

What do young people (11-24 years) think about sharing their views with the UK government?

About this report

In March 2026, we asked young people what they think about sharing their views with government, so that we could learn what matters most to them.

On the next few pages, you'll see what they told us and the main things we learned from their answers.

Our research

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We spoke to 33 children and young people aged 11 to 24 years across five focus groups. Each session lasted 90 minutes.

Participants joined us from different places and backgrounds, meeting in person in London, Manchester and Swansea, as well as online. Their conversations helped us build a better understanding of what young people think about sharing their views with government.

We asked young people things like:

- What comes to mind when you hear the terms politics and government?
- How do you feel about sharing your views with government?
- What things might stop you sharing your views?
- What things might motivate you or help you share your views?
- If you were in charge of getting as many young people's views as possible on the topic of the cost of living and what government should do about it, how would you do that?

We found that younger participants (aged 11–15 years) sometimes thought differently about topics than older participants (aged 16–24 years).



What the young people we spoke to told us

Understanding of government and politics

Young people spoke about what they think about politics and government in the UK.

Some young people didn't understand the difference between politics and government and what different government institutions do.



Understanding politics

Young people said they knew about big things happening around the world, such as climate change and conflicts in other countries, but when it came to UK politics, they often felt less informed. Some thought politics was mainly for older people and not something they needed to know much about yet.



How young people feel about government

Young people told us that they felt let down by government and that decision-makers do not always listen to their views. They wanted to see evidence that their opinions have been listened to and had helped make a positive change, to feel like sharing their views is worth their time.



"I feel, I mean, frustrated and tired, you know, when adults make decisions that affect young people and it feels like we're not really listened to."

(11-15 years)



What influences whether young people take part in research

Young people described a range of things that influence whether they take part in government research.

Research that matters to young people

Young people told us they would be more likely to take part in research if they could clearly see how it would benefit them or others. They wanted to be asked about the things that matter most in their lives, such as mental health, school and social media.



"I think the government should ask young people like me about the effects of our daily [lives] like school stress, mental health support, after-school activities and how social media affects us. It would be also good if they asked what we think about these things because it really matters to us and you know it can actually make a difference."

(11-15 years)

Time and effort

Young people told us they would be more likely to take part in research if it was quicker and easier to fit into their everyday lives. They suggested running research in places they already spend time, such as schools and universities. Many said that they are often so concerned with immediate priorities in their own lives that they don't have time to focus on wider issues in society.



Threats and Incentives

Young people told us they did not agree with fining people for not taking part in surveys such as the Census, but they would be more likely to take part if there was a potential fine. Young people told us receiving money to pay for their time would be more appropriate, but some young people worried about whether this is a good use of tax-payer money.





Doing the right thing

Young people told us that they think their generation tends to focus more on their own problems rather than the whole of society. They said this was probably because they have so many more immediate worries around finance and mental health, so struggle to focus on longer-term issues. Many told us that if they did take part in a survey, it would be because they wanted to do the right thing.

"Financially becoming stable and just living a kind of stable life used to be much easier as well. So because that became harder, I think the priorities for young people have also changed according to that."

(16-24 years)

"You could be confused about the question and mess up the answer."

(11-15 years)

Confidence and fear of messing up

Younger people (aged 11 to 15 years) told us they sometimes worry about whether they will understand survey questions correctly, especially when a topic feels important to them. Some were concerned about giving the "wrong" answer. They also said they could feel uncomfortable sharing their opinions in front of people they know, as they worried about being judged by others.



Trust and scams

Young people (16-24 years) told us they are worried about scams and data breaches, so how government choose to contact them and how much they trust them with their data is really important, particularly when sharing personal information.



"Unless it was like posted by an official like government page that was like verified by Instagram, TikTok, whatever. I wouldn't, I wouldn't trust any QR code that was just given on social media."

(16-24 years)





How young people are contacted

Young people told us they would be more likely to take surveys sent by post seriously, especially if it looked official and included logos they recognised. They also told us they would pay attention to SMS messages but would be worried about it being a scam. Young people told us they already receive many emails so they would forget about an email invitation.



Social media

Young people told us that social media would be a useful place to introduce the research and talk about why it's important, but they wouldn't want to receive an invitation to take part that way.



"If the government wants to encourage people, young people, to do it, then they should get people, exactly as you said, to go online talking about their experience, because I think that'll be more effective."

(16-24 years)



Places young people already go

Young people told us they would prefer to share their views face-to-face, particularly in a place they are already in, such as schools or community hubs. They also said they would feel more comfortable if another young person was collecting the data.



The views and experiences shared by participants in this research will help shape a larger future research project, allowing us to hear from even more young people and build a deeper understanding of the issues that matter most to them.

If you'd like to read more about these findings, you can read [the full report on the ONS website](#).

This research was completed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Hopkins Van Mil.