to be fake or misleading report feeling annoyed, confused, embarrassed, guilty, and betrayed.

Survey respondents were given an open text box to respond to this question. Responses were sorted by theme, as discussed in this section.

Young people who have seen or shared news or information online that turned out to be fake or misleading report feeling annoyed, confused, embarrassed, guilty, and betrayed.

"It feels horrible realising media that I've consumed online is fake, I wonder how many others have fell for the same post and have changed their perspective and thoughts on empty news makes you feel like a fool as well"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"Annoyed that it was fake"

– young man, aged 11-15, North East Scotland.

"It had me feeling worried that there is a possibility that other pieces of news I may have seen might be fake causing me to be on edge"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"It would make me feel like I couldn't trust that source in a whole anymore"

– young man, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"I can't exactly remember the shared news that turned out to be fake but I remember feeling betrayed because I felt as though my trust had been broken."

– young woman, aged 16-17, West Scotland.

"It's sad to give out fake news to scare people or make them sad"

– young man, aged 16-17, North East Scotland

Some young people said they rarely or have never seen or shared news or information online that turned out to be fake or misleading

"That's so far never happened to me or is oblivious to me at this current moment."

– young woman, aged 11-15, Glasgow.

"I have never seen or shared information that was fake or misleading online."

– young man, aged 18-25, West Scotland.

"I rarely have seen fake or misleading news on social media. I am careful about what news sources I trust and only follow a selected few"

– young man, aged 18-25, North East Scotland.

Some young people try to fact check information

"If I see something on social media, I go online to find more reliable sources to check if it is correct"

– non-binary young person, aged 18-25, Glasgow.

"I don't think I have shared fake news as I always cite my sources and cross reference. If I spread misinformation, I would feel sick since there are enough bad faith actors in the political and internet space. I have seen fake information constantly, and it annoys me."

– young man, aged 18-25

"SO much news tends to be misleading or fake even in nature, so it's always important to fact check it and if its misleading or fake not spread it on the internet, or correct people who talk to you about it if they're misinformed. It often makes me feel angry since misleading news is typically dramatized and is used to inflame people on their sides of a political topic."

– young woman, aged 18-25, Lothian.

Some young people worry about other people seeing fake or misleading information online

"I can normally tell when it's fake based on how shocking it is, but I think that it's a concern for older people or people who are more likely to believe it and be misled."

I think it can strike some controversy and it's bad how people think it's okay to say things or make things up for people to believe"

– young woman, aged 11-15, Central Scotland.

"I see so much AI generated fake news and it really annoys me because people spread it for views and likes, but some people do believe it to be real when they see it and that can be really harmful and dangerous!"

– young woman, aged 16-17, North East Scotland.

"I saw an AI made video of presidents in the world being used to promote cruel things that aren't actually happening. Since this video was extremely realistic, it made me scared that one day, people might get fooled by these fake videos and cause actual threat and violence in the real world."

– young woman, aged 16-17, Lothian.

"I see a lot of scientific misinformation online, especially around vaccines, 'wellness' products etc. I have a scientific background and to me it is obviously fake, misleading and fear mongering, but it makes me angry to see how these posts influence other people into believing it."

– young woman, aged 18-25, Lothian.

Some young people never share posts they see online because they worry they will get into trouble or because they don't trust their sources

"I never share information just in case it is false and I end up in that situation"

– young woman, aged 11-15, North East Scotland.

"I rarely share things, but I think you have to become suspicious of practically everything to some degree, regardless of where you see it or where it comes from, from a random twitter account to the BBC or politicians themselves"

– young man, aged 18-25, Central Scotland.

Some young people feel less engaged with the news and what is going on in the world because they don't know what they can trust

"I've seen so much fake and misleading news online; I see a lot of apparent quotes from famous people showing that they are saying something bad but then you find out the context of what they were saying, sometimes it's that they are mocking that bad statement but an article has used it as a clickbait headline to make you think that is what that person believes. In general it makes it hard to look at the news sometimes, mainly on social media, as it's a struggle to have to think of everything critically, when there are some things which should not be lied about."

– young woman, aged 18-25, North East Scotland.

"It's very frustrating to have to constantly wonder if something I'm seeing is manipulated or edited, and even just plain untrue. It makes me less bothered about real news and that annoys me that I feel like that."

– young woman, aged 18-25, Lothian.

"I've never shared that kind of news online (I hardly ever post anything at all), but I chatted with family about the taxes on farmers (and in general) months ago and it turned out my understanding and information were wrong, there was a similar situation trying to understand the cuts in benefits (especially for old and disabled people) and of course that's very embarrassing. I also often avoid talking about news and politics out of a fear of seeming not smart or misinformed."

– young woman, aged 18-25, North East Scotland.

Practitioner Roundtable

This section outlines the themes from the group discussions at the practitioner roundtable on 10th December 2025.

The roundtable focused on four questions:

- What findings from our recent research surprised or resonated with participants.
- What effective political and information literacy should look like in practice.
- What initiatives organisations are currently delivering.
- What collective actions could strengthen this work.

The responses show the challenges and opportunities to helping young people deal with a complex information environment, take part in democracy with confidence, and find trusted sources of information.

What findings from our recent research surprised or resonated with participants

Participants were struck by the lack of reference to libraries in the survey findings, despite their potential as trusted spaces for information. The dominance of online platforms for political engagement was another surprise, highlighting the need for physical spaces for young people and trusted adults to come together.

Other themes from the discussion highlighted curiosity about single-issue voters; the influence of American political culture on young people's perception of politics; hesitancy among teachers and youth workers to discuss politics; and the lack of accountability demanded from social media platforms.

Gendered differences were noted, with boys and young men appearing more confident in politics, while girls and young women appearing to be more interested in issues but less confident, with social media having an impact on their participation. Representatives from organisations at the event noted their own research suggested some LGBTQ+ young people have expressed mistrust of systems and governments, fearing the weaponisation of information.

What effective political and information literacy should look like for young people in practice

The group agreed that political and information literacy should be embedded across formal and non-formal education and delivered in engaging and creative ways.

Partnerships like The Ferret and Young Scot training librarians on misinformation were seen as positive examples, alongside Young Scot's work promoting critical information literacy and curiosity. Libraries were also highlighted as important, and should play an enhanced role as trusted spaces. Adults need confidence and skills to fact-check and challenge polarising views respectfully, while young people should be supported to develop AI literacy and healthy scepticism. A recognisable, trusted brand for political information was suggested, alongside continuous learning for young people and practitioners.

What initiatives organisations are currently delivering

Organisations shared a wide range of work already taking place on young people's information and political literacy. For example:

- Ofcom is planning a pre-election campaign on misinformation.
- SLIC is funding projects in public libraries and offering professional development.
- Youth Scotland is looking at tools to build capacity for youth workers.
- Napier University is researching school libraries and launching a new MSc in information science.
- The Young Women's Movement and LGBT Youth Scotland are leading campaigns and manifesto work.
- The Scottish Youth Film Foundation is involving young people in reporting on misinformation ahead of the Scottish Parliament election in May 2026.
- Carers Trust Scotland is finalising its manifesto and carrying out peer research on healthy transitions, alongside a campaign for carer ID cards.

What collective actions could strengthen this work

The group agreed that practitioners need spaces to share knowledge.

Key priorities include creating a central hub of trusted resources on the Young Scot website; raising awareness of European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) quality standards; and doing more research into gender differences in approaching information and democracy.

A joint campaign on information literacy was suggested, along with linking organisations to libraries and giving youth workers the ability to develop skills on mis/disinformation and information literacy.

Other ideas included looking at a possible legal challenge on disinformation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Building stronger partnerships, networks and ways to share learning is vital to challenge this growing issue.

Conclusion

This report is a starting point – a snapshot of the voices, experiences, and ideas shared by young people and stakeholders across Scotland. It highlights both the opportunities and challenges in strengthening young people's political and information literacy, respecting and upholding young people's human rights, and ensuring young people's meaningful participation in democratic life.

We invite you to reflect on these findings, share them within your networks, and consider how you can support and implement the recommendations outlined in this report.

Together, we can create a Scotland where young people feel respected, informed, confident, and able to shape decisions that affect their lives.

Demographics

This section outlines a summary of the survey respondent demographics. Demographics data was gathered at the end of the online survey, and these questions were optional for participants to respond to.

Due to the nature of the focus groups and stalls, participant demographics data was not collected at these events.

Age

Three quarters of survey respondents are aged between 12 and 17, with the remaining respondents being aged between 18 and 25. Only one 11-year-old young person took part in this survey.

Age	Number	Percentage
11	1	0.2%
12	57	13.8%
13	36	8.7%
14	42	10.2%
15	50	12.1%
16	68	16.5%
17	53	12.8%
18	35	8.5%
19	12	2.9%
20	11	2.7%
21	16	3.9%
22	9	2.2%
23	8	1.9%
24	9	2.2%
25	6	1.5%

Gender

Three-fifths of survey respondents identify as female, while one third identify as male. A very small number of respondents identify as non-binary or in another way.

	Number	Percentage
Female	251	59.5%
Male	144	34.1%
Non-binary	5	1.2%
In another way	5	1.2%
I prefer not to say	17	4.0%

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

Participants were asked to provide their postcode. All postcodes were entered into the 'Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020v2 postcode lookup file'¹ to identify the relative deprivation of the areas in which participants live. 257 survey respondents gave a valid postcode.

Decile / quintile 1 represents the most deprived areas of Scotland. Decile 10 / quintile 5 represent the least deprived areas of Scotland.

Survey respondents are fairly evenly spread across all five SIMD quintiles, although fewer are in Quintile 2, and more are in Quintile 4. One fifth of all survey respondents live in the most deprived areas of Scotland, and the same number live in the least deprived areas of Scotland.

SIMD Decile / Quintile	SIMD Decile		SIMD Quintile	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	24	9.3%	53	20.6%
2	29	11.3%	34	13.2%
3	16	6.2%	47	18.3%
4	18	7.0%	71	27.6%
5	27	10.5%	52	20.2%
6	20	7.8%		
7	32	12.5%		
8	39	15.2%		
9	31	12.1%		
10	21	8.2%		

¹Scottish Government (2020) Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020v2 postcode lookup file. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020v2-postcode-look-up/>.

Geographical Location

Participants were asked to provide their postcode, which was used to identify the local authority in which they live.

Young people from every local authority in Scotland took part in this survey, although

significantly more responses were received from some local authorities than others. The highest number of responses were received from Glasgow and City of Edinburgh, followed by Aberdeenshire, Highlands, and West Lothian.

	Number	Percentage
Aberdeen City	9	2.2%
Aberdeenshire	28	6.8%
Angus	10	2.4%
Argyll and Bute	2	0.5%
City of Edinburgh	54	13.2%
Clackmannanshire	4	1.0%
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	2	0.5%
Dumfries and Galloway	13	3.2%
Dundee City	6	1.5%
East Ayrshire	3	0.7%
East Dunbartonshire	14	3.4%
East Lothian	12	2.9%
East Renfrewshire	8	2.0%
Falkirk	11	2.7%
Fife	17	4.2%
Glasgow	65	15.9%
Highlands	26	6.4%
Inverclyde	2	0.5%
Midlothian	7	1.7%
Moray	4	1.0%
North Ayrshire	7	1.7%
North Lanarkshire	15	3.7%
Orkney	5	1.2%
Perth and Kinross	5	1.2%
Renfrewshire	11	2.7%
Scottish Borders	10	2.4%
Shetland Islands	2	0.5%
South Ayrshire	9	2.2%
South Lanarkshire	19	4.6%
Stirling	4	1.0%
West Dunbartonshire	3	0.7%
West Lothian	22	5.4%

To calculate the urban/rural classification of participants' postcodes, all postcodes were entered into the 'Urban rural classification postcode lookup' file². The urban/rural classifications used in the table below are based on Scottish Government data published in May 2022.

261 survey respondents gave a valid postcode. Of these, around one third live in large urban areas, and a similar number lived in other urban areas. Just under one quarter live in accessible, remote, or very remote rural areas, and 9.1% live in accessible, remote, or very remote small towns.

	Number	Percentage
1 - Large Urban Areas	96	36.8%
2 - Other Urban Areas	83	31.8%
3 - Accessible Small Towns	18	6.9%
4 - Remote Small Towns	3	1.1%
5 - Very Remote Small Towns	3	1.1%
6 - Accessible Rural Areas	35	13.4%
7 - Remote Rural Areas	9	3.4%
8 - Very Remote Rural Areas	14	5.4%

²University of Dundee (2022) Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification Postcode Lookup.

Available at: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-postcode-lookup>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Qualitative survey responses by demographics

What do you think about politics?

Responses by gender:

Note: the number of respondents who identify their gender as non-binary or in another way is too low to calculate meaningful results, and therefore these responses are not shown.

Male respondents (n = 142)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral / neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel involved in politics	21.8%	24.6%	14.1%	22.5%	16.9%
I feel comfortable talking about politics	33.8%	35.9%	10.6%	9.9%	9.9%
Politics has an impact on my life	45.8%	22.5%	16.2%	7.7%	7.7%
It is important for young people to be involved in politics	43.0%	38.7%	9.9%	4.2%	4.2%
I know how to get involved in politics	16.2%	34.5%	15.5%	18.3%	15.5%
I want to be more involved in politics	27.5%	21.8%	23.2%	19.0%	8.5%
I know where to find information about politics that I can trust	29.6%	35.9%	12.0%	11.3%	11.3%
It is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics	18.3%	32.4%	21.8%	19.7%	7.7%
I can make a difference in local or national decisions	14.1%	26.1%	26.1%	18.3%	15.5%

Female respondents (n = 248)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral / neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel involved in politics	19.0%	28.2%	18.1%	27.0%	7.7%
I feel comfortable talking about politics	29.8%	33.9%	16.9%	15.7%	3.6%
Politics has an impact on my life	44.0%	27.8%	16.9%	9.3%	2.0%
It is important for young people to be involved in politics	52.4%	30.6%	12.1%	3.6%	1.2%
I know how to get involved in politics	13.0%	32.4%	15.8%	27.1%	11.7%
I want to be more involved in politics	24.6%	27.8%	20.6%	19.4%	7.7%
I know where to find information about politics that I can trust	20.2%	35.9%	16.5%	21.0%	6.5%
It is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics	22.6%	43.1%	18.5%	12.1%	3.6%
I can make a difference in local or national decisions	12.6%	27.9%	25.1%	25.5%	8.9%

Responses by age:

11-15-year-old respondents (n = 183)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral / neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel involved in politics	13.7%	21.3%	18.6%	33.3%	13.1%
I feel comfortable talking about politics	29.0%	35.0%	16.9%	13.1%	6.0%
Politics has an impact on my life	35.5%	26.8%	18.6%	13.7%	5.5%
It is important for young people to be involved in politics	39.3%	39.9%	13.7%	5.5%	1.6%
I know how to get involved in politics	6.6%	31.9%	15.9%	26.9%	18.7%
I want to be more involved in politics	24.0%	21.9%	22.4%	22.4%	9.3%
I know where to find information about politics that I can trust	17.5%	36.6%	16.4%	18.6%	10.9%
It is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics	25.1%	33.9%	23.5%	14.8%	2.7%
I can make a difference in local or national decisions	8.2%	21.9%	30.1%	23.5%	16.4%

16-17-year-old respondents (n = 120)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral / neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel involved in politics	26.7%	33.3%	13.3%	18.3%	8.3%
I feel comfortable talking about politics	36.7%	30.0%	13.3%	14.2%	5.8%
Politics has an impact on my life	50.0%	25.8%	16.7%	5.0%	2.5%
It is important for young people to be involved in politics	55.0%	28.3%	12.5%	2.5%	1.7%
I know how to get involved in politics	20.0%	34.2%	17.5%	19.2%	9.2%
I want to be more involved in politics	27.5%	28.3%	20.8%	15.8%	7.5%
I know where to find information about politics that I can trust	29.2%	37.5%	13.3%	15.8%	4.2%
It is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics	12.5%	40.0%	19.2%	20.8%	7.5%
I can make a difference in local or national decisions	14.2%	36.7%	20.8%	20.0%	8.3%

18-25-year-old respondents (n = 105)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral / neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel involved in politics	24.8%	27.6%	16.2%	21.9%	9.5%
I feel comfortable talking about politics	29.8%	34.6%	14.4%	14.4%	6.7%
Politics has an impact on my life	58.7%	26.0%	9.6%	2.9%	2.9%
It is important for young people to be involved in politics	65.4%	23.1%	6.7%	1.9%	2.9%
I know how to get involved in politics	19.2%	36.5%	12.5%	23.1%	8.7%
I want to be more involved in politics	26.0%	26.9%	22.1%	19.2%	5.8%
I know where to find information about politics that I can trust	26.9%	34.6%	14.4%	15.4%	8.7%
It is hard to know what is true or fake online when it comes to politics	24.8%	41.0%	18.1%	10.5%	5.7%
I can make a difference in local or national decisions	20.4%	28.2%	19.4%	26.2%	5.8%

Where do you usually find out about what's going on in the world?

Responses by gender:

Note: the number of respondents who identify their gender as non-binary or in another way is too low to calculate meaningful results, and therefore these responses are not shown.

Male respondents (n = 144)	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Never
Other websites (e.g. blogs)	6.3%	18.8%	18.1%	26.4%	30.6%
Teachers or youth workers	6.9%	21.5%	23.6%	20.8%	27.1%
Friends	14.0%	33.6%	32.9%	13.3%	6.3%
TV or radio	21.5%	24.3%	28.5%	14.6%	11.1%
Family	22.4%	39.2%	21.0%	12.6%	4.9%
News websites (e.g. BBC)	25.7%	28.5%	18.1%	15.3%	12.5%
Social media	52.1%	22.9%	13.2%	8.3%	3.5%

Female respondents (n = 250)	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Never
Other websites (e.g. blogs)	4.5%	13.4%	25.6%	27.2%	29.3%
Teachers or youth workers	7.2%	24.4%	22.0%	20.8%	25.6%
Friends	15.2%	35.2%	22.0%	18.0%	9.6%
TV or radio	16.4%	30.8%	33.2%	12.0%	7.6%
Family	18.1%	30.2%	26.2%	14.9%	10.5%
News websites (e.g. BBC)	26.1%	35.7%	23.7%	10.8%	3.6%
Social media	49.2%	28.6%	12.5%	6.0%	3.6%

Responses by age:

11–15-year-old respondents	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Never
(n = 186)	4.3%	11.8%	22.6%	25.8%	35.5%
Teachers or youth workers	8.6%	28.0%	24.7%	21.5%	17.2%
Friends	10.8%	30.1%	25.8%	22.0%	11.3%
TV or radio	13.0%	33.5%	29.2%	14.6%	9.7%
Family	21.5%	28.0%	27.4%	12.9%	10.2%
News websites (e.g. BBC)	25.9%	37.3%	24.3%	9.7%	2.7%
Social media	42.2%	27.0%	13.0%	11.4%	6.5%

16–17-year-old respondents (n = 120)	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Never
(n = 186)	5.0%	20.8%	25.8%	28.3%	20.0%
Teachers or youth workers	6.7%	24.2%	23.3%	25.8%	20.0%
Friends	15.8%	28.3%	36.7%	13.3%	5.8%
TV or radio	24.4%	31.1%	22.7%	14.3%	7.6%
Family	26.1%	39.5%	18.5%	10.1%	5.9%
News websites (e.g. BBC)	30.0%	35.8%	15.0%	14.2%	5.0%
Social media	51.3%	31.1%	11.8%	5.0%	0.8%

18–25-year-old respondents	Every day	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less than once a month	Never
(n = 106)	3.8%	13.3%	16.2%	20.0%	46.7%
Teachers or youth workers	6.9%	12.9%	19.8%	28.7%	31.7%
Friends	12.5%	27.9%	28.8%	17.3%	13.5%
TV or radio	17.1%	34.3%	26.7%	16.2%	5.7%
Family	18.1%	33.3%	35.2%	7.6%	5.7%
News websites (e.g. BBC)	24.8%	29.5%	20.0%	13.3%	12.4%
Social media	60.4%	21.7%	12.3%	1.9%	3.8%



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