

The Manifesto for Youth: Young people are demanding to be heard in the General Election

By Democratic Audit UK

*Young voters are very likely to turn out to vote in smaller numbers than older voters at the General Election, with party politics achieving little to no cut through with younger age groups. Despite this, there are signs of encouragement, according to **Andy Mycock**, who was involved in Huddersfield University's [Manifesto for Youth](#).*



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Since the late 1990s, research has suggested that there is now a **'disengaged generation'** of young people who are less likely to participate in traditional forms of politics, such as voting in elections or joining political parties. Young people also say they don't trust or understand politicians and that politicians don't understand or care about them. However significant numbers of young people also claim they are interested and knowledgeable about politics and recognise their duty to vote even though they view the political system with **'engaged scepticism'**. They have therefore increasingly adopted new forms of political participation, particularly in the realms of social media, which seems to be an alternative to traditional and formal political activities.

Research has highlighted that there is a need to reform how political parties engage with and represent the interests of young people, particularly those not yet old enough to vote. Political parties offer few opportunities to these young people to design policies that reflect their interests, particularly during local, national or European elections. This means that young people on the cusp of enfranchisement have scant interest in election manifestos that offer little they can relate to in terms of policy. This can instil a sense of political dislocation that can last for years. There is scant evidence that this situation has been acknowledged or addressed during the current election campaign.

In response to this damaging party political amnesia, Politics research staff and students based at the University of Huddersfield have undertaken a project with young people from West Yorkshire and Manchester to produce an manifesto of policy ideas from under-18 year-olds who cannot vote in the forthcoming General Election. **'A Manifesto for Youth'** was a project was led by me Dr Andy Mycock, Alex Coates, a 2nd year politics student, and Lammy Jones, a postgraduate student within the Centre for Research in the Social Sciences.

The research team collaborated with colleagues from the Kirklees Youth Council, the Rodillian Academy (Lofthouse, West Yorkshire), Ryburn Valley High School (Sowerby Bridge), Loreto Sixth Form College (Manchester), and Xaverian College (Manchester). 111 young people took part in the project and invested considerable time, energy, and ideas in producing the final manifesto. The project was supported by the [Political Studies Association](#).

A Manifesto for Youth was design to offer young people who are not yet old enough to vote the opportunity to propose policies that would like to see in the political party manifestos during the General Election. The eight policy proposals outlined within the Manifesto proved to be the most popular amongst our respondents. An area of particular concern was the lack of political voice that young non-voters feel they have, with many proposing a lowering of the voting age to 16 and statutory political education in schools. Economic issues were paramount too, with respondents seeking compulsory work experience in schools and the raising of the minimum wage for under 18 year-olds.

Interest in education was another key policy area, with young non-voters demanding a greater input into educational reform and a lowering of higher education tuition fees. Transport was an issue that vexed many of our respondents, with a significant number seeking the introduction of free public transport to counter rising prices that limited their freedom to travel. Finally, the young people involved in the project requested more support in schools focusing on youth mental issues.

Respondents involved in the Manifesto engaged with a wide-range of policy areas, highlighting the distinctive remit of youth citizenship and its overlap with the electoral interests of those over the age of eighteen. It is clear many young people involved in the project felt that their policy interests and aspirations were considered less important than older age groups. The idea of MY MP CAN was designed to make bold the purpose of the manifesto and to promote the idea that our representatives have power to enact many of these changes. While all of the participants in this document are not of voting age yet, their views should still matter and MP's should represent these as they would any other constituency member.

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To download the report, please click [here](#).

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