

## Austria lowered the voting age for young people like me, and transformed politics. The UK should do the same

### Level 1: Elementary

#### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. At what age do children become adults? Explain your answer.
2. At what age are people allowed to drive, work, vote and get married where you live?
3. Could it be a good idea to let younger people vote? Why?

#### 2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. Then, complete each example sentence using the same word. You may have to change the form of the word.

disappointed

election

extreme

impact

licence

1. When someone is \_\_\_\_\_, they are unhappy because something didn't happen or because it isn't as good as they hoped.  
*I saw the film, but I was \_\_\_\_\_ because I didn't like the actors.*
2. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is when people vote to choose someone for a political job.  
*They hold \_\_\_\_\_ in Mexico every six years to choose a new president.*
3. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is a powerful effect that something has on a situation or person.  
*The book 1984 had a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ on me when I first read it.*
4. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is very large in amount or degree.  
*People living in the city were not ready for such a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ winter.*
5. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is an official document that the government gives you to show you have permission to have or do something.  
*All dog and cat owners must have a \_\_\_\_\_ for their pets.*

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corrupt

encourage

fail

opportunity

voice

6. \_\_\_\_\_ means using your position of power to get an advantage or money dishonestly.  
*The system is \_\_\_\_\_! They ask for money before helping you.*
7. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to make someone more likely to do something.  
*In the summer, the government provides free sun cream to \_\_\_\_\_ people to take better care of their skin.*
8. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is a situation that makes it possible to do something that you have to or want to do.  
*You will have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ to ask questions at the end of the talk.*
9. To \_\_\_\_\_ means not to do something that you should do or not to succeed.  
*She tried her best, but she \_\_\_\_\_.*
10. Your \_\_\_\_\_ is the expression of your opinion.  
*Working parents are asking for a \_\_\_\_\_ in the conversation about work-life balance.*

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**Beth Riding**

**29 May, 2024**

- 1 I know this country needs a change, so I was disappointed to see that the general election will be held on 4 July 2024—just two months before my 18th birthday.
- 2 Like many other young people across the country, I feel helpless watching this government. It's sad that we cannot vote and change the decisions that the government makes. Instead, we have to watch older people vote and decide things that will impact us the most.
- 3 Take, for example, global heating. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a person who was a child in 2020 may experience up to four times more extreme events during their lifetime under a 1.5-degree Celsius increase in global temperature. A person older than 55 will not experience any of those changes in their lifetime. But 16- and 17-year-olds can't vote and have to watch as the UK gives 100 oil and gas production licences for the North Sea, and as Rishi Sunak flies in a jet from Leeds to London, a journey that would only take two hours by train.
- 4 While 16—to 17-year-olds can't vote, they are old enough to work, pay taxes, and join the army; 17-year-olds can drive a car and donate blood. If 16- and 17-year-olds are old enough to help society in these ways, why can't we vote?
- 5 16-year-olds can already vote in Scotland for local and Scottish parliamentary elections. One report found that those who could vote from 16 were more likely to continue voting as they entered their 20s. Similar results were seen in Austria, where the voting age is 16 for nationwide elections.
- 6 Many young people see politics as boring and corrupt, and don't want to vote. Lowering the voting age to 16 would encourage them to take part. Young people need to express their opinions to ensure everyone has the same opportunities and a safe living environment in the future.
- 7 In their 14 years in power, the Conservative Party has failed young people. More than 270,000 children are waiting for mental health treatment, and university fees have risen from 3,000 pounds to 9,250 pounds per year.
- 8 The Conservatives blame our generation, promising to bring back national military service to "get young people out of their bubble" when all we need is for them to treat us with respect and allow us a voice.

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Decide if each statement is True or False according to the article.

1. The writer feels happy that she can't vote.
2. People who are children in 2020 will experience more extreme weather events in their lifetime.
3. In the UK, 17-year-olds can drive cars, donate blood, pay taxes and join the army.
4. People who start voting at a younger age vote less when they're older.
5. In Austria, 16-year-olds can vote in national elections.
6. University fees went down while the Conservative Party was in power.
7. The writer thinks that people younger than 18 should get the right to vote.

#### 4 Key language

a. Complete the phrases from the text with the verbs below.

experience

express

hold

join

pay

treat

vote

1. \_\_\_\_\_ an election
2. \_\_\_\_\_ changes
3. \_\_\_\_\_ taxes
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the army
5. \_\_\_\_\_ in elections
6. \_\_\_\_\_ an opinion
7. \_\_\_\_\_ with respect

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#### b. Complete the statements with words from task a.

1. You can write a letter to the newspaper to \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In most countries, 18-year-olds can \_\_\_\_\_ in national \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If you earn more money, you have to \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Teenagers \_\_\_\_\_ many \_\_\_\_\_ in their bodies and social lives.
5. He wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ and train to be a pilot.
6. They \_\_\_\_\_ every five years to vote for Members of the European Parliament.

### 5 Discussion

#### a. Discuss these statements.

- Young people should be allowed to vote on what will affect them in the future.
- If you are old enough to pay taxes and join the army, you're old enough to vote.

### 6 In your own words

#### a. Use an internet search engine to find information about the different legal ages in other countries for the following rights.

- drive
- join the army
- get married
- leave school
- buy alcohol or cigarettes
- vote
- work

#### b. Discuss your opinion about the best age for each right. Give reasons for your opinion.