

# The Youth Leaders' Debate: A new voice for the 2015 General Election

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There are 35 constituencies in England and Wales where at least 20 per cent of the voting population are between 18 and 24 years old; 17 of these were marginal seats in the 2010 election. Young people could have a dramatic impact on the upcoming general election, yet in 2010 only 44 per cent of this age group voted. There is also reason for optimism however, as youth participation in politics is on the rise, with many young people fighting the stereotype of political apathy.

With the two-party system being challenged by emerging political parties across the political spectrum, from the Green Party to UKIP, the possibility of real change is bringing young people back into politics. Young Greens' membership doubled in size in 2014 alone. Even UKIP, who have tended to attract older voters, now have a youth wing which has grown 70 per cent in under a year.

In light of this, on the **28th of April** Shout Out UK and Channel 4 are launching Britain's first ever Youth Leaders' Debate, in Central London. The debate will emulate the recent ITV debate, with the youth wings of seven major British political parties, including representatives from Conservative Future, Liberal Youth, Young Independence, Young Greens, Young Labour, Plaid Cymru Youth and SNP Youth, discussing a variety of issues. The questions will be a mix from social media and the audience. Shout Out UK are currently on the lookout for audience members and those interested should visit the [Facebook event](#) or the [website](#) for more information.

The disillusionment and lack of interest of many young people in politics has led to their interests being ignored by politicians. As much as 76 per cent of over-65s voted in the 2010 general election, in comparison to a meagre 44 per cent of 18-24 year-olds. Looking at figures like these it is easy to see why issues affecting young people, such as youth unemployment and housing are neglected by politicians and the group are repeatedly let down over promises on university tuition fees. Older generations are simply far more likely to vote. This vicious circle means that the age group is becoming increasingly disillusioned with the political process. To break this cycle and ensure the interests of young people are addressed by politicians we must re-engage this age group in the political system. The Institute for Public Policy Research recently recommended that young people should be forced to vote, yet this fails to tackle the root cause of the problem.

Young people could be key in swinging the vote in the May General Election. Through education and events such as [Shout Out UK's Youth Leaders' Debate](#) we can engage this age group in politics and ensure the powerful voice of today's youth is heard.

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