



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Votes at 16 Research:

Identification and Document Ownership and Democratic Engagement

Joe Twyman
Melanie Cohen
Matthew Blayney
Martin Boon



© Crown copyright, 2026

Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

This document/publication is also available on our website at www.gov.uk/mhclg

If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, use our [webform](#) or write to us at:

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

For all our latest news and updates follow us on X: <https://x.com/mhclg>

July 2026

Foreword

This report outlines the findings of a major research study which MHCLG commissioned from Deltapoll with young people aged 14-17 to inform the Government's work to extend the right to vote to 16- and 17-year-olds. Over 3,500 respondents took part in a nationally-representative survey, and detailed views were sought via an additional 32 focus groups, conducted across the UK.

The UK Government committed in its manifesto to increasing the participation of young people in democracy by extending the right to vote to 16- and 17-year-olds across all elections in the UK. The Representation of the People Bill was introduced to Parliament on 12 February 2026 to deliver the required legislative changes.

By supporting younger voters in participating in elections early, the Government seeks to build the foundations for their lifelong participation in our electoral processes. MHCLG commissioned this research to understand more about the attitudes and experiences of young people, to provide insight into what the likely barriers might be to implementation of the policy, what the facilitators might be and how the policy can be designed to be a success.

The findings demonstrate the importance of the education system, with majorities of participants believing schools should teach more about voting, elections and politics while fewer than half report receiving this. These findings chime with the recommendations of the Government's recent Curriculum and Assessment Review, and actions being taken by the Department of Education to ensure that all pupils receive an essential grounding in a range of topics including democracy, government and law.

The findings demonstrate the importance of good knowledge provision for young people to help them feel empowered to vote, including by providing the practical basics of how to register and turn out to vote. Many young people in this research recognised they are currently under-equipped to participate in the electoral process, which is often seen to be complex and confusing. This Government recognises that knowledge, opportunity (including access to democratic infrastructure, time and mobility), and motivation (trust, sense of efficacy and civic duty) barriers exist too for the wider population which is why the Votes at 16 policy will be introduced alongside broader objectives to promote sustained participation in electoral processes over the life course and to strengthen democratic resilience.

This analysis helps to strengthen the Department's evidence base on the conditions for success of extending the right to vote to 16- and 17-year-olds year olds, and the department will continue to develop its evidence base in this area, including through robust evaluation. I would like to thank colleagues from Deltapoll for their continued hard work conducting this research. Particular thanks should go to the authors: Joe Twyman, Melanie Cohen, Matthew Blayney and Martin Boon. Special thanks are also due to all those in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government who helped guide, inform and support this research, in particular the Elections Research and Analysis team. Above all, my sincerest thanks go to the thousands of people across the UK who gave their time to take part in the research.

Stephen Aldridge

Director, Analysis and Data

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Contents

Foreword	3
List of appendices	6
Glossary	7
1. Executive Summary	8
2. Introduction	13
3. Understanding and Knowledge of Elections	23
4. Attitudes towards Democracy, Politics and Elections	31
5. Sources of Information and Education	45
6. Barriers and Enablers to Participation	84
7. Identification and Document Ownership	101
7. Annex	135
8. Appendix	137

List of appendices

Appendix A – Full Counts of Quantitative Sample	137
Appendix B – Full Counts of Focus Groups	140
Appendix C – Percentage of respondents who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list.....	141

Glossary

ABC1: A standard classification of social grade used as a broad proxy for 'upper & middle class'.

C2DE: A standard classification of social grade used as a broad proxy for 'working class'.

Statistical significance: Where a difference between two figures falls outside the margin of error and is, therefore, unlikely to have occurred by random chance alone.

Elections Act 2022: An act of Parliament which, among other measures, made it compulsory to present photo ID in order to vote in-person in Great Britain. Until this act, ID was only required to vote in-person in Northern Ireland.

Reserved elections: Elections that are the responsibility of the UK Parliament, including UK Parliamentary elections and recall petitions and local elections in England.

Free school meals: Free meals provided in schools, pre-schools, and colleges to pupils whose parents are (or are themselves) recipients of specified forms of income support, allowances, and tax credits. They are also provided to all pupils in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2. In London, they are also provided to all primary school pupils.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The UK Government committed, as part of its 2024 General Election manifesto, to extend the right to vote to all 16- and 17-year-olds for all UK elections. This commitment will be implemented via the Representation of the People Bill, which was introduced to Parliament on 12 February 2026. Votes at 16 sits alongside broader government objectives to promote sustained participation in electoral processes and strengthen democratic resilience.
- 1.2. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) sought to establish a baseline understanding of young people's knowledge of, and attitudes towards, the political and electoral system in order to support the design and delivery of the Government's commitments on elections and voting.
- 1.3. To achieve this aim, a research project was commissioned by MHCLG and undertaken by Deltapoll using both quantitative and qualitative methods to speak to those aged 14 to 17. A total of 32 focus groups were conducted over two stages, followed by a nationally-representative survey of over 3,500 respondents, utilising both online and offline data collection.
- 1.4. This report brings together the findings from the research project, covering five specific research topics.

Understanding and Knowledge of Elections

- 1.5. This research topic looked at young people's knowledge and understanding of various aspects of elections. This included voter registration, the voting process, voter identification requirements and broader understanding of how government operates in the United Kingdom.
- 1.6. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, awareness that individuals must apply to register to vote was relatively widespread. However, the focus groups suggested that the nature of this awareness was more nuanced, with participants frequently demonstrating uncertainty about what registration involves, and with some not making a distinction between voter registration and the act of voting itself.
- 1.7. The knowledge that survey respondents had of the voting process itself was statistically significantly stronger than awareness that individuals must apply to register to vote, with large majorities aware that voting can take place in person at a polling station. Young people in the focus groups shared experiences of times they had encountered polling stations, such as school closures on election

days. Awareness of alternative voting methods was more limited, however, with postal voting understood by some participants, though some incorrectly assumed that online voting was available.

- 1.8. The awareness of voter identification requirements on polling day amongst survey respondents was also relatively high and focus group participants broadly regarded voter identification as a necessary safeguard against fraud. Even though some young people did not have a detailed understanding of exactly how the policy works in practice, the principle of identity verification was widely understood and supported.
- 1.9. When it comes to government more generally, a majority of survey respondents reported some understanding of how government works in the UK. Evidence from focus groups, however, suggested that the confidence that participants had in how the government works in the UK was often not backed up by a detailed knowledge of that subject.

Attitudes towards Politics, Democracy and Elections

- 1.10. This research topic looked at the attitudes of respondents towards democracy, their levels of political interest, trust in political institutions and elections and their engagement with electoral processes.
- 1.11. Participants were separately tested on their interest in politics and elections. When it came to interest in politics, survey respondents were asked about their interest in politics across the world, in the UK and in their local area. Respondents in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were also asked about their interest in politics in their own nation. Views were mixed, with many respondents either interested in a range of areas or none of the areas tested. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, interest in one area tested then strongly correlated with interest in others (such as an interest in UK and world politics) and also correlated with the likelihood of future voting. Similarly, many respondents were either interested in a range of different types of elections or none of the types tested.
- 1.12. Among focus group participants, trust in politicians was generally low. Participants frequently described politicians' behaviour as performative or insufficiently responsive to young people's concerns. In contrast, trust in elections was comparatively robust among survey respondents and, for some participants, Votes at 16 was seen as a change that could potentially mean politicians hear and respond to younger voters.

Sources of Information and Education

- 1.13. This topic looked at where respondents obtained political information and how they evaluated its reliability. It also looked at the role of schools, families and social media in shaping political knowledge.
- 1.14. Respondents across all four nations of the United Kingdom said the three most common sources of information relating to politics and current affairs were parents or adults at home, television and social media. For survey respondents, family discussion of politics occurred more frequently than discussions among friends, although even within families, political conversations were not routine.
- 1.15. Social media emerged as a frequent source of political information for survey respondents. Focus group participants often reported encountering political content through algorithm-driven feeds, rather than actively seeking it out. Among survey respondents, TikTok and YouTube were the platforms where political content was most frequently seen. However, many focus group participants expressed scepticism regarding accuracy and bias, with many participants describing the need to cross-check information against mainstream news sources.
- 1.16. Survey respondents were asked about their awareness of the Electoral Commission, the independent body which oversees elections in the UK. Awareness was not particularly high among respondents from all four nations of the UK.
- 1.17. The education system was identified as a common but inconsistent source of political knowledge. Strong majorities of survey respondents across all four nations of the UK believed that schools should teach more about voting and elections. Similar proportions supported increased teaching about politics more broadly. However, fewer than half of the survey respondents reported they had been given some support from their school or college to help them feel ready to vote.
- 1.18. Focus group participants reinforced this conclusion, frequently describing political education as sporadic, limited or dependent on individual teachers. Schools were nonetheless viewed as trusted and appropriate environments for delivering impartial political education.

Barriers and Enablers to Participation

- 1.19. This topic looked at the factors influencing political participation among young people including communication habits, attitudes towards voting at 16 and levels of engagement in political or civic activity.
- 1.20. Attitudes towards voting at 16 varied by nation and existing electoral arrangements but were broadly positive across all four nations of the United Kingdom. In England, more than half of survey respondents believed that being able to vote at 16 would make them feel that their voice matters more, compared with a third who believed it would not. In Northern Ireland, opinion was more evenly divided. In Wales and Scotland, where voting at 16 already applies in some elections, more than two thirds of survey respondents believed extending the franchise further would increase their sense of influence.
- 1.21. Focus group participants revealed ambivalence underpinning these results, however. Many individual participants supported the principle of earlier voting rights, but they also expressed concern about levels of political knowledge among their peers. There was some optimism about increased political influence, but there was also some uncertainty over both how ready they and others were to vote, and susceptibility to external influences.
- 1.22. Participation of survey respondents in wider political activities was generally limited. The most common activity was participation in school debates or mock elections, selected by around one third of respondents. Engagement with campaigning or activism was rare and typically issue-specific rather than sustained.

Identification and Document Ownership

- 1.23. This topic looked at patterns of identification ownership among young people and considered implications for participation in elections requiring voter identification.
- 1.24. The survey gathered information about ownership of a wide range of forms of identification.
- 1.25. The overwhelming majority of survey respondents in Great Britain possessed at least one form of currently accepted identification or a physical bank card. Testing of bank card ownership was undertaken to inform the legislation recently brought forward by the government to amend the accepted ID list to include bank cards. In England, 92% of survey respondents aged both 14 to 15 and 16 to 17 had at least one of the forms of ID from the accepted list tested or a physical bank card. In Wales those numbers were 89% and 93% respectively. In

Scotland, 98% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 97% of respondents aged 16 to 17 had at least one of the forms of ID from the accepted list tested or a physical bank card. This is due, in large part, to the widespread ownership of the Young Scot PASS card which is not available in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

- 1.26. In Northern Ireland there is a different list of accepted IDs. The survey reflected that this list has fewer available types of accepted ID. 76% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 78% of those aged 16 to 17 in Northern Ireland had an ID from the accepted list.
- 1.27. Across all four nations of the UK and across all age groups, passports were among the forms of photo ID most likely to be held by respondents. Focus group participants, however, indicated a reluctance to carry passports routinely, with participants expressing a preference for smaller or less valuable forms of identification, including when presenting photo ID to vote.
- 1.28. Among survey respondents, awareness of alternative forms of ID for voting such as Voter Authority Certificates and particularly Electoral Identity Cards was more limited. As those aged under 18 are not currently eligible to vote in any elections in either England or Northern Ireland, and voter identification is not required for those devolved or local elections in which young people can currently vote in Wales and Scotland, it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that awareness of this election-focussed form of ID was not found to be high.

2. Introduction

Policy background

- 2.1. Votes at 16 is the extension of the electoral franchise to those aged 16 and 17 across all four nations of the United Kingdom, enabling young people in England and Northern Ireland to join their peers in Scotland and Wales who are already able to vote in local and devolved elections. Votes at 16 is intended to support voters in engaging early, when they are young, and allowing them to have a say in shaping their future. This takes place alongside broader objectives to strengthen democratic resilience and promote sustained participation in electoral processes over the life course. Votes at 16 will be implemented via the Representation of the People Bill, which was introduced to Parliament on 12 February 2026.
- 2.2. MHCLG wanted to establish a baseline understanding of young people's knowledge of, and attitudes towards, the political and electoral system. This included examining motivations for participation, as well as perceived and practical barriers to registration and voting itself. This evidence will inform the design of approaches for effective communications, education and engagement as part of implementing the franchise extension.
- 2.3. Under Votes at 16, young people across the four nations of the United Kingdom will be able to register to vote from the age of 14, enabling them to participate in all elections from the age of 16. Registering from the age of 14 provides a long window before young people can first cast their vote, during which time they can complete the registration process and resolve any identity verification requirements, including providing forms of personal identification as needed. The default and most common identity verification method is the provision of a National Insurance number; however, as National Insurance numbers are not issued until just before the age 16, this creates a structural barrier for registration among those aged 14 and 15. Currently, where a National Insurance number cannot be provided, Electoral Registration Officers must seek to verify an applicant's identity through alternative routes, including checks against local data sources such as education records, requests for documentary evidence, or, where necessary, by providing an "attestation" from a qualifying individual.
- 2.4. In addition to identity verification requirements in place to register to vote, identification is required to vote at the polling station in most types of election across the UK (noting that the rules and requirements differ between Great Britain and Northern Ireland). These rules are only in place for elections where electors must be 18 to vote, so the upcoming 16- and 17-year-old cohort will not

have encountered these rules before. MHCLG therefore also wanted to understand levels of ID ownership among 14- to 17-year-olds, and whether any policy or operational changes would be necessary to ensure the registration and voting process are accessible for 16- and 17-year-olds. MHCLG has previously commissioned research on photographic ID ownership among the population aged 18 and above, but there was limited data on ID ownership among those aged 14 to 15 and those aged 16 to 17 across the United Kingdom.

Report structure

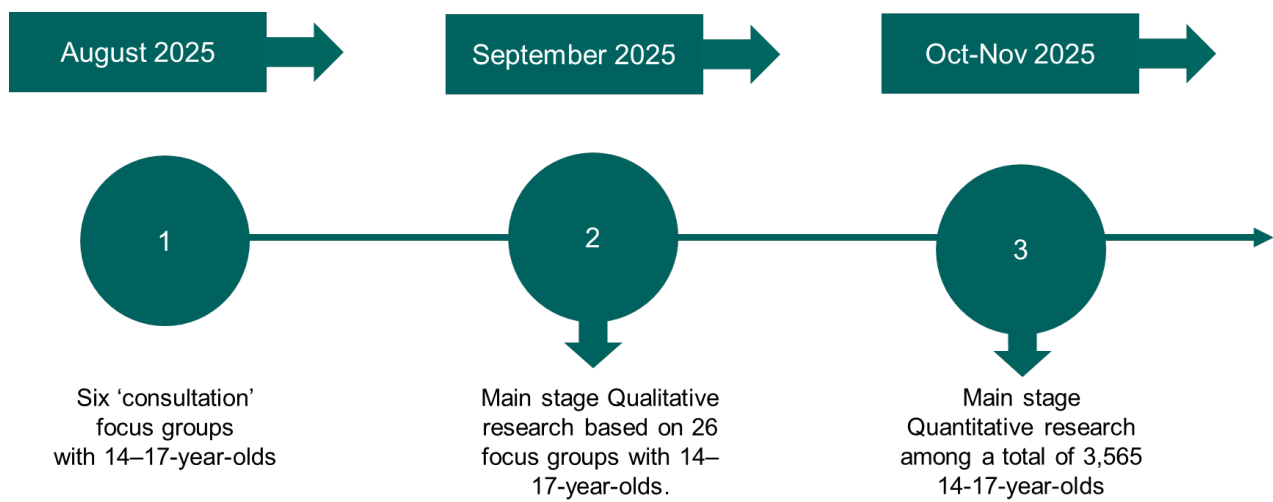
- 2.5. This report outlines and explains attitudes toward five main themes that underpin the research objectives. Each of the analytical chapters addresses one of these themes.
- 2.6. The remainder of Chapter 2 outlines the methodology that produced this research. This includes a description of the quantitative and qualitative strands, as well as an overview of the consent processes and ethics.
- 2.7. Chapter 3 covers the knowledge and understanding young people have about elections and the government. This includes their understanding of the purpose and process of registering to vote, and of the voter identification policy (which requires them to bring an accepted form of ID to the polling station to vote in person).
- 2.8. Chapter 4 focuses on the extent to which young people are interested in or aware of politics and political processes. This covers interest in local government as well as national and global political issues. The section also includes trust in politics and politicians.
- 2.9. Chapter 5 explores the sources of information young people use to learn about elections and political issues. This covers the role of parents, family, social media and the education sector. How young people judge the reliability of these information sources is also covered.
- 2.10. Chapter 6 looks both at the factors that encourage participation and at the barriers that prevent it. This section also assesses levels of support for Votes at 16 amongst 14- to 17-year-olds.
- 2.11. Chapter 7 focuses on ownership of different forms of photographic and non-photographic forms of identification and documents, including comfort levels in showing such documents when required in formal situations.

Methodology

Overall approach

- 2.12. As demonstrated in Figure 2.1, this project adopted both quantitative and qualitative methodological techniques to produce an integrated analytical landscape of young people’s attitudes toward the prospect of being able to vote in elections from the age of 16 years.

Figure 2.1 – Overall programme of research



- 2.13. The quantitative research was first informed by a set of six consultation focus groups in August 2025 that benchmarked opinions and informed the construction of mainstage research tools.
- 2.14. The consultation focus groups were followed by 26 more focus groups in September 2025, and a large-scale quantitative survey (3,565 respondents) in October and November 2025 with 14- to 17-year-olds across the United Kingdom.
- 2.15. A combined online and face-to-face approach was undertaken for the quantitative component of the project, in order to both draw a large-scale representative sample of the target audience and ensure that robust national (booster) samples in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland could be achieved. A consequence of differentially deployed questions is that sample sizes for individual questions included on both versions of the questionnaire are larger than for those which were only included in the online version. An online-only approach was adopted for the qualitative component for cost-efficiency and practicality.

- 2.16. The five main research themes were shared across the two separate methodological approaches, but for practical purposes some specific questions were included on the (longer) online quantitative questionnaire but were excluded from the (shorter) face-to-face version.
- 2.17. Specific questions were also tailored to respondents based on their age and nation to ensure that all respondents saw only questions that were directly relevant to them. The questionnaire also included attention-check questions, logic checks, and other mechanisms for screening out bots and other suspicious respondents.
- 2.18. Please note that artificial intelligence (AI) has not been used anywhere in the writing or production of this report. It has, however, been used in a small number of specific operational aspects of the research. The transcription service used as part of the qualitative analysis utilises AI. It was also used on the server side to check the quality of survey responses, for the preliminary analysis of some of the open-ended survey responses and as a sense check.

Quantitative (survey)

- 2.19. MHCLG expressed a particular interest in securing a large, nationally representative sample of young people, including sufficient respondents from each of the four nations of the United Kingdom to facilitate reliable cross-country comparisons. This presented a challenge, as respondents aged 16 and 17 are relatively scarce on online panels and respondents aged 14 and 15 have to be contacted through their parents, adding an additional layer of complexity to recruitment. To address this challenge, a mixed-methods approach was used, combining a nationally representative online survey with a bolt-on face-to-face component to boost responses in all four nations of the United Kingdom.
- 2.20. A quota-sampling approach was employed to ensure representativeness across age, gender, region, and parental social background, using targets derived from the most recent Census data for each nation of the United Kingdom. Active sampling techniques, including incentives, were used to guarantee high response rates, low dropout rates, and participation by young people from a wide range of backgrounds. As expected, the subsamples for individual nations were not sufficiently large to generate robust insights into cross-national differences, which is why the face-to-face component of the methodology was also used.
- 2.21. For the face-to-face element, in-street intercept interviews were conducted at sampling points across the four nations of the United Kingdom. A notable advantage of face-to-face research over online panel research was that geographic targeting was far more practicable. As a result, sample sizes in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were boosted, exceeding the threshold

required to conduct reliable statistical tests of cross-country differences. Face-to-face interviewers used quota sheets to ensure that sampling within each nation was representative by age and gender. The incorporation of a face-to-face component into the survey methodology also had the added benefit of increasing participation among digitally excluded young people.

- 2.22. Once data collection was complete and online and face-to-face responses had been merged, additional data checks were conducted to ensure that only genuine, attentive respondents were included in the final dataset. These checks included comparing respondents' self-reported region with their postcode, assessing the validity of open-ended responses, examining survey completion times and suspicious IP addresses and checking consistency across responses from the same individual.
- 2.23. At this stage, the data was also weighted to achieve a closer fit between the sample and the wider population of those aged 14 to 17. Weights were derived using iterative proportional fitting against targets for gender, region, age, and school type all intersected. Weighting was applied separately within each of the four nations in the United Kingdom to ensure representative subsamples. Regional weights were not applied within Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. As a result, any boosted subsamples in the smaller United Kingdom nations were weighted down to restore overall representativeness while retaining the increased statistical power afforded by the boosts.

Qualitative (focus groups)

- 2.24. In addition to the quantitative research element, focus groups with young people were conducted across the four nations of the United Kingdom. All focus groups were digitally hosted online via Zoom. An online approach enabled twenty-six focus groups to be conducted across the United Kingdom in a far more time-efficient and cost-effective manner than would otherwise have been possible, including conducting several groups in each of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 2.25. When recruiting participants, quotas were applied to ensure each focus group included at least 2 ethnic minority participants, an even split by gender, an even split by ABC1 and C2DE socioeconomic background, and an even split by high and low interest in politics. There were also two groups comprised entirely of participants living with a disability.
- 2.26. For the consultation focus groups, the primary aims were to test awareness, ownership, and attitudes with respect to different forms of ID for inclusion in the survey and to conduct a trial run of the approach intended for the main focus groups. In the main focus groups, participants' understanding of elections,

attitudes towards politics, sources of information, and barriers to participation were explored more deeply.

- 2.27. Different versions of the discussion guides were produced in order to accommodate different region-level policies or document availability (for example Young Scot Cards) and to facilitate comprehension among different ages. In all cases, the language used was accessible and assumed minimal prior knowledge of political and electoral concepts.
- 2.28. Participants were also assigned a short writing task to complete in advance of the groups, which was intended to tap into instinctive emotional reactions toward the concept of Votes at 16, which is discussed in Annex A.
- 2.29. In some cases, young people in focus groups discussed political parties or particular political figures or influencers by name. These have been removed due to them indicating party political views. Media outlets and social media platforms are mentioned by name when relevant.

Consent and ethics

- 2.30. Deltapoll adopted a two-pronged approach to the recruitment of young people for the online survey. First, respondents aged 16 and 17 were recruited directly from Deltapoll's quantitative recruitment partner's panel. Both the GSR and MRS ethics guidelines for research with young people indicate that those aged over 16 may be contacted directly rather than through their parents. This accorded with Deltapoll's own experience that respondents aged 16 and 17 were usually mature enough to make their own decisions about whether and how to engage with research. For these reasons, it was considered both ethically sound and practically desirable to target respondents aged 16 and 17 directly. Staff implemented checks to verify that these participants were over the age of 16.
- 2.31. Second, respondents aged 14 and 15 (and some additional respondents aged 16 and 17) were recruited through their parents or legal guardians. In accordance with GSR and MRS ethics guidelines for research with participants under 16, consent was first sought from the parent for the young person to participate, followed by consent from the participant themselves.
- 2.32. The parent was asked to confirm the age of the participant and whether they were available to take part in the survey. The parent was then presented with a description of the research, a link to further information, and an explanation of why inclusion of participants under 16 was being sought. If they provided consent, the screen prompted the device to be passed to the young person participating who was then provided with a tailored description of the research.

The survey proceeded only if the participant consented, and parents were encouraged to remain nearby in case of issues or concerns.

- 2.33. In line with Deltapoll's past experience of what the most effective and transparent approach to gaining informed consent is, respondents were presented a brief description of the purpose of the research alongside a link to a more comprehensive document addressing frequently asked questions, before being asked for consent. This increased the likelihood that respondents read at least a short description of the research, rather than scrolling past it. It also allowed those with concerns to be reassured by more detailed information in an easily searchable format.
- 2.34. A crucial aspect of Deltapoll's strategy for guaranteeing a representative sample was the use of cash incentives. In Deltapoll's past experience, where no incentive is offered, a large proportion of potential participants do not engage with the research. This not only constrains the attainable sample size but also compromises representativeness, as the profile of respondents willing to participate in research without reward typically does not reflect the wider population. Where a participant under 16 completed the survey, their parent received a small cash reward.
- 2.35. When it came to face-to-face research, trained and DBS-checked face-to-face social research interviewers approached young people accompanied by their parents and, where the interviewer believed them to be aged 16 or 17, young people on their own. After explaining the purpose of the research, the first question asked by the interviewer was the respondent's age, at which point interviews with unaccompanied under-16s were terminated. The interviewer then asked the young person (and their parent, where the young person was under 16) whether they would like to take part in a short interview, which was completed using a tablet.
- 2.36. For the qualitative research, diverse focus groups of young people were recruited, with informed, written consent gained both from participants and from their parent. Respondents aged 14 to 17 for this research were recruited through three strategies: asking parents on Deltapoll's partner's curated qualitative panel to opt in, targeting parents not on the panel via adverts on social media sites popular with parents of teenagers and reaching out through schools. All participants received a cash incentive payment to participate, which was paid out immediately after confirmed attendance and completion of the group that was attended.
- 2.37. At the beginning of each online focus group, moderators again asked participants whether they were happy to take part and for the discussion to be recorded.

Participants were told that they could turn off their cameras, mute their microphones, privately message the attending support officer from the recruitment team, or leave the call at any time if they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

- 2.38. Further information relating to how this research was adapted to accommodate participants aged 14 to 17 is provided in Annex A (Research with Young People) and Annex B (Accessibility).

Sample

- 2.39. The total sample size of the survey, including both components, was 3,565. The demographic breakdown of respondents is provided in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 - Size and demographic breakdown of quantitative survey samples across the four nations of the UK

		England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Total	All Respondents	2348	397	481	339
Data Collection Method	Online	2090	127	204	85
	Face to Face	258	270	277	254
Age of Child	14 Years	477	90	125	85
	15 Years	483	99	91	83
	16 Years	683	83	123	80
	17 Years	705	125	142	91
Social Grade	ABC1	1569	253	248	183
	C2DE	739	138	228	155
Gender	Male	1196	206	246	153
	Female	1137	188	232	184
	I identify in another way	11	3	3	2

- 2.40. Given that there are just over three million people aged 14 to 17 in the United Kingdom, the sampling error for a survey of this size is 1.7%. The boosted

sample sizes in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland also allowed for reliable inferences about young people within each nation and comparisons between them. For example, the proportion of young people in Northern Ireland holding accepted forms of ID could be estimated to within approximately 5.5 percentage points of the true value.

- 2.41. Similarly, differences in levels of ID ownership between young people in England and Scotland exceeding 5 percentage points were indicative of genuine divergence in the underlying population. All such statistically significant differences are clearly signposted in the data tables.
- 2.42. Quantitative fieldwork was conducted between 1st October and 2nd November 2025. The composition of the samples for the quantitative surveys is provided in Appendix A.
- 2.43. The main phase of the qualitative research was comprised of 26 focus groups conducted across the four nations of the United Kingdom. Five of these focus groups were recruited from each of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Two included a mix of participants from across the whole of the United Kingdom. The remaining nine were recruited from England. In total, this approach enabled engagement with 195 participants, including 113 across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 2.44. This constituted a large number of interviews for a qualitative research project and allowed for comprehensive exploration of all research questions, as well as confident comparisons and contrasts between young people's experiences and opinions across the different countries of the United Kingdom. The composition of the focus groups is provided in Appendix B.

Analysis

- 2.45. The analysis for the project combines findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research elements. Significant differences between major demographic and attitudinal groups have been reported, but only if those subgroups' differences compared to all other subgroups are statistically significant. Some findings that are not statistically significant are reported only in terms of 'estimates', as a representation of uncertainty. Further details can be found in the data tables published alongside this report. Analysis is not included for subsamples which are not sufficiently large to draw substantive conclusions.
- 2.46. In a few instances the rounding of the figures to exclude decimal places means that percentages do not add up to exactly 100%. Similarly, aggregated figures

may be different from the sum of the individual combined figures when rounding to no decimal places.

3. Understanding and Knowledge of Elections

Chapter Summary

- 3.1. The following chapter examines respondents' understanding and knowledge of elections in the United Kingdom. It looks at awareness of voter registration, voting processes and polling stations, voter identification requirements, and how government operates.
- 3.2. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, there was a broad understanding that individuals must apply to register prior to voting, with more than half of respondents reporting awareness (England 63%, Wales 57%, Scotland 68% and Northern Ireland 65%).
- 3.3. Despite these results in the survey, findings from the focus groups indicated that understanding of the purpose and process of registration was often limited across all four nations of the United Kingdom, with participants frequently unable to describe the practical steps involved.
- 3.4. Knowledge that voting can take place at a polling station was high across all four nations of the United Kingdom. Around nine in ten respondents were aware of this (England 92%, Wales 86%, Scotland 92% and Northern Ireland 88%).
- 3.5. Knowledge of voter identification requirements varied slightly across the four nations of the United Kingdom, in line with the different requirements in place. In England and Northern Ireland, where identification is required to vote in all elections, around eight in ten respondents were aware of the requirement (79% and 84% respectively), compared with around seven in ten in Wales and Scotland where identification is only required in general elections (68% and 76% respectively). Focus group participants largely said that ID was necessary, often linking it to preventing fraud and ensuring eligibility.
- 3.6. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, a majority reported at least some understanding of how government works with Scotland showing a higher reported level of understanding (England 68%, Wales 59%, Scotland 75% and Northern Ireland 67%).
- 3.7. Evidence from focus groups suggested that the confidence that participants had in how the government works in the UK was often not backed up by a detailed knowledge of the subject.

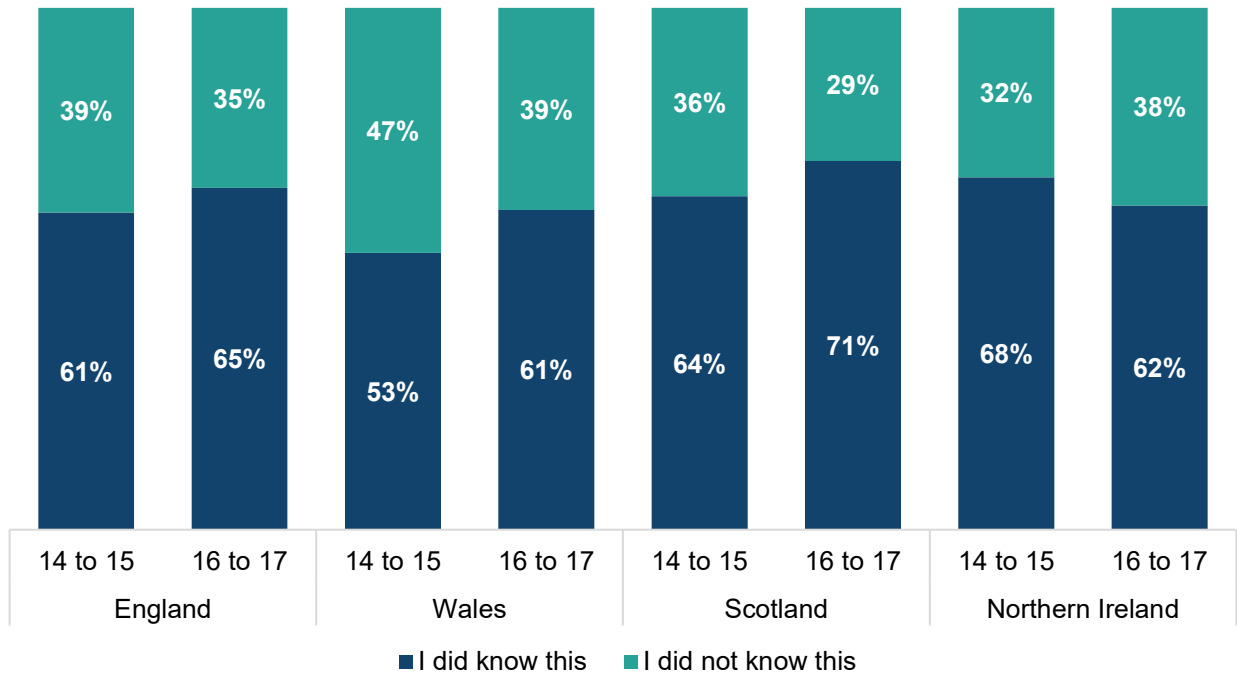
Introduction

- 3.8. Individuals must be registered to vote before they are able to vote in elections. Applications can be submitted online, by paper or telephone, and are verified and assessed by Electoral Registration Officers.
- 3.9. Applicants are asked to provide personal details, including their name, address and date of birth, and are usually required to provide a National Insurance number to support identity verification. Where an applicant cannot provide a National Insurance number or is unable to have their identity confirmed through data matching when one is provided, the Electoral Registration Officer may request additional information or evidence to advance the application. This typically involves providing documentary evidence in the form of an ID or combination of other documents such as trusted government documentation or financial and social history documentation.
- 3.10. As part of the extension of the franchise to 16- and 17-year-olds, young people across the United Kingdom will be able to register to vote from the age of 14, providing a two-year window before they can cast their first vote during which registration can be completed.
- 3.11. Once successfully registered to vote, it is possible to apply for a postal or proxy vote. After this point, electors can cast their vote via the method they have chosen – i.e., by post, by proxy or in person at a polling station.
- 3.12. The following sections set out young people's knowledge and understanding of registration, voting processes, identification requirements, and the wider electoral system.

Registration process

- 3.13. Respondents in the survey were asked if, before they began the survey, they knew that people need to make an application to register to vote. At the total level, across all four nations of the United Kingdom, more than half of respondents knew this (England 63%, Wales 57%, Scotland 68% and Northern Ireland 65%). Figure 3.1 shows the differences between the age groups, none of which are statistically significant.

Figure 3.1 - Please say if, before this survey, whether or not you knew each of the following about voting and elections in the UK? People need to make an application to register to vote



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

3.14. This pattern was partly reflected within the findings of the focus groups. Some participants did know that registration was a pre-requisite for voting, having been informed in various ways. Some participants aged 16 to 17 had received a letter with their National Insurance number in the lead up to turning 16 which explained this requirement, and some explained that their parents had encouraged them to register to vote. School had also been a source of information for some. In a small number of cases, teachers had informed students and encouraged them to register to vote, and in some others, students had learnt about voter registration in class.

“When I got my National Insurance number, in the letter it said I could now register to vote.” (Scotland, Female, 14 to 15)

“I registered to vote because my mum got me to register.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

“I am not gonna lie, my mom done a lot of it.” (Scotland, Female, 16 to 17)

“I just remember learning about it when I did my GCSEs.” (Northern Ireland, Female, 16 to 17)

- 3.15. However, the focus groups cast some doubt on the extent to which knowledge of registration is well established. Many participants were unaware that they are required to register to vote.

“I don’t really get what it means to register.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 3.16. In one focus group, no participants (14 to 15, Northern Ireland) were aware of what ‘registering to vote’ meant, having not previously come across the term.

- 3.17. Among those who indicated some awareness of the need to register, understanding was often vague and surface level, with little evidence of first-hand knowledge or familiarity with the practical steps involved. Participants were frequently unable to articulate the reasons why registration is required, or the practical steps involved.

“I am not really sure what registering to vote means you have to do.” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

- 3.18. Several young people expressed frustration at what they perceived to be inadequate provision of information within schools.

“Schools should at least tell us how. Like not just say ‘register’ but show us how.” (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

“We talked about it once in school but no one explained it properly.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 3.19. Young people expressed a broad assumption that they would need to complete an online form, with a very small number further suggesting that this form would be hosted on the GOV.UK website. This was consistent across all four nations of the United Kingdom, despite 16- and 17-year-olds in Scotland and Wales currently being able to vote in local council and devolved Parliamentary elections:

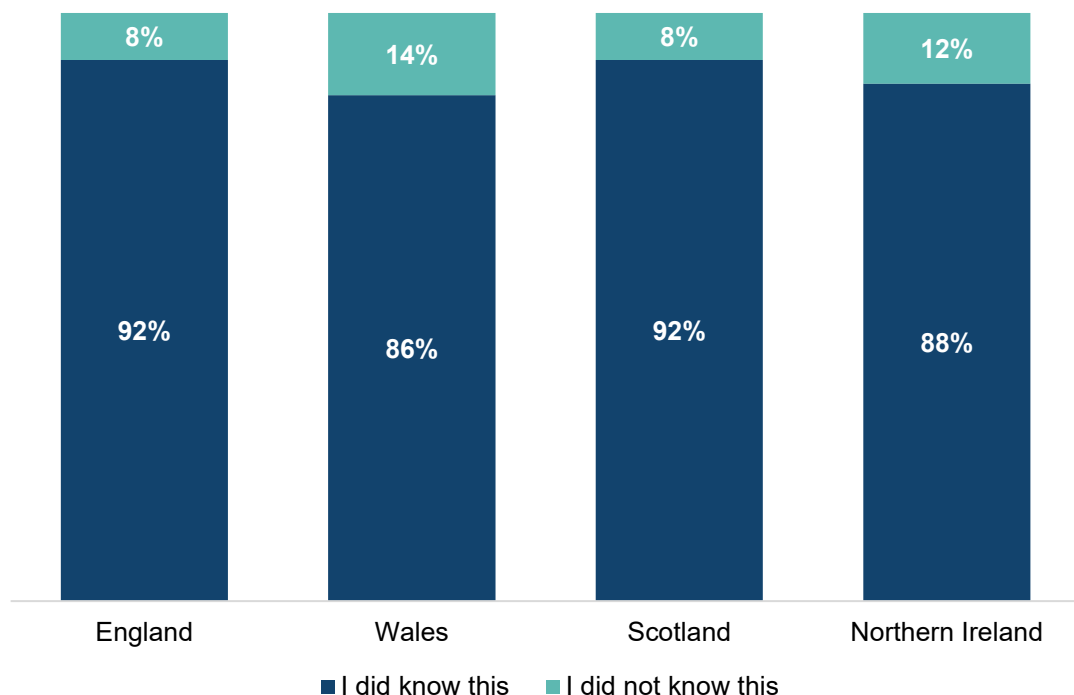
“Go to a website... maybe put in your name and date of birth?” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

“I assume you have to go on the government website and make sure you have an ID and then go down to one of the buildings that supports voting.” (England, Male, 14 to 15)

Voting process

- 3.20. Respondents in the survey were asked if, before they began the survey, they knew people can go to a polling station to vote in person. Figure 3.2 shows that across all four nations of the United Kingdom, an overwhelming majority of respondents knew this (England 92%, Wales 86%, Scotland 92% and Northern Ireland 88%).

Figure 3.2 - Please say if, before this survey, whether or not you knew each of the following about voting and elections in the UK? People can go to a place called a "polling station" to vote in person



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

- 3.21. Many focus group participants knew that people can vote in a polling station. Participants overwhelmingly knew that such places existed, in many cases because their own school or other local schools had been closed on election days.

"I'm pretty sure you go to like a polling station and then there are like boxes that you go in and tick." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

- 3.22. However, relatively few focus group participants were aware that other methods of casting a vote were available, and even among those that did, knowledge was limited. Voting by post was mentioned as an alternative to polling stations on a small number of occasions. In addition, some mistakenly presumed that online voting was available.

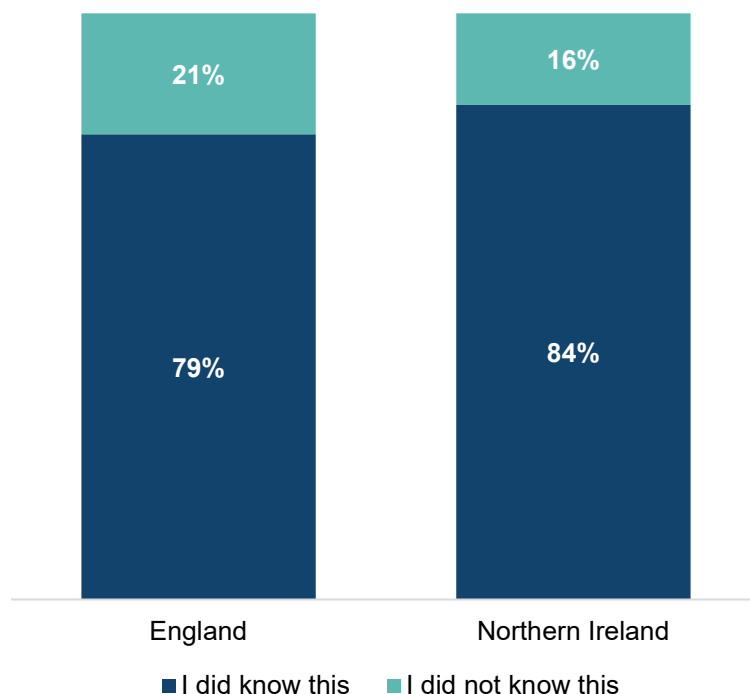
“You can send your ballot in the mail.” (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

“[I think you can vote] online?” (England, Female, 15 to 17)

Voter identification policy

3.23. Respondents in the survey were asked if, before they began the survey, they knew people needed to present a form of ID to vote in-person at certain elections. As Figure 3.3 shows, in England and Northern Ireland, a strong majority of around eight in ten respondents knew this was the case for all elections (79% and 84% respectively). Figure 3.4 shows that, in Wales and Scotland, around seven in ten respondents knew this was the case for general elections (68% and 76% respectively). The difference in question asked reflects the difference in the rules governing the requirement for identification across the four nations as all elections in England and Northern Ireland have ID requirements, compared to only reserved elections in Scotland and Wales.

Figure 3.3 - Please say if, before this survey, whether or not you knew each of the following about voting and elections in the UK? People need to present a form of ID when they go to a polling station to vote in person [England and Northern Ireland]

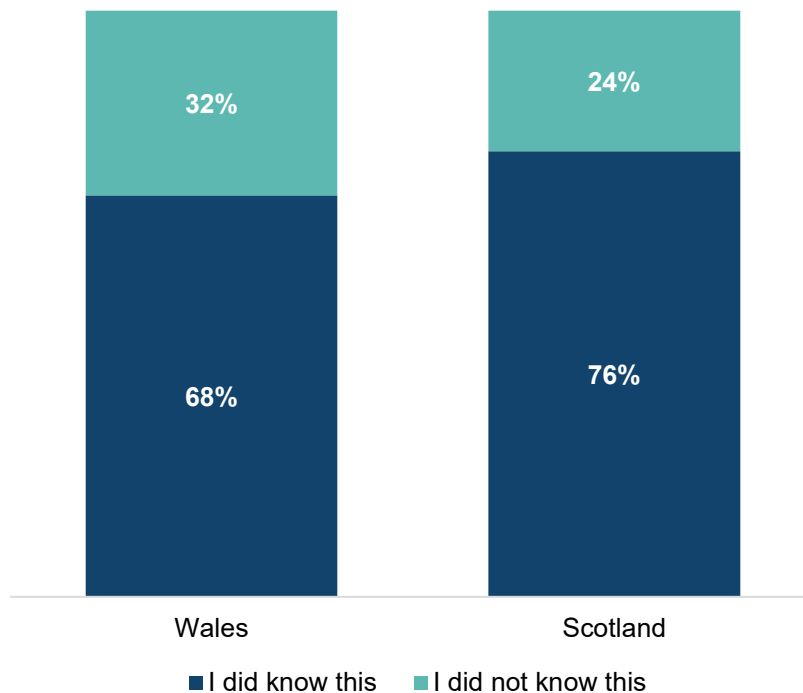


Base: All respondents = 2,175 14- to 17-year-olds in England and Northern Ireland.

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

Figure 3.4 - Please say if, before this survey, whether or not you knew each of the following about voting and elections in the UK? People need to present a form of ID when they go to a polling station to vote in person for a general election [Wales and Scotland]



Base: All respondents = 331 14- to 17-year-olds in Wales and Scotland

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 3.24. The majority of focus group participants were also aware of the need to prove their identity in polling stations. Passports and driving licences were cited as the most likely documents that would be used, with the latter instinctively presumed to be the easiest to carry and use to prove age or identity (in the United Kingdom, learning to drive on the road is legal from the age of 17, and provisional driving licenses may typically be applied for from the age of 15 and 9 months in England, Scotland and Wales, and 16 and 10 months in Northern Ireland).

“Photographic ID, right? That was the whole hoo-ha at the last general election... to be fair, they do hammer that home everywhere.” (Scotland, Male, 16 to 17)

- 3.25. Feedback from the consultation stage focus groups confirmed that most young people knew they had to bring accepted ID to polling stations in order to cast their vote. There was near universal understanding and approval that proof of identity was a rational and necessary pre-condition for being able to cast a vote in a polling station.

“Some kind of ID. So they know who you are.” (Scotland, Female, 14 to 15)

“Maybe just to make sure that they know that you are actually who you say you are.” (Scotland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 3.26. The need to prove one’s identity was taken for granted as a way to prevent possible voter fraud, a concern that many young participants touched on throughout the focus group process. Suggested fraudulent possibilities that were mentioned included the intention to steal someone’s else’s identity in order to fraudulently obtain their vote, or simply for someone to falsely prove they were of eligible voting age. In each case, there was near universal acceptance of why proof of identity was required.

“Same as before, isn’t it (to prevent) fraud?” (England, Male, 15 to 17)

“You could be like underage or something like that.” (Wales, Female, 14 to 15)

Government and electoral system

- 3.27. In the survey, respondents were asked to describe how much understanding they had about how government generally works in the UK. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, a large majority of respondents reported having at least some understanding about how government generally works in the UK (England 68%, Wales 59%, Scotland 75% and Northern Ireland 67%), while a small minority of respondents reported having no understanding at all about how government generally works in the UK (England 6%, Wales 8%, Scotland 5% and Northern Ireland 8%).

4. Attitudes towards Democracy, Politics and Elections

Chapter Summary

- 4.1. The following section looks at respondents' attitudes towards democracy, levels of political interest, trust in politics and politicians, interest in elections, and confidence in the fairness and integrity of elections across the four nations of the United Kingdom.
- 4.2. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, respondents showed strong support for democratic principles. Large majorities considered it important to live in a country where governments are chosen through elections (England 89%, Wales 88%, Scotland 91% and Northern Ireland 64%).
- 4.3. Interest in politics across the world, in the UK, in the local area and in the individual devolved nations was explored. Interest in one area correlated with interest in others across all four nations of the United Kingdom. At least some interest in UK politics was reported by 64% of respondents in England, 58% in Wales, 66% in Scotland and 52% in Northern Ireland.
- 4.4. Across the devolved nations, respondents in Scotland showed higher engagement with politics, both within their own nation and at the local level, when compared to Wales and Northern Ireland. 72% of respondents in Scotland reported at least some interest in politics in their own nation, compared with 52% in Wales and 61% in Northern Ireland.
- 4.5. Participants in the focus groups across all four nations of the United Kingdom consistently described low trust in politicians, with similar explanations provided including insincerity and a lack of responsiveness to young people. For some participants, however, voting at 16 was seen as a change that could potentially encourage politicians to both hear from and respond to this age group – something for which many participants expressed a strong desire.
- 4.6. For respondents in the survey, trust in elections specifically was reasonably high, with majorities reporting at least a fair amount of trust that elections are conducted fairly (England 67%, Wales 65%, Scotland 70% and Northern Ireland 58%).
- 4.7. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, interest in elections correlated with interest in politics, with strong majorities expressing at least some interest in registering to vote (England 69%, Wales 66%, Scotland 76% and Northern Ireland 76%).

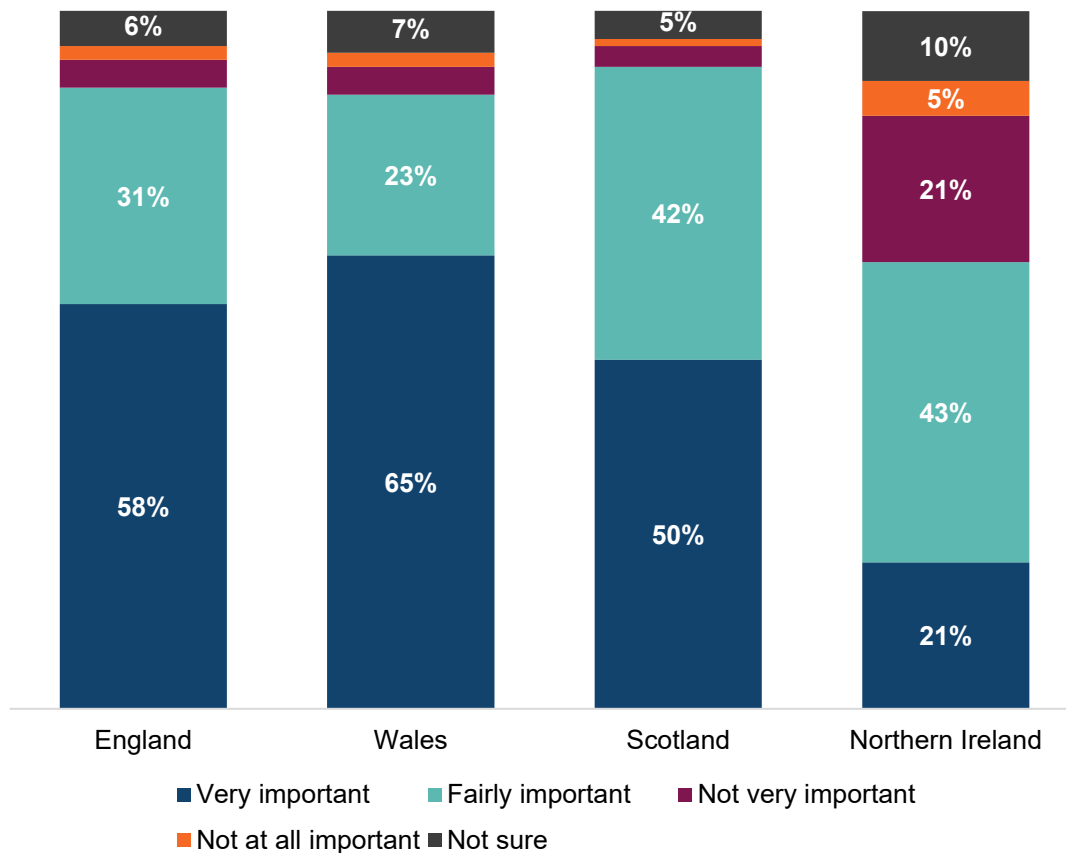
Introduction

- 4.8. Understanding young people's attitudes to democracy is important in supporting their participation in elections. For newly enfranchised voters, attitudes to democracy may shape whether voting is seen as meaningful and worth engaging with at the point they first become eligible. Insight into these attitudes helps identify potential risks to engagement and informs how support is designed to enable participation.
- 4.9. The following sections set out young people's attitudes to democracy, their interest in politics and political issues, their trust in politics and politicians, and their engagement with different types of elections across the United Kingdom.

Attitudes to democracy

- 4.10. Survey respondents were asked how important they thought it was to live in a country where the people choose their government through elections. Figure 4.1 shows that in all four nations of the United Kingdom, a strong majority of respondents believed it is at least fairly important (England 89%, Wales 88%, Scotland 91% and Northern Ireland 64%).

Figure 4.1 - How important, if at all, do you think it is to live in a country where the people choose their government through elections?



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 4.11. In England, the respondents who were more likely to think it is at least fairly important to live in a country where the people choose their government through elections were those from ABC1 households (94%), from London (95%) or the South (91%), who are aged 14 to 15 (91%), who are not limited in their day-to-day activities because of a health problem or disability (91%), who have an interest in world (95%), UK (96%) or local (95%) area politics and who will probably or definitely vote (97%).
- 4.12. In Wales, male respondents (92%) were more likely to think it is at least fairly important. In Scotland, the respondents more likely to think it is at least fairly important were those from ABC1 households (94%), who are not entitled to free school meals (94%) and respondents who are aged 14 to 15 (94%). In Northern Ireland, respondents from ABC1 households (69%) were more likely to think it is at least fairly important to live in a country where the people choose their government through elections.
- 4.13. The focus groups did not directly include the question of the importance of living in a country where governments are chosen through elections. However, there

were some conversations around democracy and elections, which focused on ensuring that votes were cast in an informed and legitimate way in order to protect democratic processes. Some participants had some self-doubt about the extent to which young participants felt capable of making informed decisions in elections, which demonstrated their implied support for the United Kingdom's democratic process.

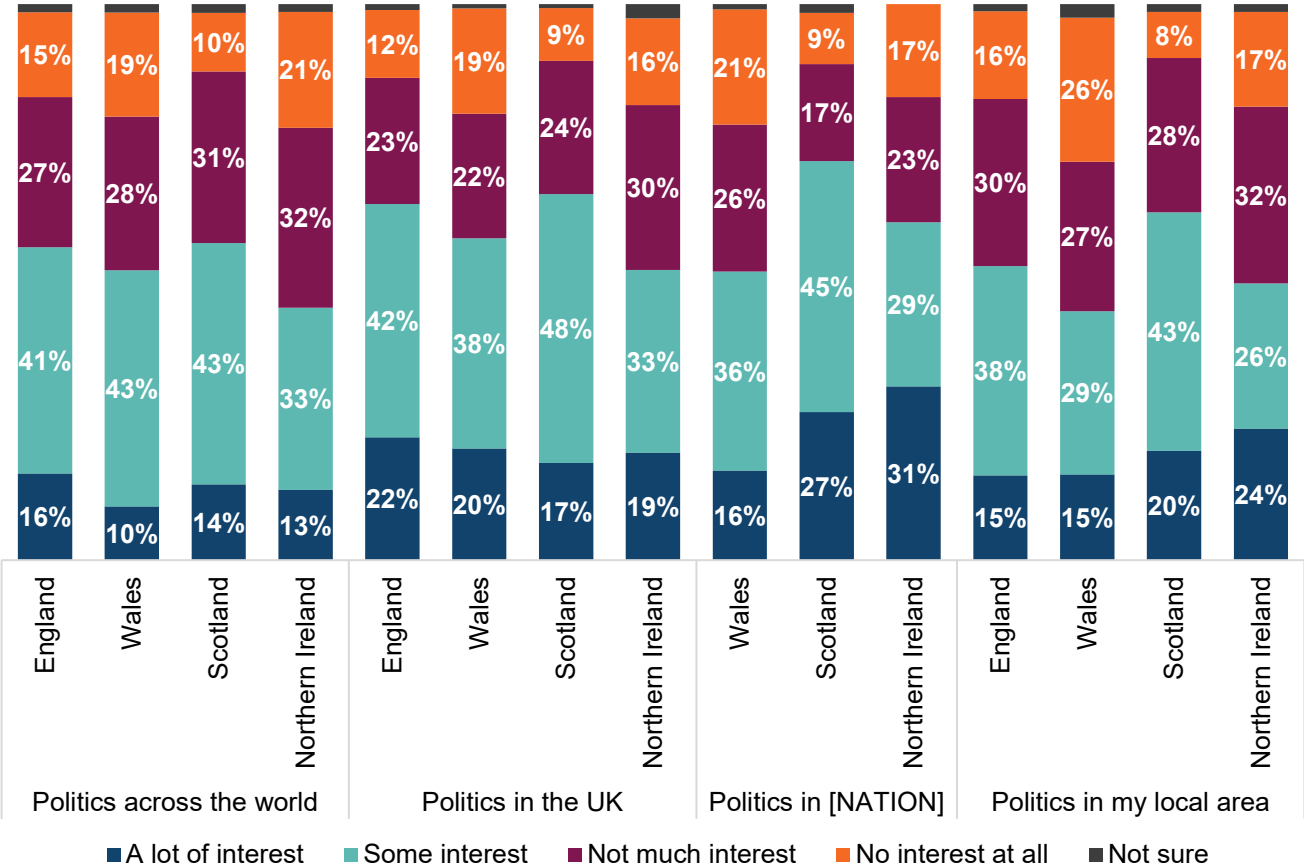
"I think it's important, but only if you understand what you're voting for." (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

Interest in politics and political issues

- 4.14. Attitudes to politics could influence whether individuals engage with political information, perceive elections as relevant to their lives and feel motivated to register to vote and cast their vote. For young people, levels of interest are often still forming and may be shaped by education, family influences, media consumption and early experiences of civic participation. Examining those levels of interest provides an insight into whether politics is perceived as accessible or distant.
- 4.15. Respondents were asked in the survey about their interest in politics across the world, politics in the UK, and politics in their local area. Respondents in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were also asked about their interest in politics in their own nation.
- 4.16. Across all four nations, having at least some interest in one of these areas tested correlated strongly with interest in the other areas. It was also correlated with an interest in elections, covered in subsequent questions. Therefore, if a respondent was interested in one area tested, they were likely to be interested in the other areas tested too.
- 4.17. When it comes to politics and political issues, across all four nations of the United Kingdom, most respondents had an interest in either none of the areas or all of the areas tested.
- 4.18. In England, the largest proportion of respondents (41%) had an interest in politics in all three areas tested. The second largest proportion of respondents (29%) had an interest in none of the areas tested. In Scotland the pattern was more extreme, with 48% having had an interest in all four areas, and 21% of respondents having had an interest in none of the areas tested. In Wales the corresponding proportions were 35% and 34%. In Northern Ireland they were 32% and 34%.

4.19. Figure 4.2 shows that respondents in England and Wales were most likely to have at least some interest in politics in the UK (64% and 58% respectively). In Scotland and Northern Ireland however, respondents were most likely to have had at least some interest in politics in their own nation (72% and 61% respectively).

Figure 4.2 - How much interest, if any, would you say you have in the following?



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

4.20. In England, Wales and Scotland, more than half of respondents had at least some interest in politics across the world (56%, 52% and 57% respectively). In Northern Ireland, a majority of respondents (53%) had not much interest or no interest at all.

4.21. In England, the respondents who were more likely to have at least some interest in politics across the world were those from London (75%), from ABC1 households (64%), entitled to free school meals (62%), attending private school (78%) and who will probably or definitely vote (70%).

4.22. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, more than half of respondents had at least some interest in politics in the UK (England 64%, Wales 58%, Scotland

66% and Northern Ireland 52%), with around one in five respondents having a lot of interest.

- 4.23. In England, the respondents who were more likely to have at least some interest in politics in the UK were from London (81%), from ABC1 households (71%), who attend private school (86%) and who will probably or definitely vote (79%).
- 4.24. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, more than half of respondents had at least some interest in politics in their respective nation, but there was some variation. The proportion of respondents with at least some interest was highest in Scotland at 72%, and lowest in Wales at 52%. In Northern Ireland, this was 61%.
- 4.25. The proportion of respondents who had at least some interest in politics in their local area varies across the four nations of the United Kingdom (England 53%, Wales 45%, Scotland 63% and Northern Ireland 50%). Wales had the highest proportion of respondents who have either not much interest or no interest at all (53%).
- 4.26. In England, the respondents who were more likely to have at least some interest in politics in their local area were those from London (73%), from ABC1 households (59%), eligible for free school meals (62%), attending private school (73%) and who will probably or definitely vote (67%).
- 4.27. Across all four questions, Scotland had the highest estimated number of respondents with at least some interest, but this was only statistically significantly higher when it came to politics in that nation and the local area. In contrast, the lowest estimated number of respondents with at least some interest was in Wales for politics in that nation and politics in the local area, and Northern Ireland for politics in the UK and politics across the world. These figures were not statistically significant, however.
- 4.28. Interest in politics among focus group participants largely supported the quantitative findings in the sense that some participants revealed a strong level of interest in political matters while others had limited or no interest at all. There was something of a strong polarisation which often simply came down to individual engagement. Stronger levels of interest were often contingent upon a keener personal sense of engagement among individuals. Sometimes, it was driven by newsworthy events that caught their attention or matters of self-interest.

"I feel like I'm more, not in like selfish way, but I'm more like mostly interested if it's like, if I know it's gonna affect me." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

"Obviously I study politics so I just have an avid interest... I check the news regularly about what's going on." (England, Male, 16 to 17)

"I'm fairly interested... it does have an effect on my daily life." (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 4.29. However, it was evident that many focus group participants were uninterested in general political matters. A number of young participants mentioned that they lacked any interest and consequently struggled to articulate any views on politics. This lack of interest extended to their friendship groups.

"I'm not very bothered... I've never really taken an interest in politics or anything like that." (Scotland, Male, 16 to 17)

"But then I have some friends who don't really care about it enough to have a conversation." (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

- 4.30. A small number of participants expressed the opposite, being passionate and enthusiastic about politics and the issues of today that impact their lives. Some participants even engaged in local political issues. However, even amongst some of these more actively engaged participants, some felt that there was more learning to do about politics in general before they could consider themselves fully knowledgeable about how politics affects them.

"It is important to be in the know. It is important to have an interest, it will affect you for the rest of your life." (Scotland, Female, 16 to 17)

"I am quite interested in politics 'cause it's really important and like they affect our lives. But I feel like sometimes it's kind of hard to like figure out what's actually going on." (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

- 4.31. Separately from knowledge about political issues, knowledge was more limited about the detailed workings of political systems and processes.

"I would want to understand more, I do not know how it works, there is a lot of misconstrued information and so I want to understand more." (Northern Ireland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 4.32. For many participants in the focus groups, a lack of interest in government and the electoral system meant that they did not actively seek out political information, nor did they engage with news sources or educational materials that might have increased their understanding of political institutions, electoral processes, or current affairs:

"I'm sort of only interested if it's like handed to me. Like I would never go looking for information, but if obviously like I hear something, I might be interested about it, but I'm never gonna like Google it myself, I don't think." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

Attitudes to politics and politicians

- 4.33. Lack of interest did not only apply to government and elections, but also to politics and politicians. Politics was widely perceived as lacking relevance to their everyday lives and was frequently described as "boring" and "confusing", as well as something viewed as more relevant to adults who merely "moaned about" it:

"It's boring — I'd rather do anything else." (Scotland, Female, 14 to 15)

"I don't feel like it's something for young people — it's all just middle-aged men shouting." (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 4.34. Focus group participants were also asked how much trust they had in politics and politicians in the UK. Overall, trust in politicians was low. Many young people argued that politicians behaved performatively: that politicians say what they think the general public want to hear or make policy promises and then do not follow through on them. Furthermore, some young people echoed their parents' cynicism about current politicians:

"I don't trust any of them. They just say what people want to hear." (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

"I trust some, but most just say whatever gets votes." (Scotland, Male, 16 to 17)

"My dad always said, if it's too good to be true, it probably isn't true." (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 4.35. The qualitative research highlighted a broad consensus among participants that politicians do not currently listen to or meaningfully engage with young people, reinforcing a perception that their views are not valued. Many young people felt that politicians regard those aged 14 to 17 as "immature" and, as a result, do not

take their opinions seriously:

“The only person they took seriously was Greta Thunberg, she is the only young person I can name who they listen to.” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

“They do not care about young people, most of their policies do not help us. They do not think about younger people when they make policies.” (Scotland, Female, 14 to 15)

- 4.36. Whilst young people were cynical about politicians’ current levels of interest in their age group, some expressed optimism for the future. These participants suggested that lowering the voting age could encourage politicians to listen more closely to young people’s views. A small number also felt that having the right to vote would lend their voices greater value, significance, and influence in future political discourse:

“I think if, yeah, if we were able to vote, then we would, there'd be much more offered to us as young people and much more to get us excited and get us voting for that party.” (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

“Politicians do not have a reason to think about 16-year-olds, so they focus on the parents to get a vote. But maybe we will see a change in that if we get the vote.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 4.37. Overall, participants perceived that winning elections currently matters more to politicians than genuinely representing the views of young people. For some, voting was therefore seen as the only meaningful lever for change capable of compelling politicians to listen and respond. While many young participants expressed a strong desire to be heard, this was accompanied by a prevailing lack of faith in political responsiveness:

“If there were Votes at 16, I think we'd be taken much more seriously because we're such a big asset in getting their parties in.” (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

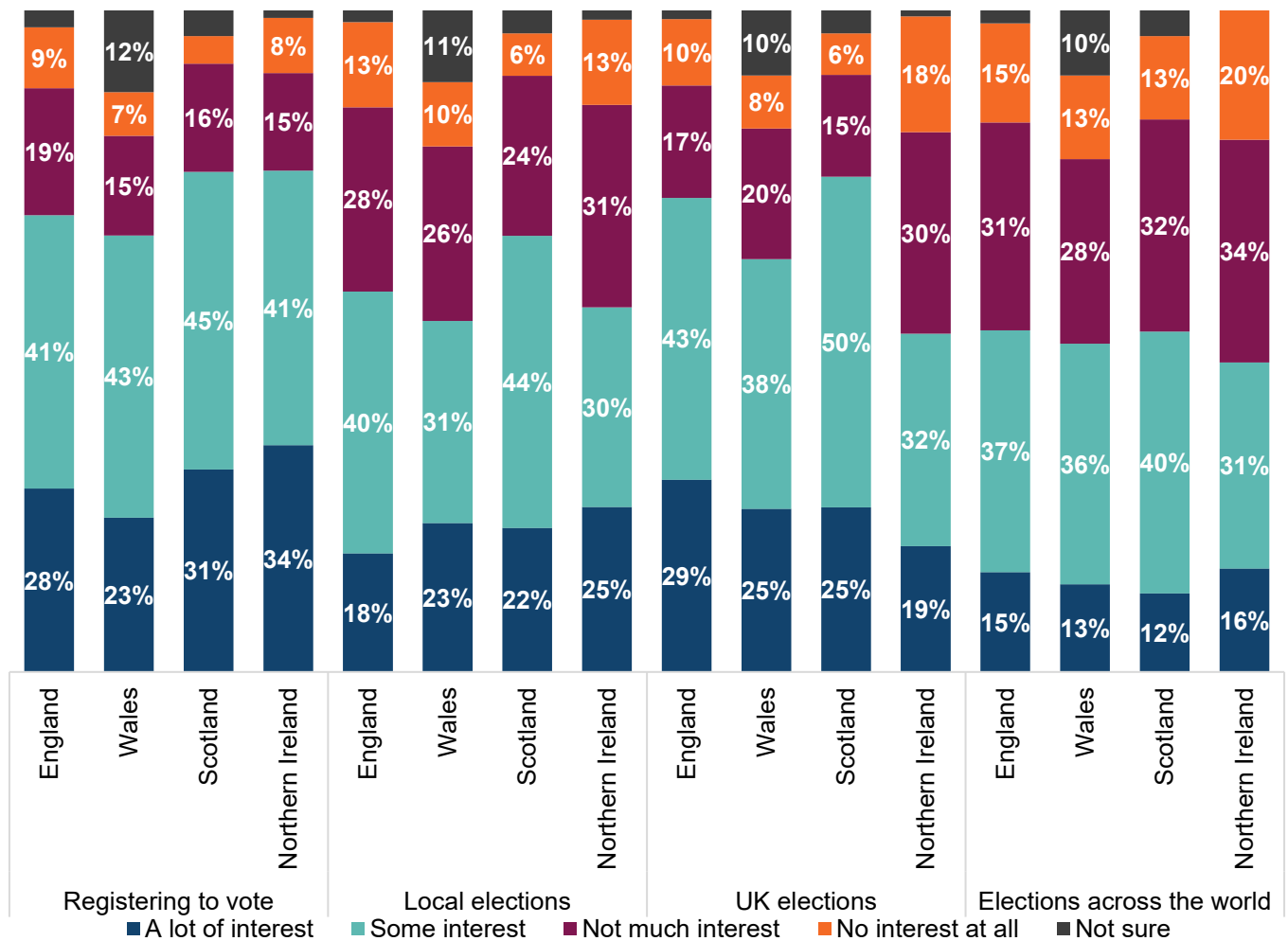
“If Vote 16 goes through, then maybe they would be forced to listen to us.” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

- 4.38. Participants’ views on how seriously young people’s views were taken by politicians and levels of trust in politicians among this age group were consistent across focus groups of both age bands and in all four nations of the United Kingdom.

Interest in elections

- 4.39. In the survey, respondents were asked about their degree of interest in different aspects of elections. Specifically, respondents were asked about their interest in registering to vote, local elections, UK elections and elections across the world.
- 4.40. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, an interest in one aspect tested is strongly correlated with interest in the other aspects tested. It is also correlated with an interest in politics and political issues.
- 4.41. When it comes to elections, across all four nations of the United Kingdom, the largest proportion of respondents had an interest in all four of the aspects tested. In Wales and Northern Ireland, the second largest proportion had an interest in none of the aspects tested. In England and Scotland, the second largest proportion had an interest in three of the aspects tested.
- 4.42. In England, 38% of respondents had an interest in registering to vote, local elections, UK elections and elections across the world, compared to 18% who had an interest in none of these. In Wales the corresponding proportions were 33% and 26%. In Scotland the corresponding proportions were 41% and 15%. In Northern Ireland they were 36% and 22%.
- 4.43. As the following data shows, the topic that respondents in England were most likely to have at least some interest in was UK elections (72%). In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, the topic that respondents were most likely to have at least some interest in was registering to vote (66%, 76% and 76% respectively).
- 4.44. Figure 4.3 shows that, in all four nations of the United Kingdom, a strong majority of respondents had at least some interest in registering to vote (England 69%, Wales 66%, Scotland 76% and Northern Ireland 76%) and more than half of respondents had at least some interest in local elections (England 57%, Wales 53%, Scotland 66% and Northern Ireland 55%).
- 4.45. Additionally, more than half of respondents had at least some interest in UK elections. However, in England (72%) and Scotland (75%), strong majorities of respondents had at least some interest in UK elections. This is lower in Wales (62%) and Northern Ireland (51%). In all four nations of the United Kingdom, around half of respondents had at least some interest in elections across the world (England 52%, Wales 50%, Scotland 51% and Northern Ireland 47%).

Figure 4.3 - How much interest, if any, would you say you generally have in each of the following?



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 4.46. In England, the respondents who were more likely to have at least some interest in registering to vote were those from London (83%), from ABC1 households (76%), who are male (72%), who attend private school (86%), who are interested in world (86%), UK (87%) or local (90%) politics and who will probably or definitely vote (86%).
- 4.47. The respondents in England who were more likely to have at least some interest in local elections were those aged 14 to 15 (61%), from London (78%), from ABC1 households (63%), entitled to free school meals (64%), attending private school (78%), interested in world (76%), UK (77%) or local (87%) politics and who will probably or definitely vote (72%).
- 4.48. The respondents in England who were more likely to have at least some interest in UK elections were those from London (89%), aged 14 to 15 (75%), from ABC1

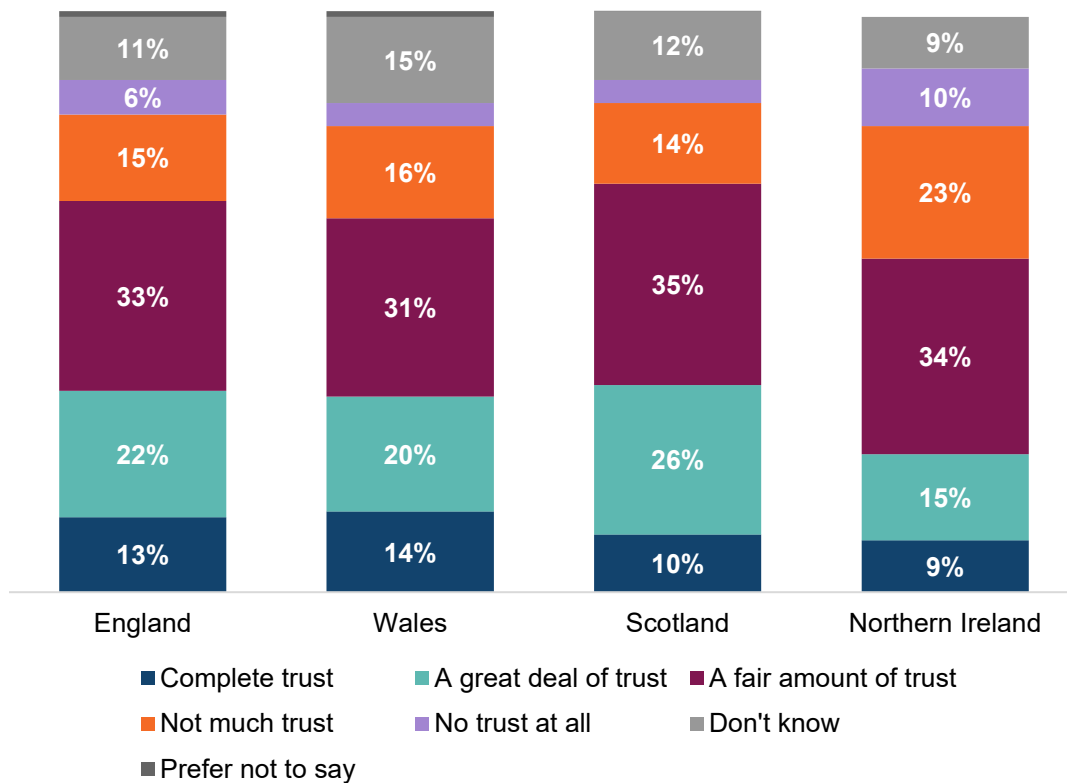
households (79%), whose day-to-day activities are not limited because of a health problem or disability (73%), who attend private school (92%), who are interested in world (92%), UK (93%) or local (93%) politics and who will probably or definitely vote (87%).

- 4.49. The respondents in England who were more likely to have at least some interest in elections across the world were those from London (72%), from ABC1 households (59%), entitled to free school meals (57%), attending private school (74%), interested in world (81%), UK (71%) or local (74%) politics and who will probably or definitely vote (65%).
- 4.50. The nation with the largest proportion of respondents who said they had not much interest or no interest at all in UK elections was Northern Ireland (30% and 18% respectively).
- 4.51. Across three of the four questions, Scotland had the largest estimated proportion of respondents who say they had at least some interest, though only in the case of interest in their local area were they statistically significantly higher than the three other nations. Only when it came to elections across the world were England's estimates higher than Scotland, though again not statistically significantly.

Attitudes to elections

- 4.52. Respondents were asked in the survey about the degree of trust they had that elections in the UK will be conducted in a fair and honest manner.
- 4.53. Figure 4.4 shows that, in all four nations of the United Kingdom, a majority of respondents had at least a fair amount of trust that UK elections will be conducted in a fair and honest manner (England 67%, Wales 65%, Scotland 70% and Northern Ireland 58%).

Figure 4.4 - How much trust, if any, do you have that UK elections will be conducted in a fair and honest manner?



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 4.54. One in three respondents in Northern Ireland (33%) had either not much trust or no trust at all. In England, Wales and Scotland, that proportion was around one in five (21%, 19% and 18% respectively).
- 4.55. In England, the respondents who were more likely to have at least a fair amount of trust that UK elections will be conducted in a fair and honest manner were those aged 14 to 15 (73%), from London (80%), from ABC1 households (74%), who are male (70%), whose day-to-day activities are not limited because of a health problem or disability (70%), who attend private school (91%), who are interested in world (80%), UK (80%) or local (81%) politics and who will probably or definitely vote (83%).
- 4.56. In Scotland and in Northern Ireland, the respondents who were more likely to have at least a fair amount of trust that UK elections will be conducted in a fair and honest manner were those from ABC1 households (74% and 63% respectively).

- 4.57. Focus group participants' discussion was in line with the quantitative evidence. Not only was democracy seen as a good system overall (in contrast with other forms of government such as a dictatorship), but elections were considered to mostly result in governments that people chose (notwithstanding some criticisms of First-Past-the-Post and perceived unfairness in regional representation).

"It's pretty fair. Because everyone's vote gets tallied and then the person who gets the most votes just gets in." (Northern Ireland, Female, 16 to 17)

"Even though none of the parties are particularly good, at least the general public get to vote for who they want. It's the lesser of multiple evils." (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

5. Sources of Information and Education

Chapter Summary

- 5.1. The following section looks at the sources from which respondents received information about politics and elections, including family, traditional media, education settings and social media. It also explores the nature of political discussion and perceptions of information reliability.
- 5.2. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, parents or adults at home, television and social media represented the three most common sources of political information for respondents, with largely similar proportions selecting each.
- 5.3. For respondents in all four nations of the United Kingdom, exposure to political content on social media was widespread. TikTok and YouTube were the platforms where political content was most frequently seen. The proportion seeing political content at least once a week on TikTok ranged from 72% in Scotland to 51% in Northern Ireland. Respondents from Scotland were consistently more likely to report frequent exposure to political content online, while respondents in Northern Ireland were least likely across most platforms.
- 5.4. Strong majorities of survey respondents in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and a majority in Wales, thought that young people should learn more about politics and political issues in school or college. In England the figure was 65%, in Scotland it was 69%, Northern Ireland 65% and Wales 53%. Similarly, a strong majority thought that young people should learn more about voting and elections in school or college, ranging from 68% in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to 61% in Wales.
- 5.5. These findings were replicated among focus group participants, where a general understanding was expressed that schools were well placed to deliver this in an objective and unbiased manner.
- 5.6. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, up to half of survey respondents had received at least some support by their school or college to feel ready to vote in the next election they were allowed to vote in. This ranged from 50% in Scotland and Northern Ireland to 34% in Wales. Focus group participants reinforced this conclusion, frequently describing political education as sporadic, limited or dependent on individual teachers.
- 5.7. Respondents' awareness that the Electoral Commission oversees elections in the United Kingdom varied between nations, ranging from 38% in Wales to 58%

in Scotland, with England and Northern Ireland at 47% and 44% respectively. Focus group participants, however, demonstrated lower awareness of the Electoral Commission.

- 5.8. For respondents in the survey, political discussion occurred more frequently within families than among friendship groups in all four nations. However, sizeable minorities reported no political discussions with family in the previous 12 months (England 31%, Wales 39%, Scotland 28% and Northern Ireland 35%).
- 5.9. For participants in the focus groups, teachers, family members and established news organisations were generally regarded as more trustworthy sources than online influencers or social media content.
- 5.10. Many focus group participants expressed scepticism regarding accuracy and bias, with many participants describing the need to cross-check information against mainstream news sources. Some focus group participants also reported difficulties in determining the accuracy of political content and in distinguishing between factual information and elements that may have been exaggerated or embellished. Identifying political bias was also a difficulty for some.

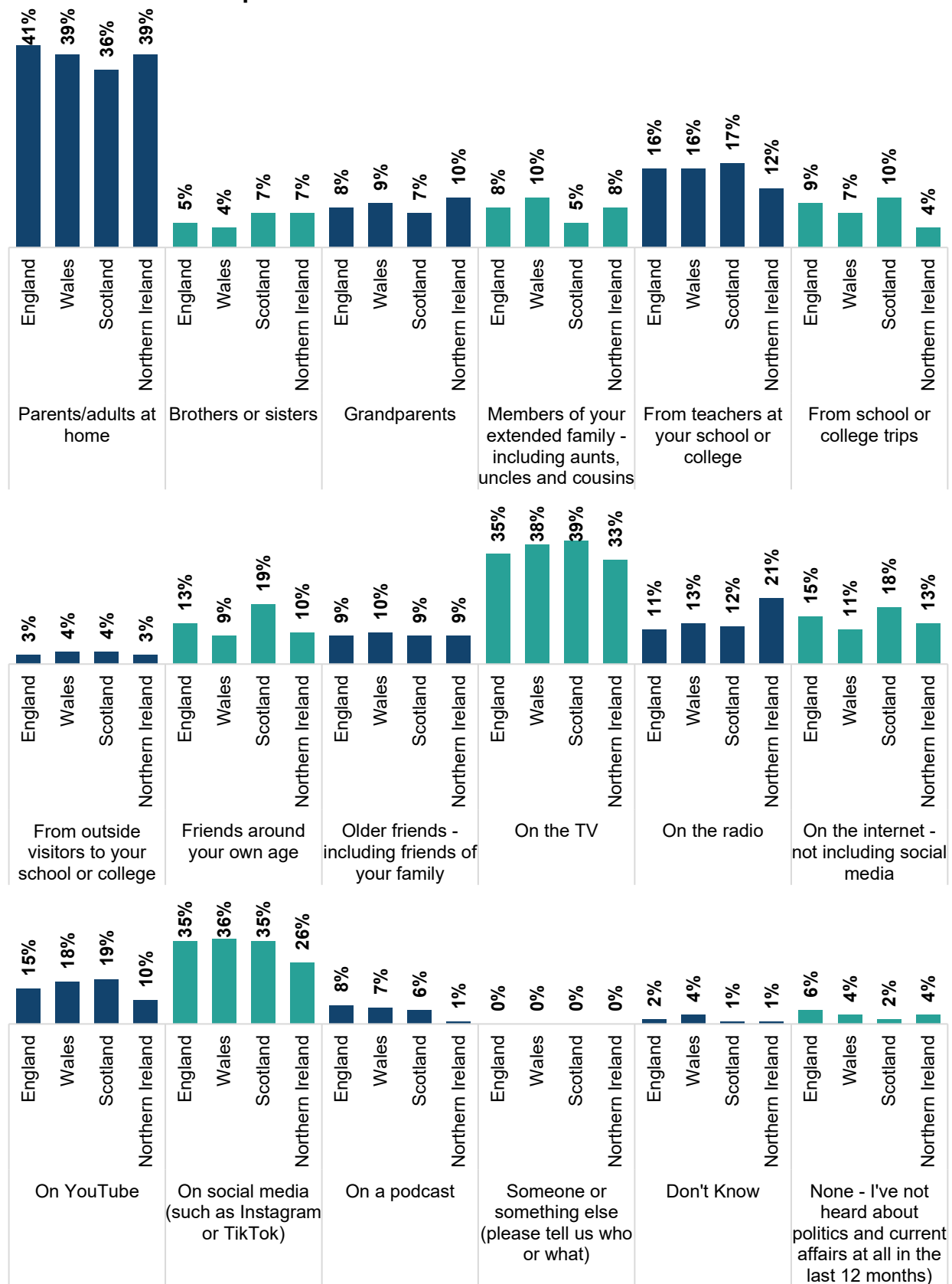
Introduction

- 5.11. Education and engagement are a vital part of implementing Votes at 16, as empowering and equipping young people with the knowledge and skills they need is crucial.
- 5.12. In order for young people to be informed and prepared to take part in the democratic process, it is important to understand where young people currently get their information about politics and current affairs from, and their experience of how the education system currently prepares them for reaching voting age.
- 5.13. The following sections set out where young people received information about politics and elections, including general sources, social media, family and friends, perceptions of information reliability, and the role of the education system across the four nations.

General sources of information

- 5.14. In the survey, across all four nations of the United Kingdom, respondents were asked to choose, from a list provided, up to three sources from which they had heard the most about politics and current affairs in the last 12 months.
- 5.15. As seen in Figure 5.1, in all four nations of the United Kingdom, parents/adults at home, television and social media were the most common sources for respondents to have heard about politics and current affairs in the last 12 months out of the list provided (41%, 35% and 35% respectively in England; 39%, 38% and 36% respectively in Wales; 36%, 39% and 35% respectively in Scotland; 39%, 33% and 26% respectively in Northern Ireland).
- 5.16. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, parents/adults at home was estimated to be the most common source where respondents heard about politics and current affairs. This source was only statistically significantly higher than other sources in England, however. In Scotland, television was estimated to be the most common source, but not statistically significantly more than other sources. Radio in Northern Ireland was the only other source on the list selected by more than one in five in any nation across the United Kingdom.

Figure 5.1 - In the last 12 months, from which of the following, if any, have you heard the most about politics and current affairs?



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Respondents were able to select up to three responses.

- 5.17. In England, the respondents most likely to have heard about politics and current affairs most from their parents or adults at home were those aged 14 to 15 (44%), respondents from ABC1 households (43%), respondents whose day-to-day activities are not limited because of a health problem or disability (43%), respondents who are not entitled to free school meals (44%) and respondents who will probably or definitely vote (45%).
- 5.18. The television was more likely to be a source among respondents aged 14 to 15 (38%), respondents whose day-to-day activities are not limited because of a health problem or disability (36%), respondents who are interested in world (38%), UK (39%) or local (40%) politics and respondents who will probably or definitely vote (39%). Social media was more likely to be a source among respondents aged 16 to 17 (39%) and respondents who are interested in world or UK politics (both 38%).
- 5.19. YouTube, TikTok and Instagram social media platforms were regularly cited by focus group participants as main sources of political information that comes their way, if only because it was often presented to them in their feeds (presumably) by the platform algorithm, rather than as a result of deliberate search.

"YouTube, TikTok definitely. I don't really go looking for it, it just comes up." (UK, Female, Disability group)

- 5.20. As might be the case with any unrequested content though, many respondents ignored it. In very few cases did any young participant pay much attention to it, preferring instead to concentrate on the non-political content that did interest them.

"If I see something political on social media, I usually scroll past it." (England, Male, 14 to 15)

"I think I do see it, but I don't really notice it." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

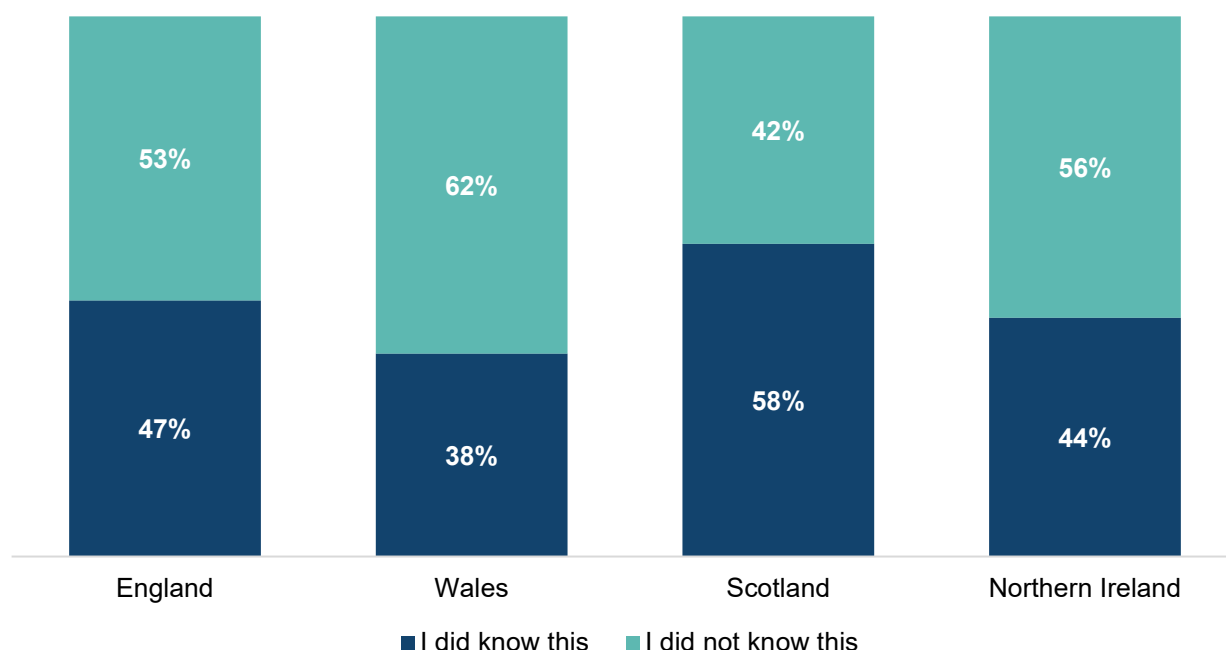
- 5.21. However, though social media political content was often unrequested or ignored, some participants explained that it still served as their primary political news source, if only because other sources often passed them by.

"All my politics is social media based. Most of what I see is like TikToks or Instagram posts." (UK, Male, Disability group)

- 5.22. Respondents in the survey were asked if, before they began the survey, they knew that the Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections in the United Kingdom. Figure 5.2 shows that across the four nations of

the United Kingdom, knowledge about this varied greatly: from 38% in Wales to 58% in Scotland. England and Northern Ireland were between the two at 47% and 44% respectively.

Figure 5.2 - Please say if, before this survey, whether or not you knew each of the following about voting and elections in the UK? The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections in the UK



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 5.23. It is possible that in prompting participants with the name of the Electoral Commission in the survey question, recognition was slightly inflated compared to if respondents were asked to name the independent body unprompted. This may explain why focus group participants demonstrated lower awareness of the Electoral Commission. There was also a reluctance to contemplate using other relevant organisations and/or charities for reliable political information. While not necessarily ruling them out as a potential source of information about voting and elections, when prompted in the focus groups, charities (for example) were not viewed as a destination for such material.

“I have never heard of the Electoral Commission. Maybe I would trust it if it was official, but I don’t really know what it is.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

“I don’t think I’d be looking at charities... charities are all for sympathy and they want you to believe their thing or feel sorry for them.” (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

Social media

5.24. Respondents were asked in the survey how often they have seen what they regard as political content on eight named social media platforms:

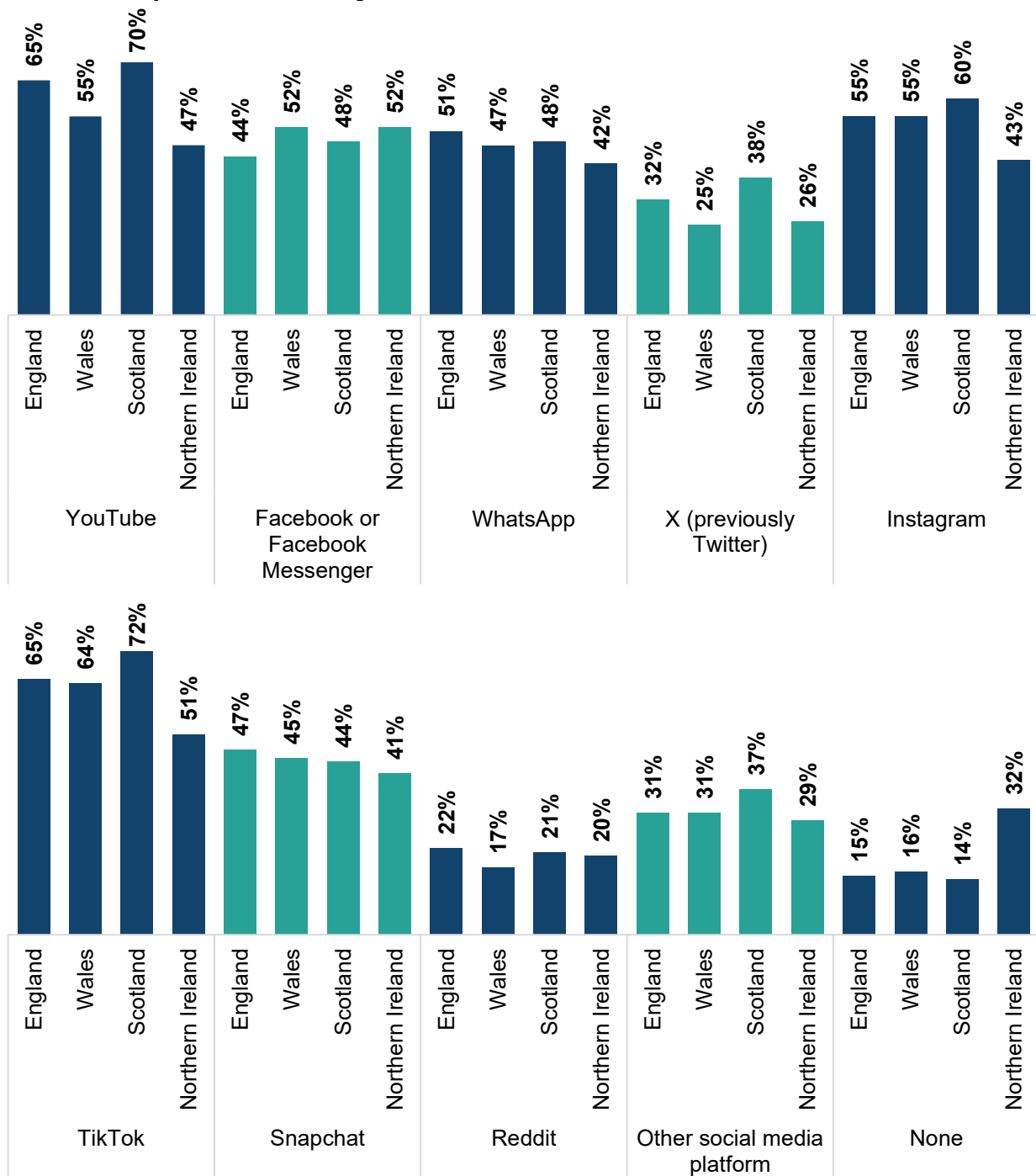
- YouTube
- Facebook and/or Facebook Messenger
- WhatsApp
- X (previously Twitter)
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Reddit

5.25. These questions were asked to those respondents who completed the online version of the survey. Because this part of the survey was conducted via the internet, it is possible that those respondents, being online, were more likely to have engaged with social media and other online platforms than those with limited or no access to the internet.

5.26. Social media was also discussed by participants in the focus groups when it came to reliability of information. This is covered in more detail in the Reliability of information section.

5.27. Figure 5.3 shows that, of the social media platforms tested, TikTok and YouTube were the social media platforms where respondents in England, Wales and Scotland were most likely to have seen political content weekly or more. While political content was also likely to have been seen on these platforms in Northern Ireland, Facebook or Facebook Messenger also featured.

Figure 5.3 - Percentage of respondents who have seen political content on different social media platforms weekly or more



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

- 5.28. The proportion of respondents who have seen political content weekly or more often on TikTok ranged from nearly three quarters of respondents in Scotland (72%) to just over half of respondents in Northern Ireland (51%).
- 5.29. The proportion of respondents who had seen political content weekly or more often on YouTube ranges from seven in ten respondents in Scotland (70%) to just under half of respondents in Northern Ireland (47%).
- 5.30. Reddit was the social media platform where respondents were least likely to have seen political content weekly or more often.
- 5.31. Across all social media platforms, respondents in Scotland were most likely to have seen political content weekly or more often. In Northern Ireland, they were least likely.
- 5.32. In England, the respondents who were more likely to see content about politics and current affairs on at least one of the listed social media platforms at least once a week, were those from ABC1 households (87%), entitled to free school meals (88%), who have an interest in world (90%), UK (89%) or local (91%) politics, who will probably or definitely vote (90%) and who attend private schools (95%).
- 5.33. The qualitative research highlighted that social media was often a dominant source of political content for young people, shaping their access to political information and opportunities for engagement. However, participants indicated that they rarely sought out political content deliberately. Instead, political information was typically encountered passively, as platform algorithms curated and delivered content through personalised feeds, reels, and “For You” pages. This algorithm-driven exposure meant that young people’s engagement with political content was often incidental rather than intentional:

“I do not actively go look out for it, it just pops up.” (Scotland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.34. Young people in the focus groups shared that they accessed various social media channels, including TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. Despite social media being a very common source of information, participants broadly agreed that political content encountered on these platforms often lacked the quality, accuracy, and seriousness associated with more traditional news outlets. As a result, young people frequently reported cross-checking political content seen on social media against established news sources in order to verify its credibility:

“The people who generate the videos take everything out of extreme, then it is

obvious it is not real. Then I really research it to verify it.” (Northern Ireland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.35. A small minority of focus group participants expressed concern that social media platforms tend to amplify extreme political views, with political content disproportionately reflecting positions from the left or right fringes. These participants noted that, in contrast, comparatively little content from mainstream political parties was encountered or visible on their feeds:

“Social media pushes extreme views, far right and far left views, it pushes content as it garners the most likes and clicks. It does not represent the views of the country.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 5.36. Young people explained that their social media feeds were often dominated by content about particular political issues. For example, some mentioned the murder of Charlie Kirk whilst others mentioned the war in Gaza. It should be noted that both were major news stories during the fieldwork period.

“When Charlie Kirk got shot, I got more like political videos on my phone than I did, than any other time.” (Wales, Female, 14 to 15)

- 5.37. While young people acknowledged that some online content can be informative and objective, many reported difficulties in navigating the wide range of digital sources available, leading some to disengage from online political content altogether. Others described relying on a small number of trusted commentators, to whom they would return when actively seeking information or guidance on specific political issues:

“There’s like pages that explain stuff but it’s hard to know which ones are proper.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

“There’s a guy called [influencer] who always comments on what’s happening in politics... I go to him a lot of the time to see what’s going on.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

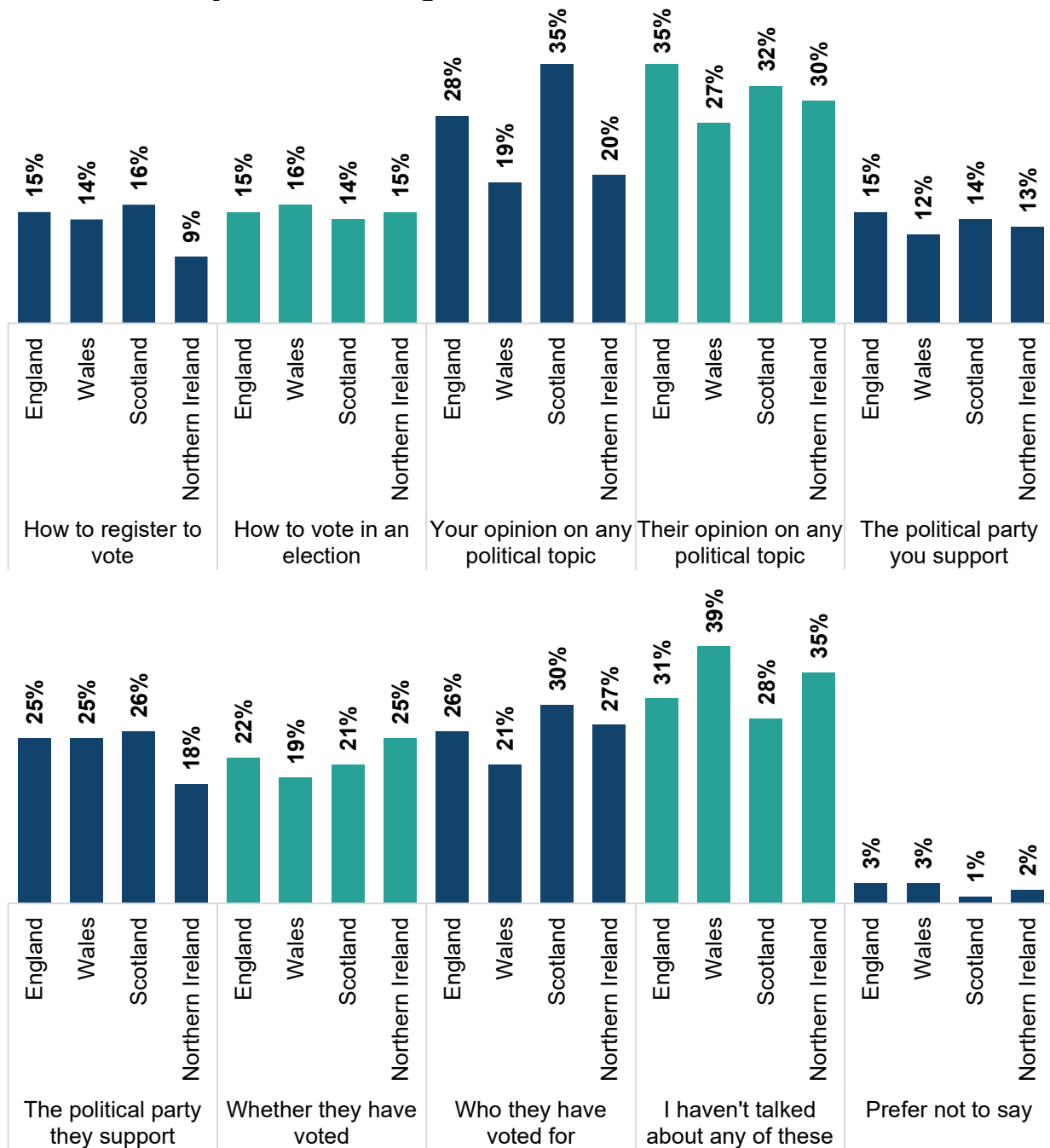
- 5.38. The views, consumption and activity on social media observed in the qualitative research were consistent across focus groups in terms of age bands and across all four nations of the United Kingdom. That said, when prompted, some young people in Wales reflected that they encountered little to no region-specific political content and instead found that political material on social media was more heavily focused on issues in England and the United States, rather than on local or devolved political matters that were more directly relevant to their lives:

“Social media is more focused on England, rather than Scotland or Wales.”
(Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

Family

- 5.39. In the survey, respondents from across the four nations of the United Kingdom were asked about a range of different topics covering politics and current affairs. Specifically, respondents were asked whether they spoke to their family about these topics in the last 12 months. It is important to note that there had not been a general election or any devolved elections during that 12 month period and, if there had been, it would be expected that more political discussions would take place.
- 5.40. Figure 5.4 shows that, across the four nations of the United Kingdom, none of the eight different topics tested had been spoken about between respondents and their families in the last twelve months by more than around a third of respondents.

Figure 5.4 - In the last 12 months, have you talked to family members or those you live with about any of the following:



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

- 5.41. The respondents' family members' opinions on any political topic were estimated to be the most common topic for discussion in England (35%), Wales (27%) and Northern Ireland (30%). In Scotland, the respondents' own opinions on any political topic were estimated to be the most common topic of conversation (35%).
- 5.42. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, sizeable minorities of respondents had not spoken about any of the topics tested (England 31%, Wales 39%, Scotland 28% and Northern Ireland 35%).
- 5.43. In England, the respondents who were more likely to have discussed how to register to vote, how to vote in an election and the political party the respondent supported are those from London (24%, 22% and 23%) and those entitled to free school meals (20%, 20% and 19%). The respondents who were more likely to have discussed whether their family member had voted are those aged 14 to 15 (25%), who are female (25%) and whose day-to-day activities are limited because of a health problem or disability (29%). Respondents aged 14 to 15 were more likely than those aged 16 to 17 to have discussed how to vote in an election (17% and 13% respectively).
- 5.44. This was not explored in the focus groups as any such discussion may have been influenced by whether parents were in the vicinity. It was, however, mentioned unprompted in some instances by participants.
- 5.45. In line with quantitative findings, it was also observed in the focus groups that although political conversations could not be described as being a frequent feature of family interaction, they were much more likely to occur among family members than friends, largely because of conversational catalysts, typically shared viewings of (BBC) news broadcasts, or dinner-table debate.

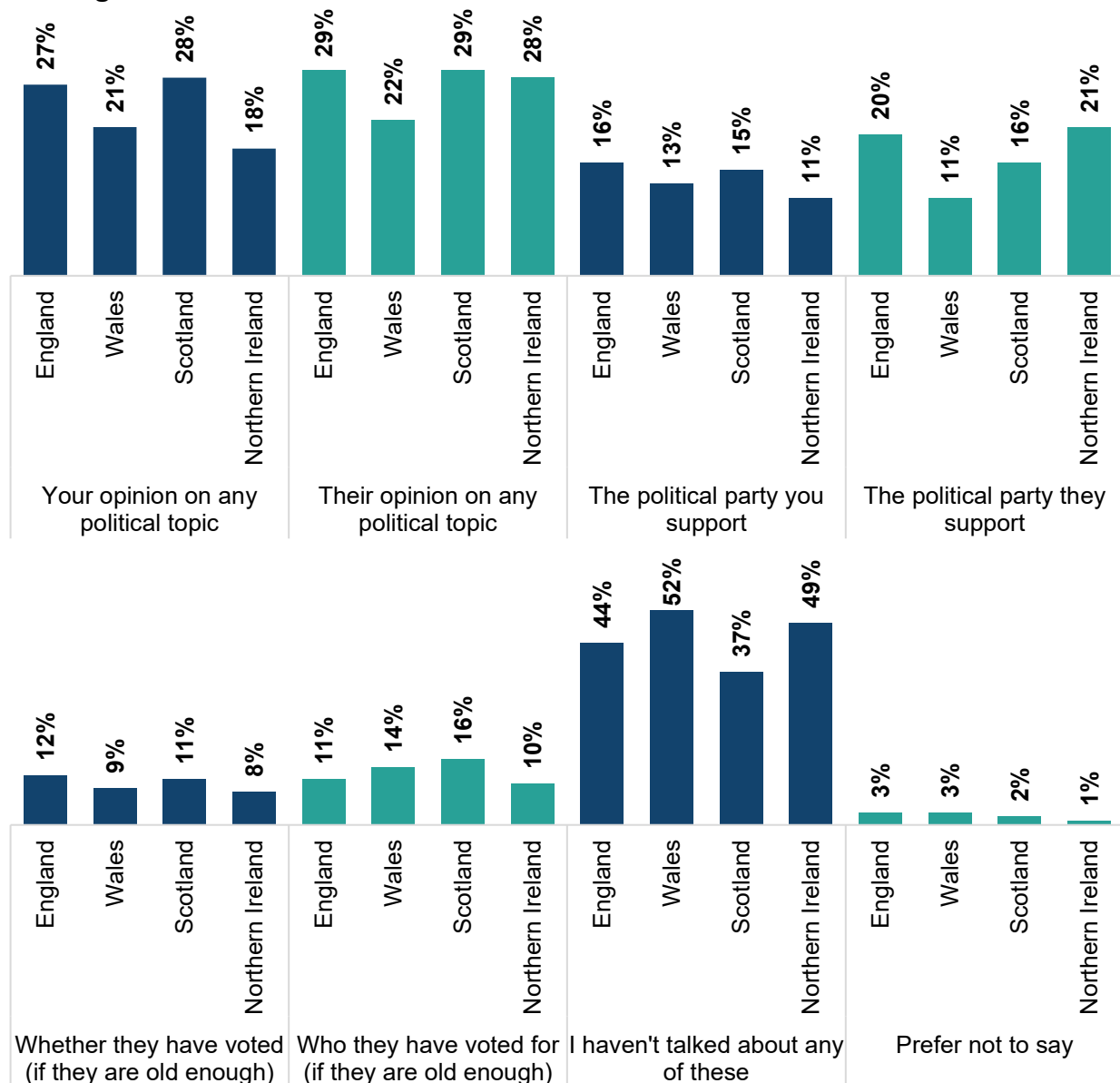
"Yeah, I think for my family, we talk about it quite a lot... Sometimes we talk about it a bit in lessons." (UK, Female, Disability group)

"At supper time, we just have the news on when we are having supper."
(Northern Ireland, Female, 14 to 15)

Friends

- 5.46. Similarly to the previous set of questions, in the survey, respondents from across the four nations of the United Kingdom were asked about a subset of topics covering politics and current affairs. Respondents were asked if they spoke to their friends about this range of topics in the last 12 months. Once again, it is important to note that there had not been a general election or any devolved elections during that 12-month period and, if there had been, it would be expected that more political discussions would take place.
- 5.47. As seen in Figure 5.5, in all four nations of the United Kingdom, the most commonly selected option was that respondents had not spoken about any of the topics tested with their friends in the last twelve months.

Figure 5.5 - In the last 12 months, have you talked to friends about any of the following:



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

5.48. In Wales, more than half of respondents (52%) had not discussed any of the different topics with their friends. In England the proportion was 44% and in Northern Ireland it was 49%. In Scotland, the proportion was under two in five (37%), and the lowest of the four nations.

5.49. None of the topics tested were spoken about with friends by more than three in ten respondents in any of the four nations of the United Kingdom.

- 5.50. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, the respondent's own opinion or the respondent's friend's opinion on any political topic were estimated to be the topics most likely to be discussed.
- 5.51. In England, respondents in London were more likely than those from other regions to have discussed all the subjects tested, with the exception of their friend's opinion on any political topic and the political party their friend supported.
- 5.52. Respondents who will probably or definitely vote were more likely than those who probably or definitely will not vote to have discussed all the subjects tested, with the exception of whether their friend has voted (if they are old enough).
- 5.53. Respondents entitled to free school meals were more likely than those not entitled to free school meals to have discussed their opinion on any political topic (30%), the political party their friend supports (25%), the political party they support (20%), and who their friend has voted for (if they are old enough) (15%).
- 5.54. Respondents from ABC1 households, respondents with an interest in world, UK or local politics and respondents at private schools were more likely to have discussed all the subjects tested.
- 5.55. This area of research was not included in the qualitative focus groups due to the potential influence of the use of friendship pairs. However, it did arise unprompted in some circumstances. Conversations about politics between friends were reported to be less common, again supporting the quantitative evidence. When they did occur, they appeared to be contingent upon personal levels of interest in newsworthy political debate being higher. For many the lack of interest in politics and voting translated into avoidance of the subject.

"I don't really talk about it often, but it comes up sometimes." (UK, Female, Disability group)

- 5.56. For others with higher levels of engagement there was a realisation that political debate often occurred amongst others with high engagement.

"It really does depend on the topics. Because some of them don't really consume as much as me, but I know they would concern other people, but others can impact me a lot more." (Wales, Female, 14 to 15)

"I have quite a few friends who are very vocal about politics and know the ins and outs of everything that they believe in, because they talk about it quite a lot." (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

Reliability of information

- 5.57. Participants in the focus groups were asked to reflect on the sources they might use when seeking out information on voting and elections in the UK, particularly in terms of the extent to which they think their chosen sources presented true and reliable information, and how they might check it.
- 5.58. When actively seeking political information, young people in the focus groups discussed relying on family (particularly parents and older siblings) and friends first and foremost, but also trusted their teachers as a reliable and credible source of political information. These sources were valued for their perceived trustworthiness and ability to explain complex political processes in an accessible way, highlighting the important role of interpersonal networks and educational settings in shaping young people's understanding of electoral participation:

"I always speak to my dad a lot about politics, I do not trust the internet as anyone can write anything on there." (England, Female, 14 to 15)

"There are some teenagers who would be influenced by a small clip online, but a teacher would give you the full story." (Northern Ireland, Female, 14 to 15)

- 5.59. Some participants considered mainstream news organisations – including the BBC and ITV – to be trusted sources of information (or at least more so than social media content). However, many participants accessed mainstream media content via social media platforms or online sources, rather than through traditional television broadcasts:

"I'd go to a news site like BBC or ITV, I wouldn't tend to go to social media because there's no way of checking if it's valid or not." (England, Male, 16 to 17)

"It just comes up... usually rants or clips from TV." (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 5.60. A small number of focus group participants explained that although they did not actively seek out televised news programmes, they were nonetheless exposed to them when other family members were watching. Generally, this tended to be at mealtimes when families are gathered together:

"I may watch the news in the morning if my family has it on!" (England, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.61. A small number of young people mentioned GOV.UK as a source of information that they would actively seek out. There was also some low-level cynicism expressed, with concerns among some young people that GOV.UK would

contain politically biased content that reflected the policies and party politics of the government of the day. This reflected their perception rather than their lived experience, as GOV.UK does not cover party political content relating to voting and registration:

“I would look at the official government website, is it GOV.UK?” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

“I would imagine there is a whole load of bias, and that is important when you are choosing a new leader.” (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

- 5.62. Participants in the focus groups were asked how they knew if something they read or heard about is true or reliable. Participants typically questioned the authenticity of content they see on social media:

“I feel like there's so, there'd be so much like fake news going around.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)”

- 5.63. Many participants in the focus groups questioned the validity of political content encountered on TikTok and expressed cynicism regarding its accuracy. Young people reported that they were often able to recognise when content had been generated by artificial intelligence. When uncertain about the credibility of information, participants described taking steps to verify it, such as consulting trusted adults, reviewing comments on posts, or independently searching for information online to assess whether the content constituted “fake news.”

“I do not trust it because most of the accounts are fake.” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

“I do get like a few politics things, but for me, I don't like fully believe it. Okay. 'cause obviously TikTok lies quite a lot. So then once I find out like. I read what I read. And then I go do further research about it. Because sometimes like, well a lot of the time TikTok is like lying or like faking or like click baiting things.” (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.64. Those who attended the focus groups generally considered the BBC and other mainstream news sites to be more trustworthy than content accessed via social media platforms and individual accounts. Indeed, the majority of participants assumed that the BBC provides neutral and unbiased political coverage, suggesting a reliance on established public service broadcasters as trusted sources of information, alongside a limited understanding of the complexities of media bias.

“I check other pages – like if it’s on BBC too, then I know it’s probably true.” (UK, Female, Disability group)

“Maybe the BBC the most... they don’t have a biased view. I find [BBC] to be quite trusting... normally they have to be quite neutral.” (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

- 5.65. Some young participants reported difficulties in determining the accuracy of political content and in distinguishing between factual information and elements that may have been exaggerated or embellished to enhance the appeal of a story:

“It’s kind of hard to tell with TikTok and stuff really, because some, like they get some truth behind it, but then put like a little bit of lies behind it. Like to make it seem like more dramatic or like to get more views. So, it’s kind of hard to tell what’s actually true and what’s false.” (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.66. Furthermore, some young people reported difficulties in identifying the political bias underpinning online political content, with one participant summarising this challenge by stating that “it is hard to find the truth.” For those who were less engaged with politics, there was limited awareness of whether influencers and commentators were expressing the views of particular political parties or ideological positions. A small number of focus group participants demonstrated greater political awareness, referencing “right-wing” and “left-wing” content and identifying material produced by some political parties as inherently biased.

Education system

- 5.67. The Government has emphasised the importance of ensuring that young people understand and value the democratic process and feel that it is relevant to them. It has committed to ensuring that democracy education reinforces the importance and value of participating in democracy and inspires greater democratic engagement.
- 5.68. These goals chime with the recommendations of the Government’s recent Curriculum and Assessment Review, following which the Department of Education committed to making citizenship compulsory in primary schools, and to publishing revised programmes of study to ensure that all pupils receive an essential grounding in a range of topics including democracy, government and law.

- 5.69. To inform these changes, it is crucial to understand how young people experience the education system, and in particular how it engages with the democratic process, at the moment.
- 5.70. Respondents were asked in the survey about whether they thought young people at school or college should learn more or less about different aspects of the political process. It should be noted that respondents were not provided with a strict definition of what was meant by 'school or college' and instead it was left for individuals to interpret themselves.
- 5.71. Figure 5.6 shows that strong majorities of respondents in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and a majority in Wales, thought that young people should learn more about politics and political issues in school or college (England 65%, Wales 53%, Scotland 69% and Northern Ireland 65%). In addition, Figure 5.7 shows that, in all four nations of the United Kingdom, a strong majority of respondents thought that young people should learn either a little more or a lot more about voting and elections in school or college (England, Scotland and Northern Ireland 68%, and Wales 61%). The findings therefore show a high degree of alignment across both areas of learning.

Figure 5.6 - Do you think young people should learn more or less about the following in school or college? Politics and political issues

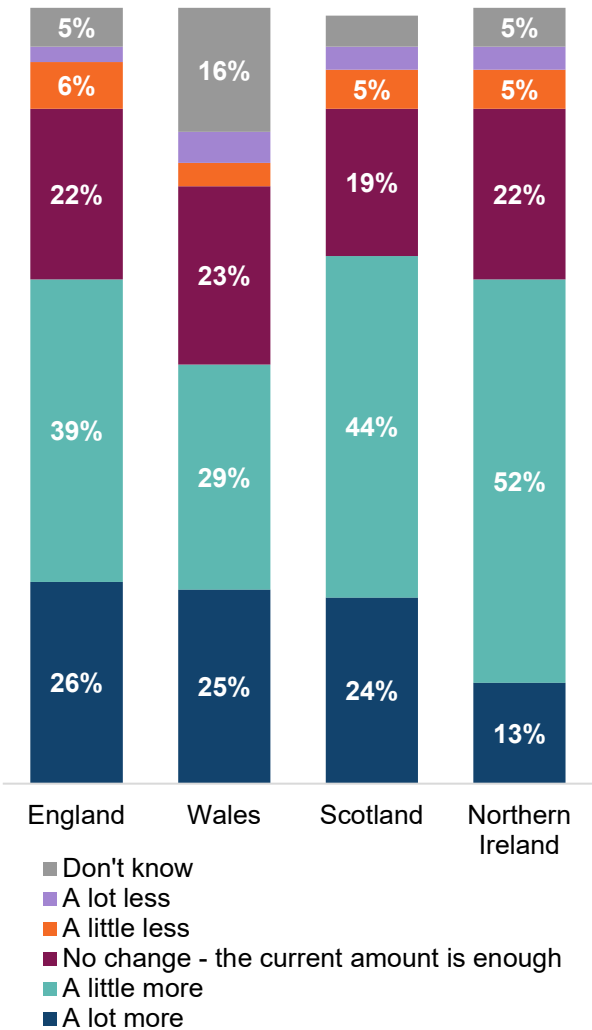
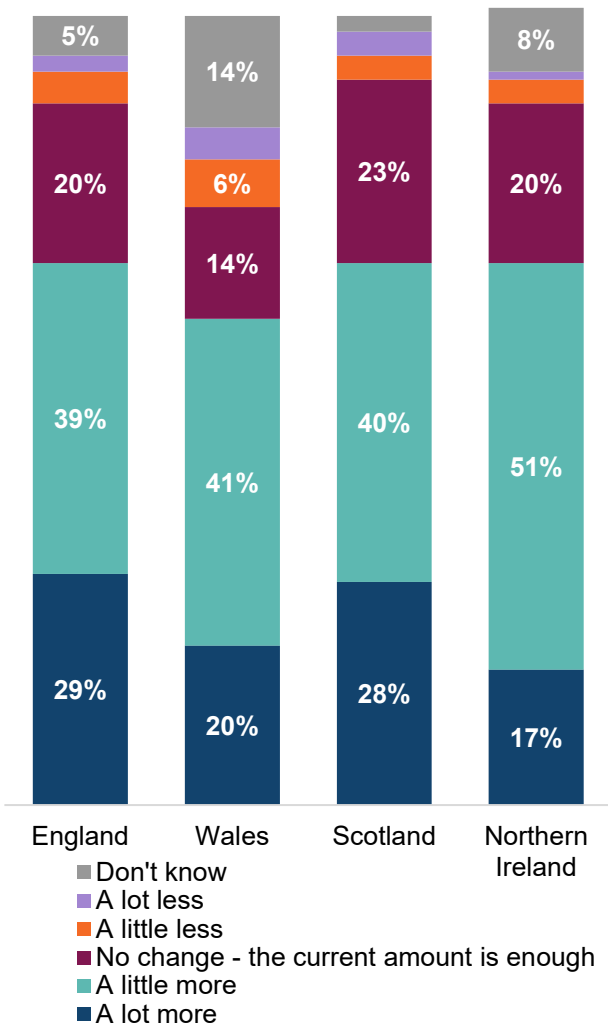


Figure 5.7 - Do you think young people should learn more or less about the following in school or college? Voting and elections



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

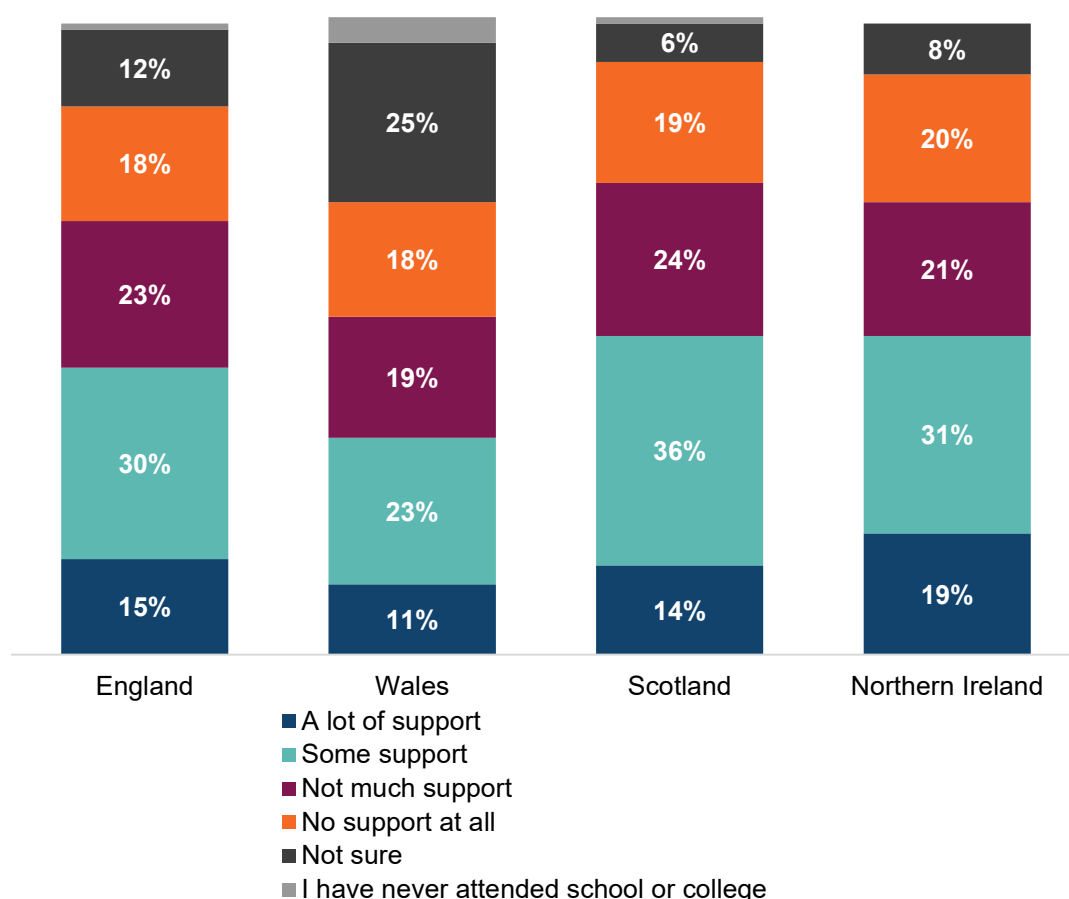
- 5.72. Only small minorities across the four nations of the United Kingdom thought that young people should learn less about politics and political issues in school or college (8% in each nation). Similarly, only small minorities across the four nations of the United Kingdom thought that young people should learn less about voting and elections in school or college (England 7%, Wales 10%, Scotland 6% and Northern Ireland 4%).
- 5.73. In England, similar groups of respondents were more likely to think young people should learn more about both politics and political issues and voting and elections. These included respondents from ABC1 households (71% and 74%), those whose day-to-day activities are not limited by a health problem or disability

(67% and 71%), those with an interest in world (75% and 78%), UK (76% and 78%) or local (74% and 77%) politics, respondents who say they will probably or definitely vote (78% and 81%), and those who attend private schools (80% and 83%).

5.74. In contrast, when asked specifically about whether young people should learn more or less about politics and political issues, the respondents who were more likely to think young people should learn less were those whose day-to-day activities are limited by a health problem or disability (17%), those entitled to free school meals (11%), and those who probably or definitely will not vote (15%).

5.75. Figure 5.8 shows that half of respondents or fewer across all four nations of the United Kingdom had been given at least some support by their school or college to feel ready to vote in the next election they were allowed to vote in (England 45%, Wales 34%, Scotland 50% and Northern Ireland 50%).

Figure 5.8 - How much support, if any, has your school or college given you to feel ready to vote in the next election you are allowed to vote in?



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 5.76. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, around one in five respondents reported having been given no support at all from their school or college (England and Wales 18%, Scotland 19% and Northern Ireland 20%).
- 5.77. In England, some demographic groups were statistically significantly more likely to say they had received at least some support from their school in order to feel ready to vote. The respondents who were more likely to have received some support from their school to feel ready to vote were those aged 14 to 15 (52%), from London (68%), from ABC1 households (54%), entitled to free school meals (52%), with an interest in world (60%), UK (58%) or local (63%) politics, who will probably or definitely vote (56%) and who attend private schools (77%).
- 5.78. In contrast, some demographic groups were statistically significantly more likely to say they had received not much or no support from their school to feel ready to vote. The respondents who were more likely to report having received not much or no support from their school or college to feel ready to vote were those aged 16 to 17 (47%), not from London (46% in the North, 42% in the Midlands, 45% in the South outside of London), from C2DE households (53%), not eligible for free school meals (46%), with not much or no interest in world (55%), UK (56%) or local (55%) politics and who will probably not or definitely not vote (48%).
- 5.79. The role of schools and colleges (and indeed the impact of the education system) in supporting young people in their knowledge of politics, government and elections was also discussed in the focus groups. Many participants commented there was a lack of provision, saying that what they received did not translate into sufficient knowledge on politics and elections, with limited political education delivered through the curriculum:

“I don’t think I’ve really learnt anything about politics at school.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

“We don’t do enough — just one lesson ages ago.” (Scotland, Female, 14 to 15)

“They don’t teach it properly in my school. They just tell you like, ‘here are the parties,’ but not what they stand for.” (UK, Female, Disability group)

- 5.80. Classroom-delivered politics education was sometimes included via content for certain subjects. For example, Modern Studies and Religious Education included some course content on politics or the political system.

“Politics is a module in Modern Studies, but teachers do not speak about politics outside of subjects.” (Scotland, Female, 16 to 17)

"We normally talk about a lot of political stuff in RE, so particularly last year we did capital punishment and abortion." (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.81. Others took a more nuanced view, citing informal or extra-curricular activities as partially filling the information gap. A small number of participants mentioned that their schools provided some extra-curricular political education in various formats. These included mock elections, debating and lunchtime clubs, and citizenship activities. In some instances, proactive teachers engaged with students in a less formal learning environment. The majority of the young people who attended schools with extra-curricular activity acknowledged that it was sporadic and short-lived, limiting its overall impact on their broader political awareness and engagement. Some limited appreciation of events put on by schools was observed, however.

"When there is a general election, the school does an in-house general election in the school. They give sheets with descriptions of the political parties and you have to choose what you think is best." (England, Female, 14 to 15)

"On 'Citizenship Days' we can talk with our peers about politics, and share our views. They happen about once a term. We focus on different things, but mainly politics." (England, Female, 14 to 15)

"My school has done like mock votes. So you read their manifestos and then you like discuss with your peers and then you go with yourself and think what do you think is the best? And then yeah, I think that's a pretty good way of informing young people about what they offer." (England, Female, 14 to 15)

- 5.82. However, there was an acknowledgement that schools did increase the amount of political discussion around election time, with one school assembly focusing on how to register to vote. There was a broad consensus that the activities in school did spark a wider interest in politics more generally, even though content was often considered to be brief, rushed and ad hoc.

"Simple little facts like that would definitely help me in the process to be more interested in politics, and might help my vote be more useful." (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.83. Some participants did suggest that political discussion was something that they had to opt into – either formally or informally - rather than automatically provided. One cited a Politics Society/Club (but for Sixth Formers), while another talked of a History teacher who often engaged in conversations about politics with those who were interested.

- 5.84. Responsibility for education is devolved throughout the UK, so curriculums vary between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is also important to note that not all schools are required to follow curriculums set out by the relevant body with responsibility for education in that area.
- 5.85. A small number of students in Scotland reported that Modern Studies (a subject in Scotland which covers contemporary political and social issues) had provided them with a clearer understanding of how politics affects communities across Scotland.
- 5.86. In contrast, the extent to which political content was covered in PSHE lessons in England appeared to vary considerably between schools, with some participants indicating that politics was not addressed at all. Overall, the delivery of political education across schools and colleges in the United Kingdom in participants' descriptions appeared to be inconsistent and sporadic.

"We had PSHE in Year 7 and 8 but after that it just stopped." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

"Welsh Baccalaureate used to focus on issues. It was compulsory. That was good. Maybe it could have looked at political issues too." (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

"We learn about it in Modern Studies, politics is one of the topics in it." (Scotland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.87. The focus groups highlighted that the primary barrier to political engagement among young people was a lack of political knowledge. Participants consistently reflected that political education in schools and colleges was minimal and expressed a strong desire for more comprehensive and accessible political education to be delivered within formal educational settings.

"They should at least lay out the groundwork, at least teaching people the basics first." (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

- 5.88. Young people expressed a clear interest in the focus groups in learning more about elections, voting processes, and political parties' policies. There was broad consensus that schools were well placed to deliver this content in an objective and unbiased manner. The qualitative research highlighted a shared belief among young people that schools could act as a gateway to empowering young people with the knowledge needed to increase political interest, confidence, and engagement.

"I feel like if schools and colleges like told us more about it, then maybe people

would be more interested in about learning about it and all the issues that come with it, which is maybe why lowering the age to 16 would be beneficial.”
(England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 5.89. Some participants in the younger age band (14 to 15 years) expressed concern that the introduction of political education could be distracting or add pressure during critical periods leading up to exams. As a result, they suggested that such content should be introduced earlier, a few years before their first public exams, to allow sufficient time for learning without increasing academic pressure.

“Schools should do this when they think students are mature enough to learn about it, best not to educate people when they are about to start their GCSEs.”
(England, Male, 14 to 15)

- 5.90. Despite all the views expressed above, when presented with specific methods that might support the stated interest of learning more about elections and voting, enthusiasm appeared to dissipate. For example, the groups were asked for their opinions on the prospect of more and better Citizenship classes in school, more support from youth organizations to help young people engage in politics, and communications explaining how to register and vote. There was mild enthusiasm for these ideas, but a concern that they may only engage those whose interest in politics was already developed. Few believed they would engage the uninterested. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

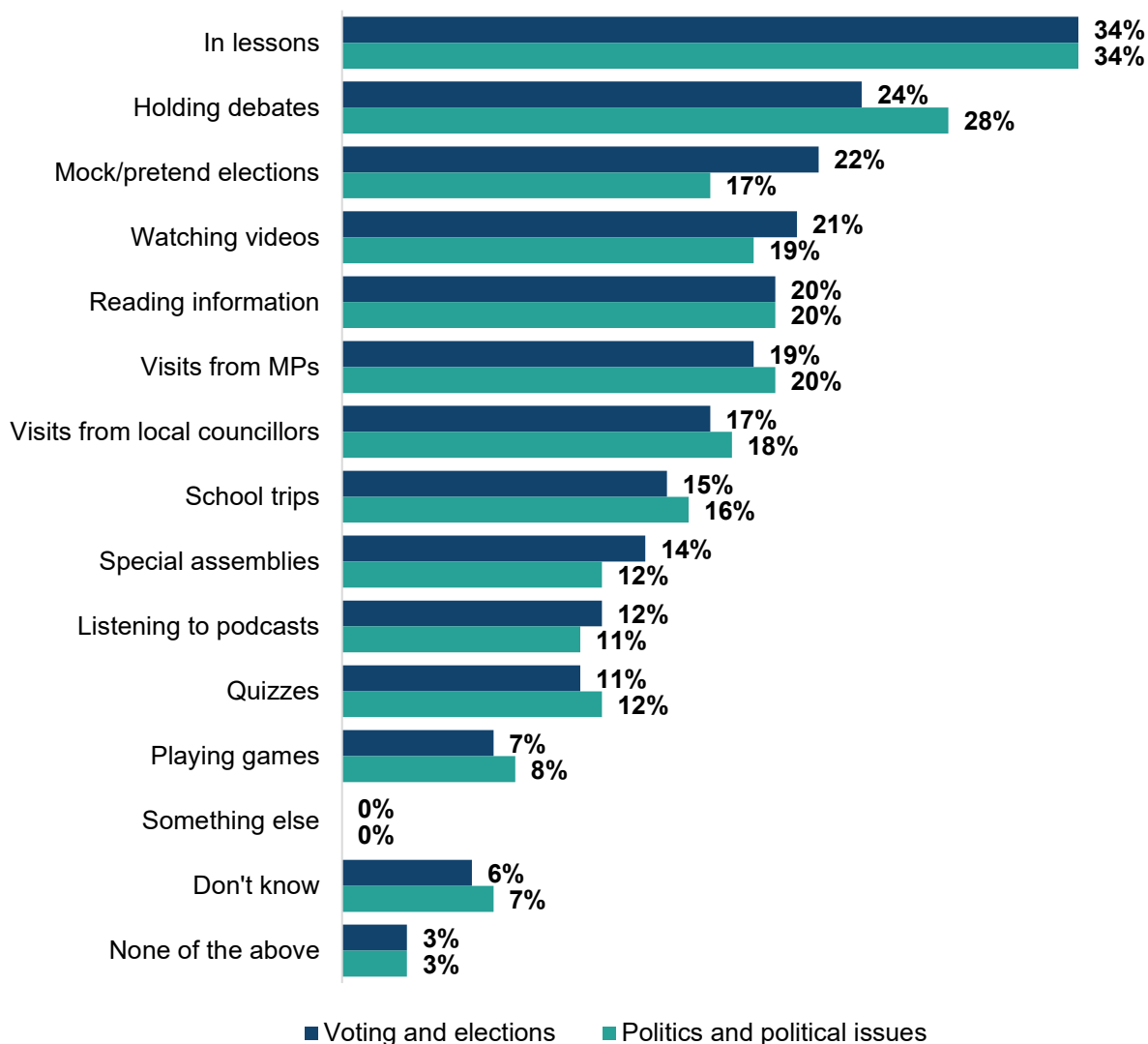
“Yeah, I definitely think it would, especially if like certain people already are passionate about politics and stuff already. I definitely do think there would be some downsides to it with the fact that obviously not everyone, again, has the same maturity levels.” (Scotland, Female, 16 to 17)

- 5.91. In the survey, across all four nations of the United Kingdom, respondents were provided with a list of different sources and asked to select up to three of the best ways for young people to learn more about voting and elections, which are discussed in the following sections. The same list was then provided when respondents were asked about learning more about politics and political issues.
- 5.92. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, ‘in lessons’ came top of the list of the best ways for young people to learn more in school or college about both voting and elections and politics and political issues. None of the other options in the list provided was selected by more than a third of respondents, indicating a lack of consensus over which of the individual interventions tested would be most welcomed.

England

5.93. Figure 5.9 shows that in England, learning about voting and elections in lessons was the option most likely to be selected for the best ways for young people to learn more in school or college about both voting and elections and politics and political issues (both 34%).

Figure 5.9 - What do you think are THE BEST ways for young people to learn more about the following in school or college? [England]



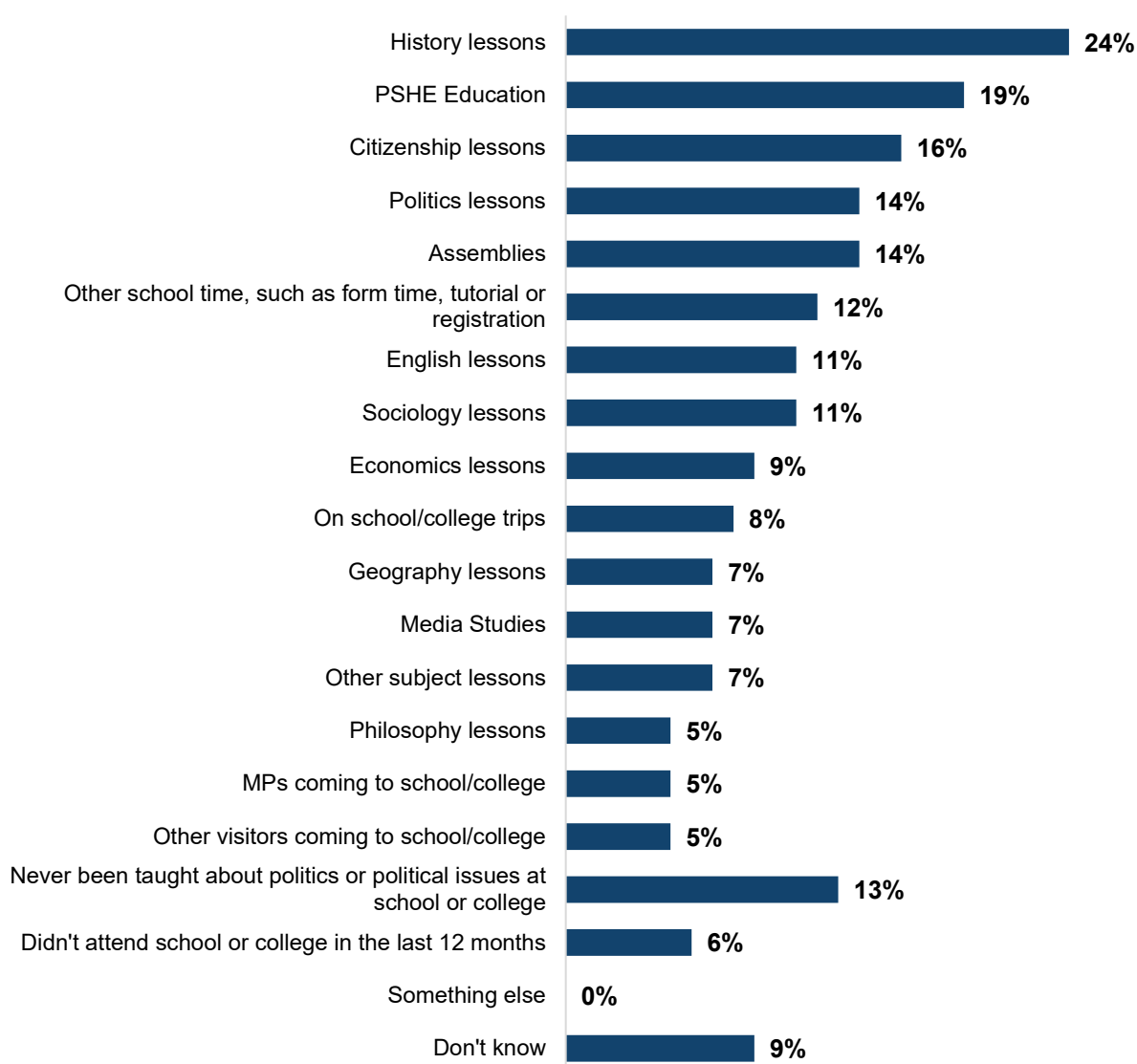
Base: All respondents = 2,090 14- to 17-year-olds in England
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Respondents were able to select up to three responses.

5.94. The respondents who were more likely to select 'in lessons' to learn more about voting and elections were those aged 14 to 15 (38%), respondents from ABC1 households (37%), respondents who are interested in UK politics (36%) and respondents who will probably or definitely vote (37%).

5.95. The respondents who were more likely to select ‘in lessons’ to learn more about politics and political issues were those who are not entitled to free school meals (37%) and who will probably or definitely vote (38%). This finding is replicated across all four nations of the UK.

5.96. In terms of when respondents have been taught about politics or political issues at school or college, Figure 5.10 shows that, in England, none of the options from the list provided were selected by more than a quarter of respondents.

Figure 5.10 - In the last 12 months, when have you been taught about politics or political issues at school or college? [England]



Base: All respondents = 2,090 14- to 17-year-olds in England

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

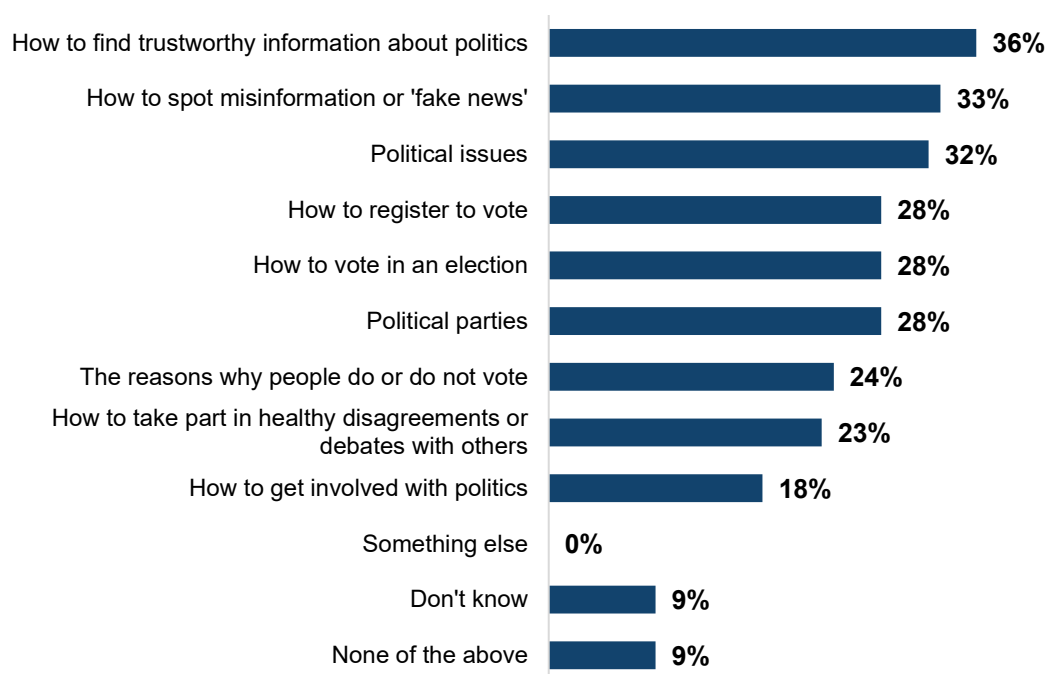
Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

5.97. History lessons and PSHE Education were the most common options selected (24% and 19% respectively). However, nearly one in seven respondents (13%)

reported never having been taught about politics or political issues at school or college.

- 5.98. The respondents more likely to select History lessons were those aged 14 to 15 (32%), respondents from ABC1 households (29%), respondents interested in world (32%), UK (30%) or local (30%) politics, respondents who will probably or definitely vote (30%) and respondents attending private schools (46%). It is possible that those respondents more interested in politics are more likely to remember those subjects being covered in lessons.
- 5.99. In addition to when respondents have been taught about politics or political issues at school or college, the survey asked respondents whether they would personally like to learn more about a range of topics relating to politics, government and elections. As Figure 5.11 shows, in England, respondents were most likely to say that they would personally like to learn more about how to find trustworthy information about politics (36%). How to spot misinformation or 'fake news' (33%) and political issues (32%) were also among the most frequently selected options from the list provided. Fewer than one in ten respondents (9%) did not want to learn more about any of the issues on the list provided.

Figure 5.11 - Which of the following, if any, would you personally like to learn more about? [England]



Base: All respondents = 2,348 14- to 17-year-olds in England

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

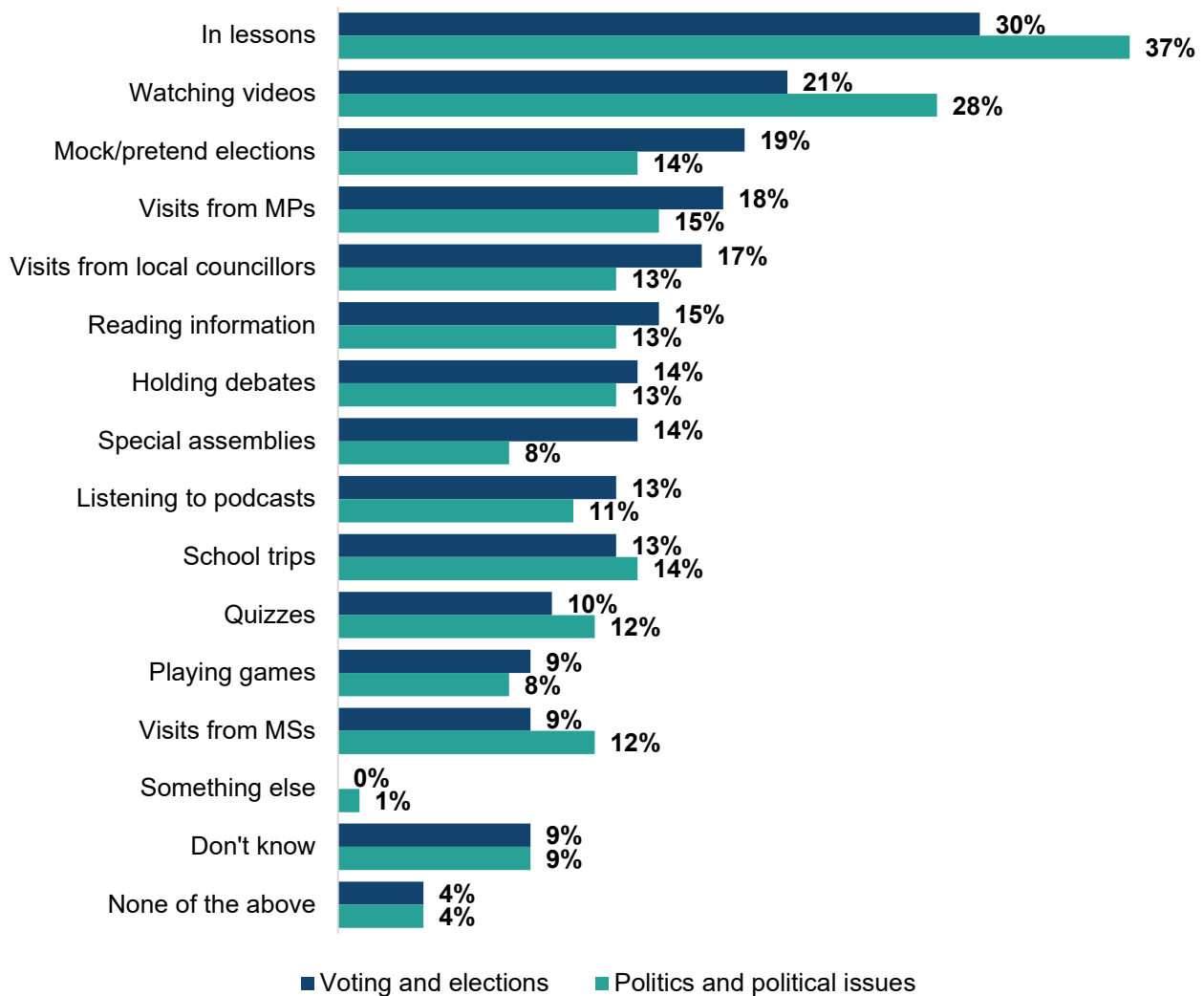
Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

- 5.100. How to spot trustworthy information about politics, how to spot misinformation or 'fake news' and political issues were all more likely to be selected by respondents from ABC1 households, respondents who have an interest in world, UK or local politics, respondents who will probably or definitely vote and respondents who attend a private school.
- 5.101. Additionally, how to spot misinformation or 'fake news' was more likely to be selected by respondents not entitled to free school meals, while Political issues was more likely to be selected by respondents entitled to free school meals.

Wales

- 5.102. Figure 5.12 shows that, in Wales, when young people were asked what would be the best way to learn more about voting and elections in school or college, none of the options presented were selected by more than three in ten respondents. 'In lessons' was the option most likely to be selected for the best way for young people to learn about voting and elections and school or college (30%), and the option most likely to be selected for the best ways to learn about politics and political issues (37%).

Figure 5.12 - What do you think are THE BEST ways for young people to learn more about the following in school or college? [Wales]



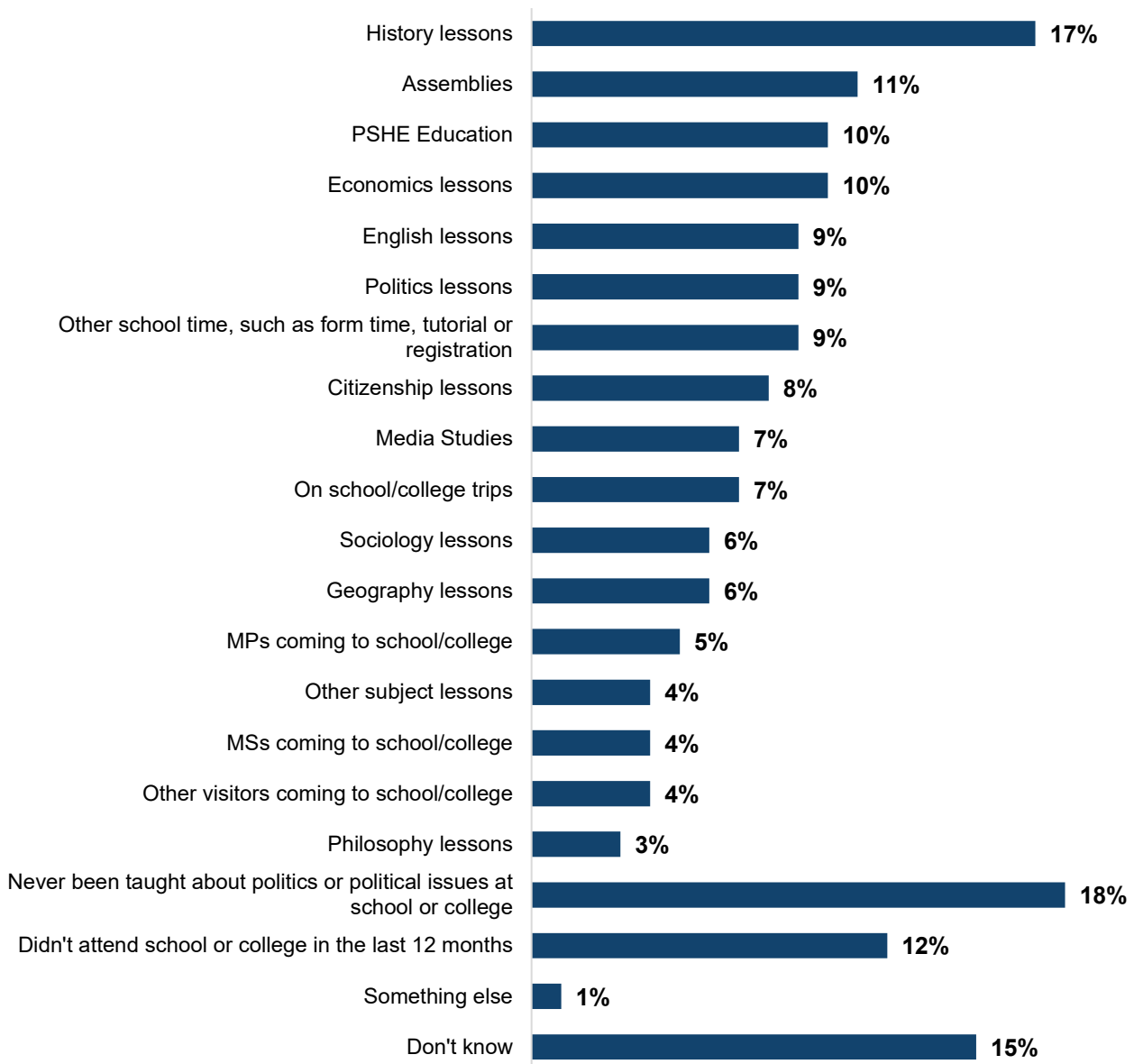
Base: All respondents = 127 14- to 17-year-olds in Wales

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select up to three responses.

5.103. Figure 5.13 shows that, in Wales, none of the options from the list provided for when respondents have been taught politics at school or college were selected by more than one in seven respondents. As with England, History lessons were the most common option selected (17%). Nearly one in five respondents (18%) reported having never been taught about politics or political issues at school or college.

Figure 5.13 - In the last 12 months, when have you been taught about politics or political issues at school or college? [Wales]



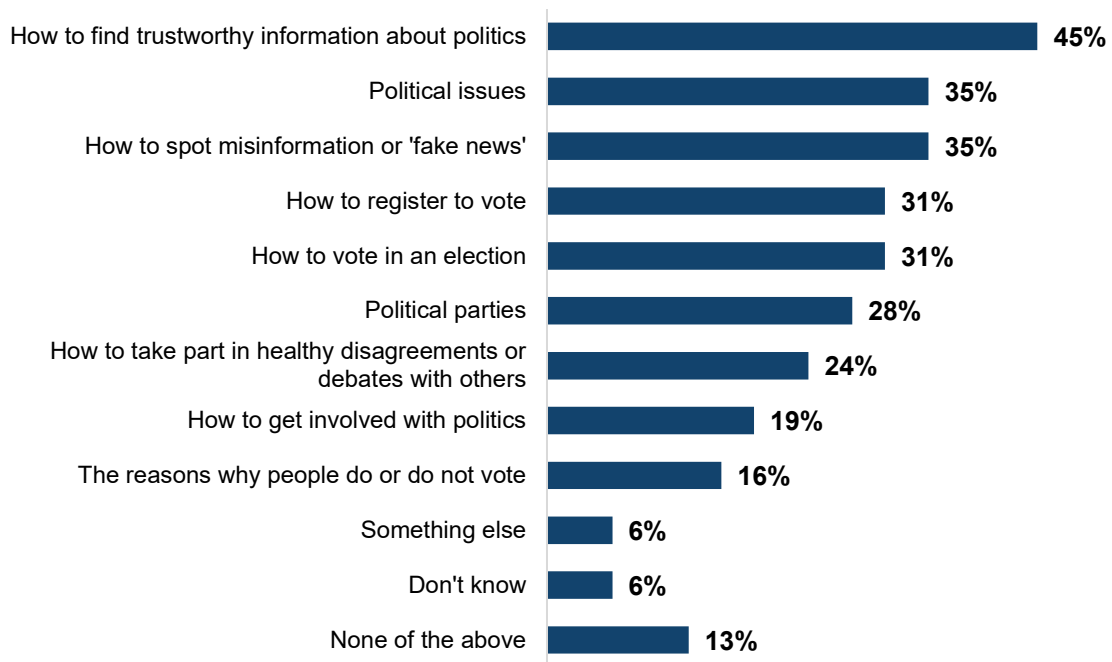
Base: All respondents = 127 14- to 17-year-olds in Wales

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

5.104. Figure 5.14 shows that, in Wales, respondents were most likely to say that they would personally like to learn more about how to find trustworthy information about politics (45%), out of the options provided. Political issues (35%) and how to spot misinformation or 'fake news' (35%) were also among the most frequently selected options from the list provided. Fewer than one in seven respondents (13%) did not want to learn more about any of the options in the list provided.

Figure 5.14 - Which of the following, if any, would you personally like to learn more about? [Wales]



Base: All respondents = 397 14- to 17-year-olds in Wales

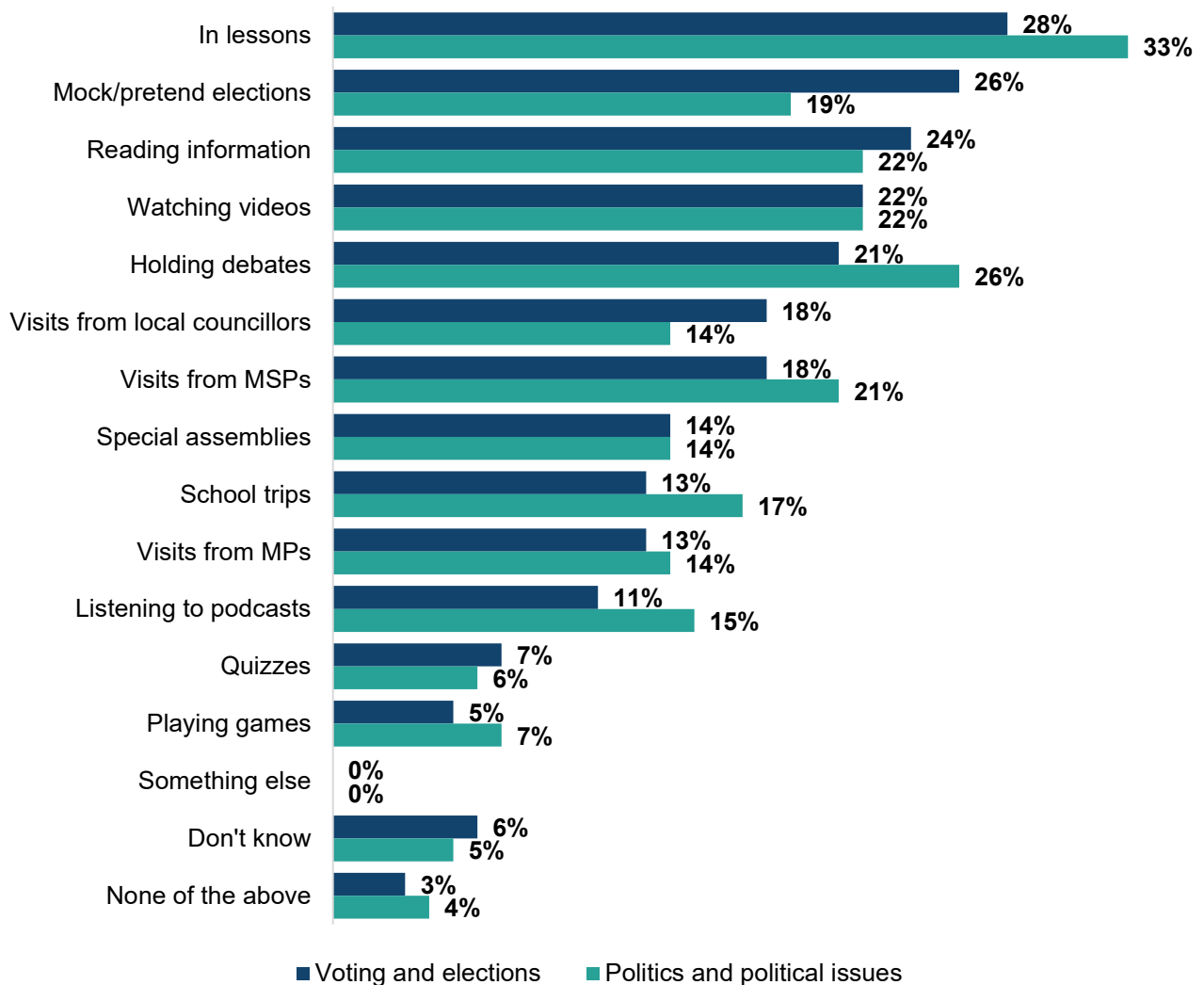
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

Scotland

5.105. Figure 5.15 shows that in Scotland, none of the options from the list provided for the best ways for young people to learn more about voting and elections at school or college were selected by more than three in ten respondents. In Scotland, 'in lessons', mock/pretend elections and reading information were the options estimated to be most likely to be selected (28%, 26% and 24% respectively). For the best ways for young people to learn more about politics and political issues, 'in lessons' was also the option most likely to be selected (33%). It was the only option selected by more than three in ten respondents.

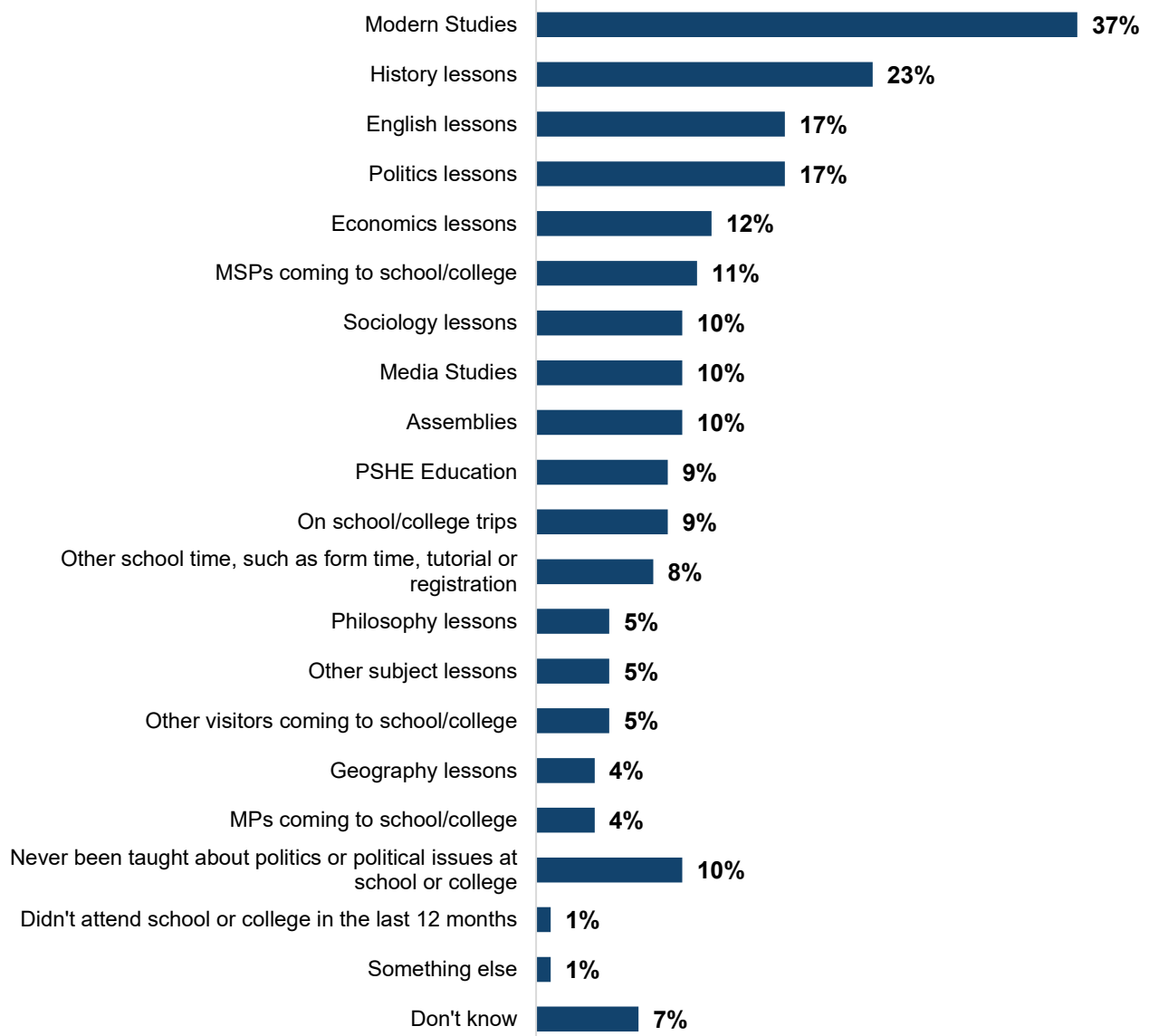
Figure 5.15 - What do you think are THE BEST ways for young people to learn more about the following in school or college? [Scotland]



Base: All respondents = 204 14- to 17-year-olds in Scotland
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Respondents were able to select up to three responses.

5.106. Figure 5.16 shows that, in Scotland, none of the options from the list provided for when respondents have been taught politics at school or college were selected by more than two in five respondents. In Scotland, Modern Studies and History lessons were the most common options selected (37% and 23% respectively). One in ten respondents (10%) reported having never been taught about politics or political issues at school or college. Modern Studies is only taught in Scotland and so does not feature in the results from other nations.

Figure 5.16 - In the last 12 months, when have you been taught about politics or political issues at school or college? [Scotland]



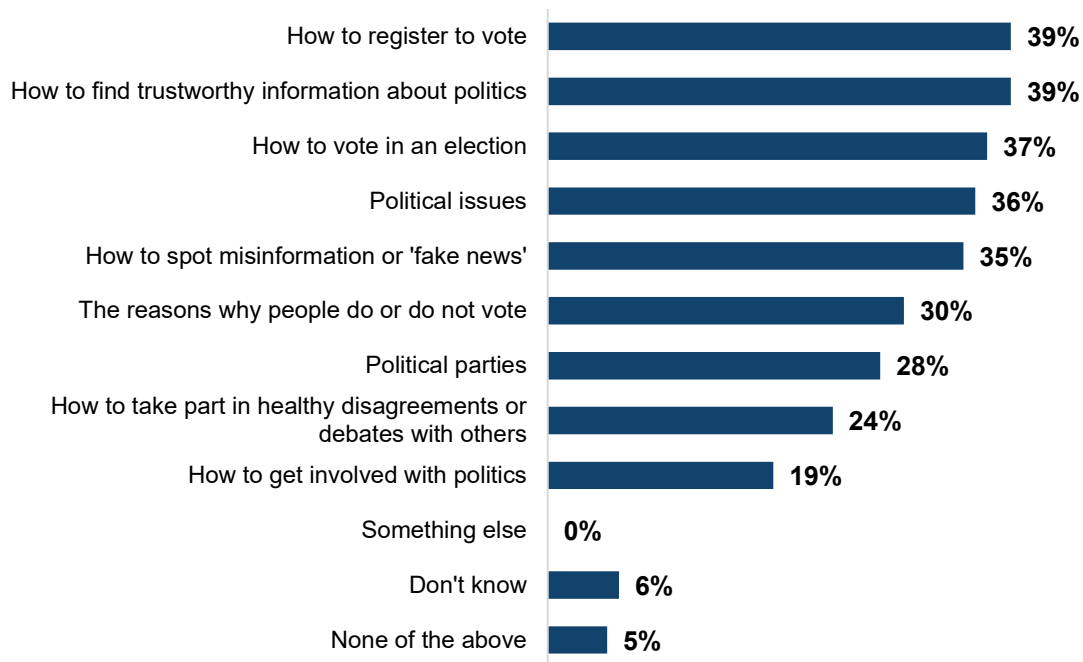
Base: All respondents = 204 14- to 17-year-olds in Scotland

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

5.107. Figure 5.17 shows that, in Scotland, respondents were most likely to say that they would personally like to learn more about how to register to vote and how to find trustworthy information about politics, out of the options provided (39% for both). How to vote in an election (37%), political issues (36%) and how to spot misinformation or 'fake news' (35%) were also among the most frequently selected options from the list provided. One in twenty respondents (5%) did not want to learn more about any of the options in the list provided.

Figure 5.17 - Which of the following, if any, would you personally like to learn more about? [Scotland]



Base: All respondents = 481 14- to 17-year-olds in Scotland

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

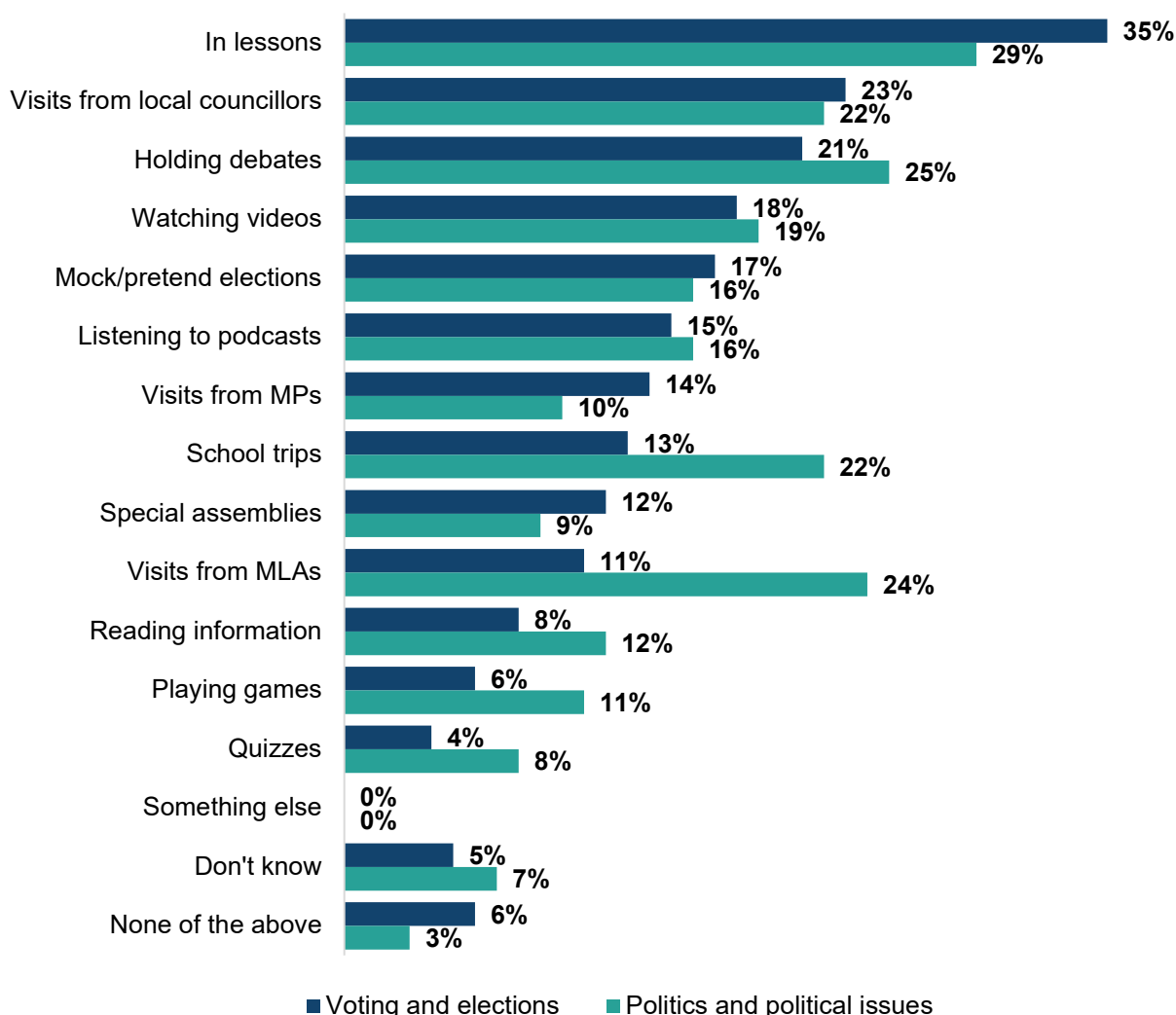
5.108. Compared to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, respondents in Scotland were statistically significantly more likely to say that they would personally like to learn more about how to register to vote and the reasons why people do or do not vote.

5.109. How to spot misinformation or 'fake news' was more likely to be selected by respondents from ABC1 households (39%). How to register to vote and how to vote in an election were more likely to be selected by respondents aged 14 to 15 (46% and 44% respectively). This was also the case for respondents entitled to free school meals (46% and 44% respectively), who were also more likely to select how to get involved with politics (27%). How to find trustworthy information was more likely to be selected by respondents aged 16 to 17 (44%).

Northern Ireland

5.110. Figure 5.18 shows that, in Northern Ireland, none of the options from the list provided for the best ways for young people to learn more about voting and elections at school or college were selected by more than around a third of respondents. In Northern Ireland, 'in lessons' was the option most likely to be selected (35%) when it comes to learning about voting and elections. 'In lessons' was also the option most likely to be selected when it comes to learning about politics and political issues (29%). None of the options from the list provided for the best ways for young people to learn more about politics and political issues at school or college were selected by more than three in ten respondents.

Figure 5.18 - What do you think are THE BEST ways for young people to learn more about the following in school or college? [Northern Ireland]



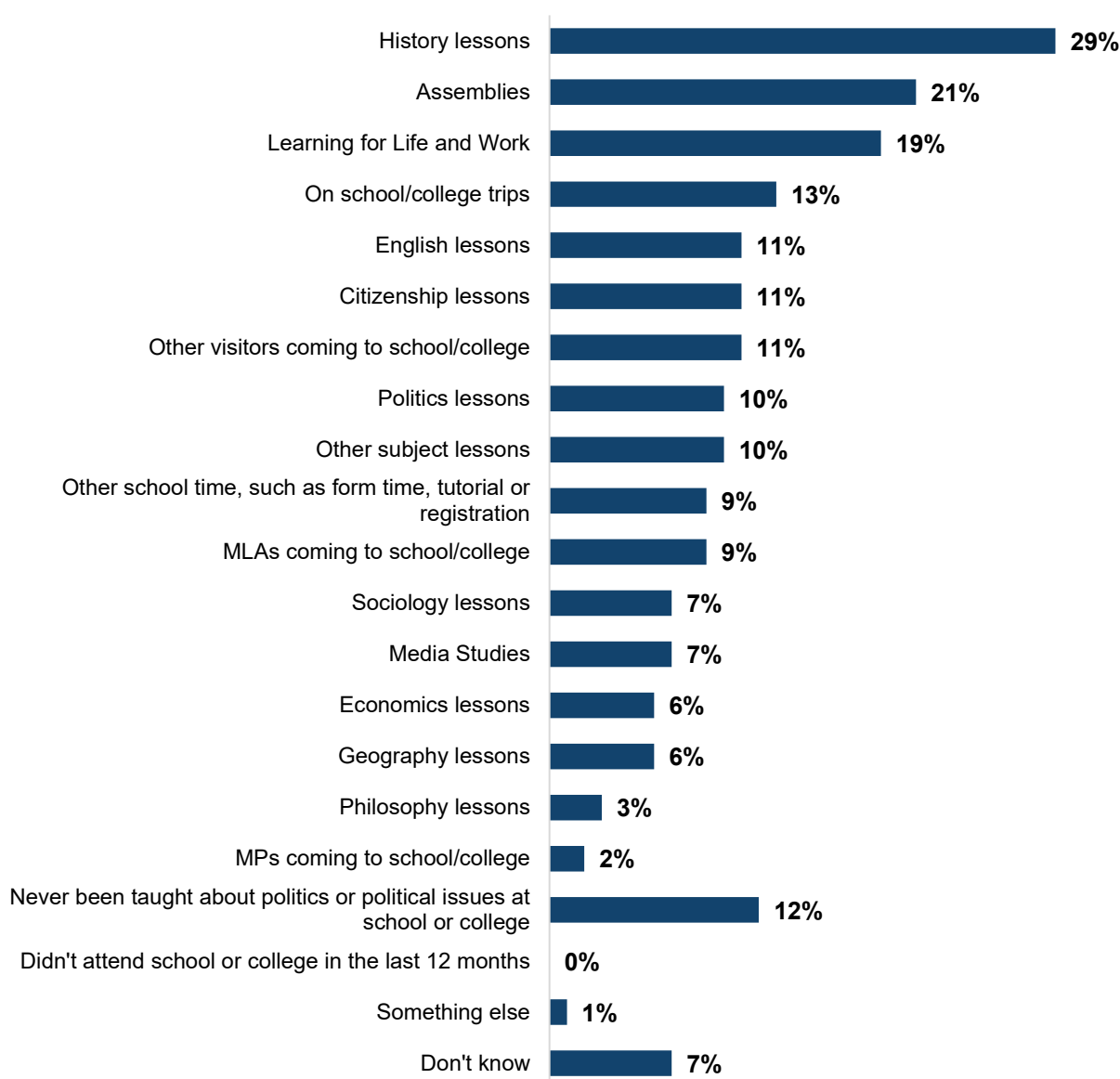
Base: All respondents = 85 14- to 17-year-olds in Northern Ireland

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select up to three responses.

5.111. Figure 5.19 shows that, in Northern Ireland, none of the options from the list provided for when respondents have been taught politics at school or college were selected by more than three in ten respondents. History lessons, assemblies and Learning for Life and Work were the most common options selected (29%, 21% and 19% respectively). Around one in eight respondents (12%) reported having never been taught about politics or political issues at school or college. Learning for Life and Work is not taught in the other three nations and so does not feature in their results.

Figure 5.19 - In the last 12 months, when have you been taught about politics or political issues at school or college? [Northern Ireland]



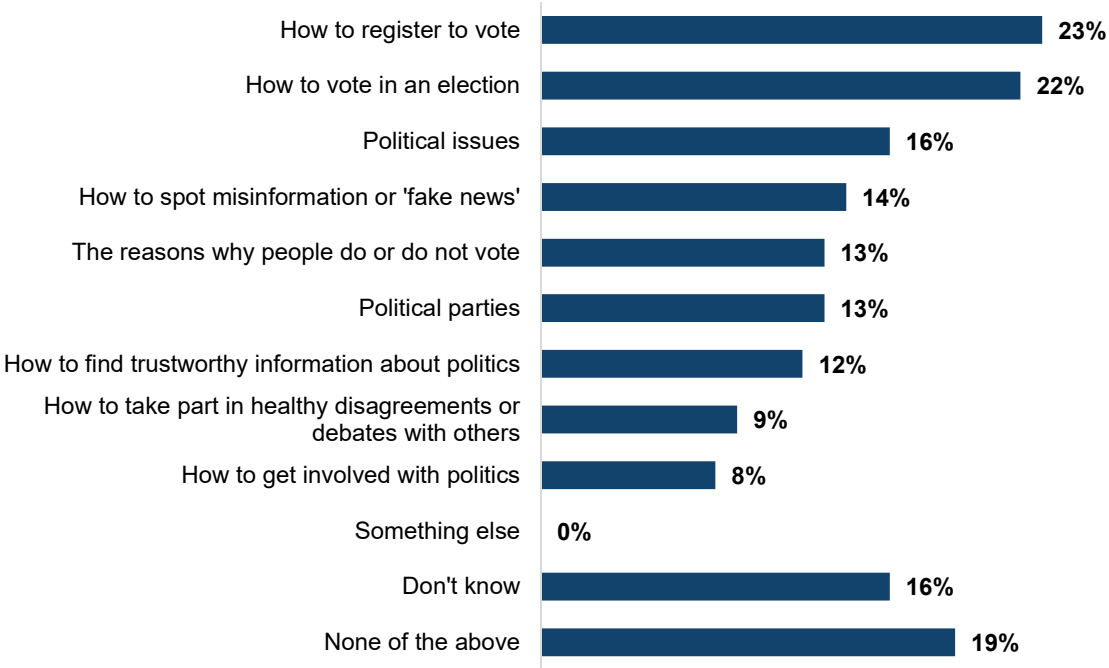
Base: All respondents = 85 14- to 17-year-olds in Northern Ireland

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

5.112. Figure 5.20 shows that, in Northern Ireland, respondents were most likely to say that they would personally like to learn more about how to register to vote (23%) and how to vote in an election (22%), out of the options provided. The proportion of respondents who selected ‘How to find trustworthy information about politics’ was statistically significantly lower than in the three other nations. Nearly one in five respondents did not want to learn more about any of the list provided (19%).

Figure 5.20 - Which of the following, if any, would you personally like to learn more about? [Northern Ireland]



Base: All respondents = 339 14- to 17-year-olds in Northern Ireland
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

6. Barriers and Enablers to Participation

Chapter Summary

- 6.1. The following section looks at the factors that encourage or discourage participation in elections and political processes among young people. It explores both practical barriers, such as knowledge and administrative understanding, and motivational factors including interest, confidence and perceived relevance.
- 6.2. Views on the possible impacts of Votes at 16 varied depending on the specific electoral rules for each of the four nations of the United Kingdom, but they were generally positive. In England, more than half of survey respondents (57%) believed that being able to vote at 16 would make them feel that their voice matters more, compared with a third (34%) who believed it would not. In Northern Ireland, opinion was more evenly divided (44% versus 41% respectively). In Wales and Scotland, where voting at 16 already applies in some elections, more than two thirds of survey respondents believed they would feel that their voice matters more (69% and 67% respectively).
- 6.3. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, participants in focus groups identified a lack of understanding about how to register to vote or how to cast a vote as barriers to participation.
- 6.4. Feelings of insufficient knowledge or confidence to participate were present among focus group participants across all four nations of the United Kingdom, correlating with the finding in the survey that large minorities report limited interest in politics or elections. Further, the common barriers to participation were perceptions that politics is complex, confusing or insufficiently relevant to everyday life.
- 6.5. At the same time, however, there were consistent feelings of hope and positivity from focus group participants regarding the idea of Votes at 16. Many believed that it would allow young people to voice their opinions and, crucially, for those opinions to be heard. This, in turn, was seen as being able to act as an enabler for greater political interest and engagement.
- 6.6. Encouragement from schools and parents was seen as a factor enabling participation across all four nations of the United Kingdom.
- 6.7. Differences between nations are closely correlated with levels of political interest. For example, higher levels of political interest in Scotland correspond with higher reported engagement across several measures.

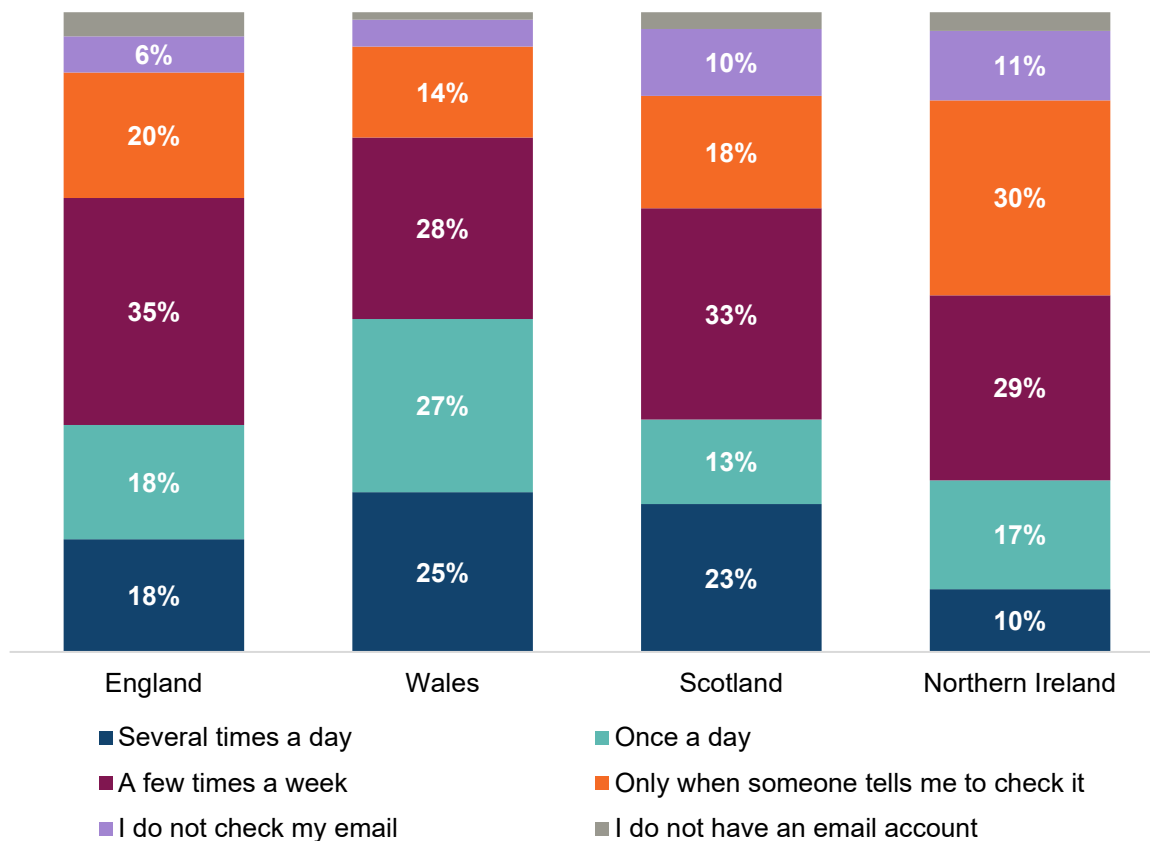
Introduction

- 6.8. Understanding the barriers and enablers that shape young people's participation is essential for assessing how effectively Votes at 16 can be implemented.
- 6.9. The following sections set out the barriers and enablers to participation among young people, covering knowledge-based and practical obstacles, levels of confidence and interest, and the circumstances under which young people feel more or less likely to engage.

Checking e-mails

- 6.10. During typical electoral registration processes, it may be necessary for electoral administrators to contact applicants about their application. They may use a variety of methods for communicating with the applicant, including text, phone, email, and letters to their address. Emails are often considered the most effective communication method by administrators due to their efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- 6.11. In order to better understand whether this would remain the case for younger applicants once the franchise change has been made, MHCLG wanted to understand to what extent young people had access to emails and, if so, how frequently they checked them for new messages. As these results include respondents to an online survey, it is likely that those respondents will generally be more frequent in checking their emails, along with many other online activities, than those with less regular access to the internet.
- 6.12. Figure 6.1 shows that, in all four nations of the United Kingdom, a majority of respondents checked their email at least a few times a week (England 71%, Scotland 69%, Wales 80% and Northern Ireland 56%).

Figure 6.1 - How often do you check your emails for new messages?



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

6.13. Only in Wales did a majority of respondents (52%) check their email at least once a day. In Scotland that proportion was 36%, in England 35% and in Northern Ireland 27%.

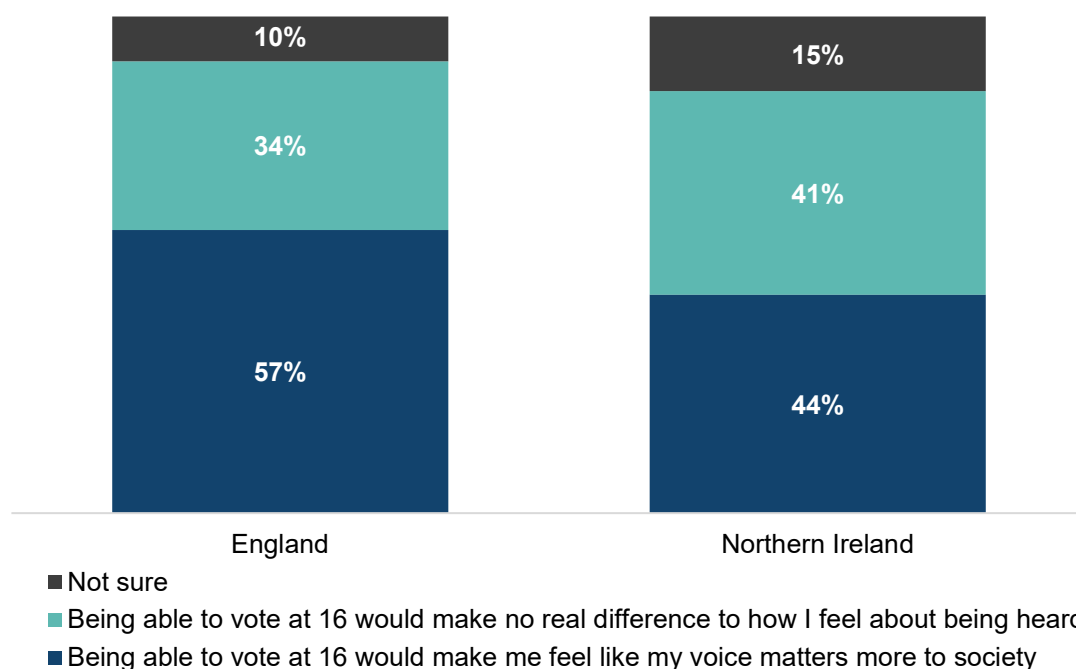
6.14. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, only a small minority of respondents either did not check their email at all or did not have an email account (England 9%, Scotland 13%, Wales 5% and Northern Ireland 14%).

Attitudes to Votes at 16

6.15. Respondents were asked in the survey about how voting at the age of 16 would make them feel, in order to understand what would ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and understanding they need to participate in elections. Different versions of the question were asked to respondents in England and Northern Ireland compared to respondents in Scotland and Wales to reflect differences in age requirements for voting; in the former nations, no voting at age 16 currently takes place while young people can already vote from the age of 16 in local and devolved elections in Scotland and Wales.

- 6.16. Figure 6.2 shows that, in England, a majority of respondents (57%) believed that being able to vote in elections at 16 would make them feel like their voice matters more to society. A minority of around a third of respondents in England (34%) thought it would not. In Northern Ireland, respondents were relatively evenly divided over whether being able to vote in elections at 16 would make them feel like their voice matters more to society or not (44% and 41% respectively.)

Figure 6.2 - Imagine that you were able to vote in all elections from the age of 16. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view?

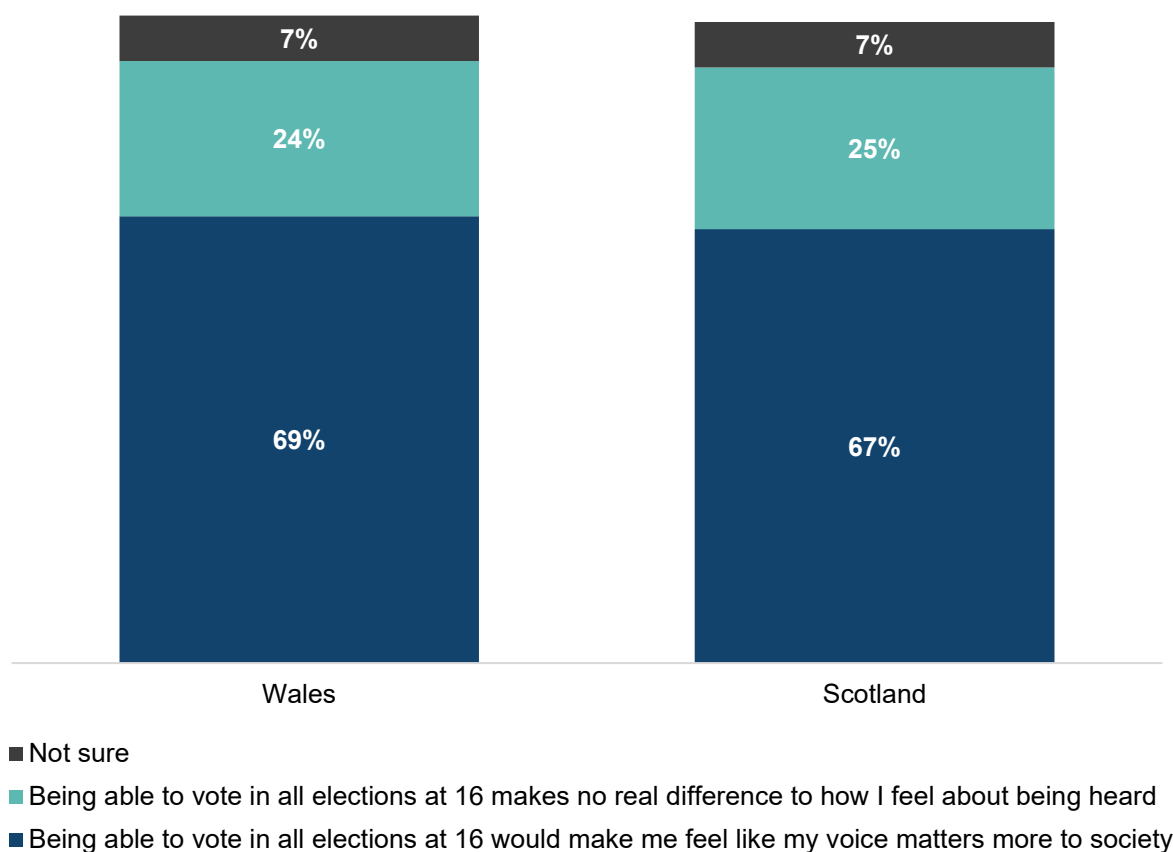


Base: All respondents = 2,687 14- to 17-year-olds in England and Northern Ireland
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

- 6.17. In England, the respondents who were more likely to believe that being able to vote in elections at 16 would make them feel like their voice matters more to society were those aged 14 to 15 (61%), from London (71%), from ABC1 households (63%), whose day-to-day activities are not limited because of a health problem or disability (59%), who are entitled to free school meals (61%), who have an interest in world (70%), UK (70%) or local (72%) politics, who will probably or definitely vote (72%) and who attended private school (73%).
- 6.18. In Northern Ireland, respondents aged 14 to 15 (49%) were more likely than those aged 16 to 17 (38%) to believe that being able to vote in elections at 16 would make them feel like their voice matters more to society.
- 6.19. In Wales and Scotland, voting at 16 is already allowed in some elections. Welsh and Scottish respondents were therefore asked a slightly different question in the survey.

- 6.20. Figure 6.3 shows that, in Wales and Scotland, strong majorities of more than two thirds of respondents believed that being able to vote in all elections at 16 would make them feel like their voice matters more to society (69% and 67% respectively).

Figure 6.3 - Imagine that you were able to vote in UK general elections as well from 16. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view?



Base: All respondents = 878 14- to 17-year-olds in Wales and Scotland
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

- 6.21. In both nations, a minority of around a quarter of respondents thought that being able to vote at 16 in UK general elections would make no real difference (Wales 24%, Scotland 25%).
- 6.22. The qualitative research addressed this matter in multiple ways. As part of the group forming process at the start of each focus group, a cartoon style graphic was shown. On it were various characters, each of whom displayed a distinct emotion: happiness, fear, concern, disinterest, and others. Each focus group participant was asked to choose the character that most accurately represented their own initial instinct toward the idea of Votes at 16 being introduced. This projective technique approximates what they thought of the policy via simple characterisation.

- 6.23. The cartoon technique immediately introduced important themes that covered a range of emotional responses. Most commonly, there was an uncertainty about Votes at 16, where positive reactions were equally balanced against wariness that some young people were not ready to vote at the age of 16. The ‘ambivalent’ character was selected by the most participants, many of whom liked the concept of voting at a younger age, but distrusted fellow young people’s ability to make an informed choice.

“That one on the platform, it’s moved up and it’s in a stable position. It gives new opportunities to younger people, maybe we get more involved in politics. A lot of people don’t know what they’d pick, but it’s the same with any age group.”
(England, Male, 16 to 17)

“16 is a good age, but I do think they might not know stuff and be influenced by other people”. (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 6.24. Furthermore, there was also a strong sense of optimism across the participants. The next most common theme to emerge was an upward looking, smiling character, symbolising a hope that Votes at 16 would allow young people to voice their opinions – and crucially, for them to be heard. This theme aligns with the quantitative data, with both research components indicating that voting would facilitate influence over politics. Furthermore, a notable number of participants indicated they had selected this ‘smiling’ character as it symbolised someone who had already achieved something with pride.

“I feel like it is speaking and I think that all 16 & 17 year olds should be able to vote.” (Wales, Male 16 to 17)

“I agree, people our age should have a voice and help build our future. I want to have a voice into my own future.” (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.25. However, young people did not only express positivity towards Votes at 16. In line with the survey data, a minority of young participants thought it would be undermined by the inability or immaturity of their cohort to make voting choices that reflected their interests or knowledge.

“A lot of people are not mature enough to vote, they are the ones falling.”
(Scotland, Male, 14 to 15)

“I think people our age aren’t involved enough in parliament to make an informed decision.” (Scotland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 6.26. Many other characters were chosen in lower proportions, each representing different initial reactions. Some of the most prevalent other emotions selected included fear, objection, indifference, delight, helpfulness and progress or personal development, highlighting diversity in thought and a lack of consensus on attitudes towards Votes at 16.
- 6.27. In addition to the cartoon character task, focus groups participants were asked whether extending voting rights to include all elections from the age of 16 would increase their interest in politics or political issues. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, views were divided: while some participants suggested that the introduction of voting at 16 could potentially enhance their political interest, this view was not shared universally across focus group participants.
- 6.28. Among those young people more positive about the potential outcomes, two main benefits occurred to them: firstly, they believed that extending the vote to 16-year-olds could encourage them to get more engaged and involved. They believed that it would prompt them to become more informed about party politics and political processes. These participants recognised the sense of responsibility associated with voting, and they felt that this responsibility would motivate them to seek out information and develop a more informed understanding of political issues and choices:

“I think that having the vote would be useful and it probably would make people get into politics.” (Wales, Female, 14 to 15)

“I think if I had to, um, vote I would definitely do more research on which one to vote for. Whereas, 'cause I can't vote right now, I just leave it up to everyone who can vote?” (Wales, Female, 14 to 15)

- 6.29. Secondly, they highlighted that some young people would feel more motivated by the prospect of voting at 16, giving them the opportunity to potentially influence political discourse. For these participants, the extension of voting rights fostered a sense of empowerment, and they responded positively to the idea that their voices would be valued and could have a meaningful impact. Additionally, for some participants, the ability to vote at 16 was seen as a way to demonstrate to adults that young people are engaged with political issues:

“It would be good to know that you are having an impact on a cause and having my say!” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

“You’d pay more attention if it felt like your opinion mattered.” (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

“If we were given the vote from 16, we would be more likely to try and have an understanding and make the right decision for outcomes for the future.” (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

- 6.30. Leading directly on from this, new-found empowerment was seen by some as a catalyst for greater political mobilisation among young people. They argued that, with an increased sense of political engagement and inclusion, young voters would be more likely to discuss, debate, and share views on political issues with their peers. This peer-to-peer engagement was seen as a potential means of normalising political discussion among young people and fostering a more sustained interest in civic participation:

“I think it would definitely make people more interested, like, especially at the start, because everyone will be talking about how we can all vote now.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.31. However, many participants in the focus groups remained ambivalent towards politics in response to the prospect of being given the vote at 16. Some openly acknowledged that their lack of interest in politics, coupled with limited concern about political outcomes, would continue to act as a barrier to future political engagement:

“I just do not care about politics now.” (Northern Ireland, Male, 14 to 15)

“If I was a bit older I'd be more interested in it because right now I'm more interested in things like TikTok.” (Northern Ireland, Male, 16 to 17)

- 6.32. Some participants felt that their age and limited knowledge left them currently feeling unprepared for the responsibility that voting carries. Additionally, a degree of concern was expressed about the possibility of young people being blamed if an election outcome were to swing in an unpopular direction:

“I think it should be left to adults, I am only 16 and I am still in school and that is what I should focus on!” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

“I just think like, being 18, it's only two years older than 16 anyway. If, for example, like it came with an outcome that like people didn't like, I feel like people would start blaming like, oh, it's because with like 16-year-olds have it, like they're just doing it.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.33. Regarding how equipped 16-year-olds as a whole are to vote, while many participants questioned whether this age group was ready, others pointed to the responsibilities that young people already assume and argued that, if individuals

can make other important decisions that impact their lives they should also be entitled to vote:

“When you are 16, you can get a job and join the army, so why should you not have a vote?” (Northern Ireland, Male, 14 to 15)

“People say we’re too immature, but we’re also expected to make life decisions at 16.” (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.34. On the other hand, it was also argued that 16-year-olds may not yet have accumulated some of the life experience necessary to make informed voting decisions. As many would still be in full-time education, participants suggested that their exposure to issues such as mortgages, employment benefits, and inflation would be limited, given their minimal direct interaction with these areas:

“Voting does not matter to people under 18, as issues do not affect us i.e. mortgages. I think voting should be left to people who are impacted.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.35. The focus groups offered a nuanced introduction to the idea of Votes at 16. Initial instincts often inform longer term attitudes and behaviours, and in this case the idea that enfranchising younger people might generate optimism, and higher levels of political engagement and personal empowerment might well be the policy outcome. However, young people also recognised that many peers are currently unprepared for life as a voter, being short of knowledge on both the electoral process and policy offerings of political parties.

Strategies to enable participation

- 6.36. Following this, focus group participants were presented with four ways in which young voters could be supported around the introduction of Votes at 16, which included communication campaigns around how to register and vote, more frequent and better quality citizenship classes in schools, and more support from youth organisations to help young people engage in politics. However, feedback on these specific proposals was limited. The only option that was seen as most helpful was to provide better quality – but not more frequent – citizenship classes as current citizenship classes were considered to be of low quality. Young people preparing for GCSE qualifications were particularly resistant to the idea of adding more classes on topics they regard as peripheral to their main subjects. This therefore reflected nuance to the strong support outlined in Chapter 5 from young people around wanting to learn more about voting and elections in school and college.

“Better quality, because I think more hours would be taken away from my lessons that I picked for GCSE.” (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

“Nothing really. We do citizenship but it’s not proper. We had a talk once about general elections but not how to actually vote.” (UK, Female, Disability group)

- 6.37. Despite these concerns, the majority of focus group participants felt that it was imperative that young people were taught more about politics before they were given the right to vote at 16.

“Only if schools actually taught us, otherwise it’s pointless.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.38. These concerns about insufficient knowledge highlighted a clear expectation that young people should receive structured support. Focus group comments strongly suggested that schools and colleges are the gateway to empowering young people with the necessary knowledge to boost their political interest and to encourage electoral (and more general) political participation.

“If they talked about it more in college and school, more people would be interested.” (Northern Ireland, Female, 16 to 17)

“You’re expected to understand everything but no one actually explains it properly.” (UK, Female, Disability group)

- 6.39. Participants in the focus groups also expressed concern that politics and voting were complex topics, highlighting further the importance of tailored, high-quality, and well-structured support.

“I don’t think that I have enough information on like how to do it or who to do it for.” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

“I just want someone to explain it like properly, not like loads of big words.” (Scotland, Female, 14 to 15)

“No point giving us the vote if you don’t teach us what to do with it.” (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

- 6.40. There was also a concern that these approaches may only engage those whose interest in politics was already developed. Few believed they would engage the uninterested.

- 6.41. Appropriate and age-sensitive use of social media was also strongly thought to be the right channel to reach young people, so long as content could be considered to be authentic, trustworthy and honest.

“A good way to motivate would be for the parties to get on social media more. [Party] have done a really good job of getting more followers and voters because they're always on social media.” (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

- 6.42. Young people considered information about the mechanics of elections and voting as a useful starting point, such as the process of registration.

“They should just give you a simple guide... like with pictures or steps.” (UK, Female, Disability group)

- 6.43. A suggestion that there could be a government communications campaign to guide young people through the registration and voting processes, received limited reaction in the focus groups, which could indicate such a campaign would only appeal to a minimal number of young people or passive agreement.

- 6.44. Furthermore, some young people were interested in party politics and the choices involved in deciding who to vote for. There was a demand for greater understanding about what parties stand for, and what implications are associated with an individual vote choice.

“I think to actually cast my vote, I'd need to just, I would like information on each party and like what they stand for 'cause then I could try and like align my views with a party and then I'd be able to vote.” (England, Female 16 to 17)

- 6.45. Politics was felt to be more meaningful to focus group participants when it was more direct or personal to them, with Votes at 16 itself possibly becoming something of a catalyst for greater participation as it brings politics closer to them:

“If issues were more related to us directly, we'd put more effort into learning about that stuff” (Northern Ireland, Male, 16 to 17)

I think it would really just depend on if there's topics that would directly resonate with me.” (Scotland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 6.46. In addition, not only does politics need to be relevant to them, but in return young people want to feel that their political voice has value - that Votes at 16 (for example) can make a positive difference to their own lives, or perhaps to the community around them.

“Voting at 16... it gives new opportunities to younger people. Maybe we get more involved in politics, which is good.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 6.47. For some, the ability to vote would become a statement of personal empowerment, a symbol of personal self-worth, or recognition of being invested in civic society.

“I would want to vote as I would like to be part of the decision that decides who is in power.” (Northern Ireland, Female, 14 to 15)

“If I could vote, I think I would. It’s like, you’d have a reason to care more.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 6.48. These focus groups suggest there is a need for more formal provision of information about voting and politics before young people reach the age of entitlement to vote at 16. Many recognised they were currently under-equipped to participate in the electoral process, which was often seen to be complex and confusing. Schools were seen to be the right provider of clarity on this, but doubt surrounded the use of additional citizenship classes as the vehicle for more substantive provision, given likely increase in workloads especially for those in important examination years. However, actually being granted the vote was considered to be a strong opportunity to fill the information gap by motivating young people to do more research into politics.

“I’d want to make sure I actually understand before voting, so I’d probably try to learn more.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

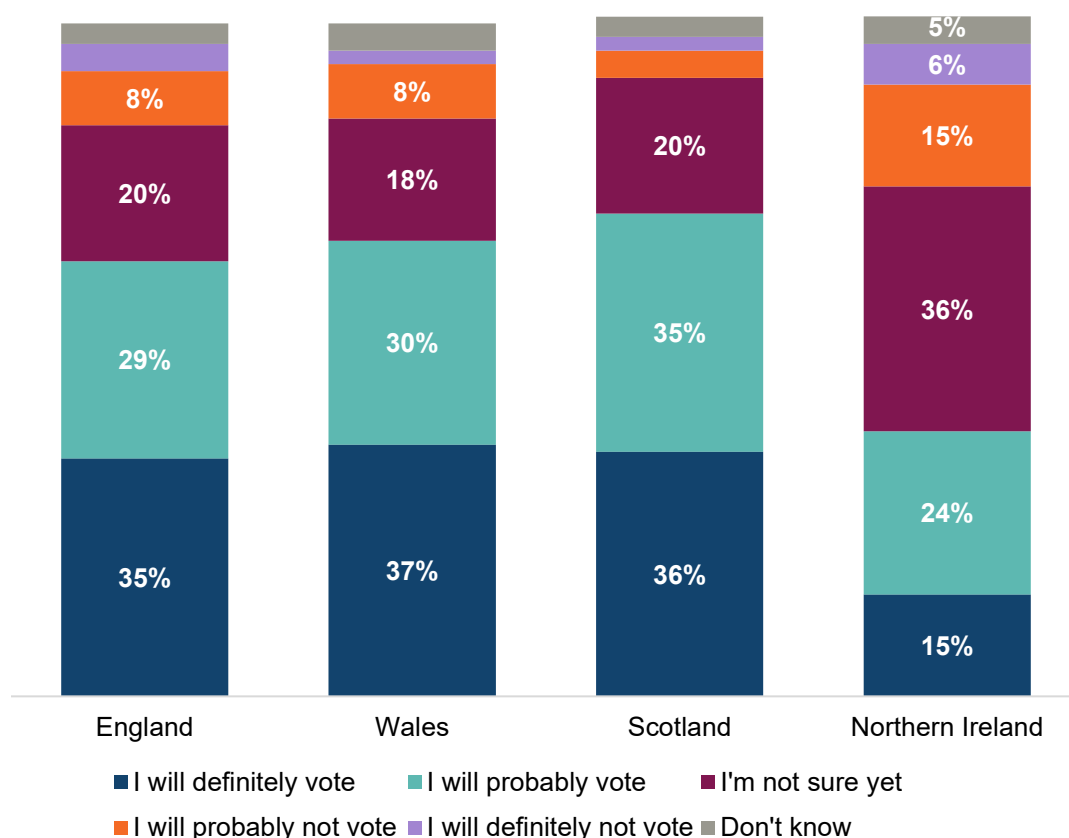
“And if I was given a chance to vote, I would definitely be more knowledgeable on it. It’s just the fact that we aren’t allowed to vote that I don’t actually know much about it.” (Wales, Male, 14 to 15)

Intention to vote

- 6.49. Respondents were asked in the survey whether or not they would vote at the next general election, were they old enough to do so. In Deltapoll’s past experience, the results from questions which ask respondents to predict their behaviour in future hypothetical situations should be treated with caution as human beings are often poor at predicting their own behaviour, particularly in circumstances where they have limited knowledge.
- 6.50. As Figure 6.4 shows, in England, Wales and Scotland, around two thirds of respondents will probably or definitely vote, and more than a third will definitely

vote, if they were old enough at the next election. Around one in five respondents were not sure yet.

Figure 6.4 - If you are old enough to vote at the next general election, will you vote?



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 6.51. In England, Wales and Scotland, there was little variation in the proportion of respondents who will probably or definitely vote (64%, 67%, 71% respectively). In Northern Ireland, the pattern of responses was different to the other three countries. Around two in five respondents (39%) will probably or definitely vote, and around one in six will definitely vote (15%), if they are old enough at the next election. More than a third of respondents (36%) were not sure yet.
- 6.52. In England, the respondents who were more likely to probably or definitely vote were those aged 14 to 15 (69%), from London (76%), from ABC1 households (71%), who are male (68%), whose day-to-day activities are not limited because of a health problem or disability (67%), who have an interest in world (81%), UK (80%) or local (81%) politics and who attend a private school (80%).
- 6.53. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, respondents from ABC1 households were more likely to at least probably vote (78% and 46% respectively). In Scotland,

respondents not eligible for free school meals (76%) were also more likely than those who are (58%) to at least probably vote.

- 6.54. In the focus groups, participants were asked whether they believed young people would participate in elections if they were given the opportunity to vote. The qualitative research outlined above revealed a clear dichotomy of views towards Votes at 16, with opinions divided between those who were pessimistic or optimistic that their peers would be likely to vote. Once again, needing to have more of an understanding of party political matters largely underpinned potential future abstention.

“I won’t vote as soon as I can. I’ll wait a few years to gain more knowledge on it.”
(Wales, Female, 14 to 15)

“I don’t think I’d be ready to vote in six months” (England, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.55. When participants admitted to a lack of current interest though, it almost inevitably led to doubt on whether they would cast a ballot at 16 or indeed sometime in the future. For some, voting is just not important to them at this point in their lives.

“I would probably not be bothered, I just do not care” (Northern Ireland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 6.56. At the other end of the spectrum, participants who were studying Politics reported being part of more-informed social circles and suggested that their friends would be more likely to engage with political processes and participate in voting:

“Yes, my friends have strong opinions and are interested in politics, so I think they would be engaged.” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

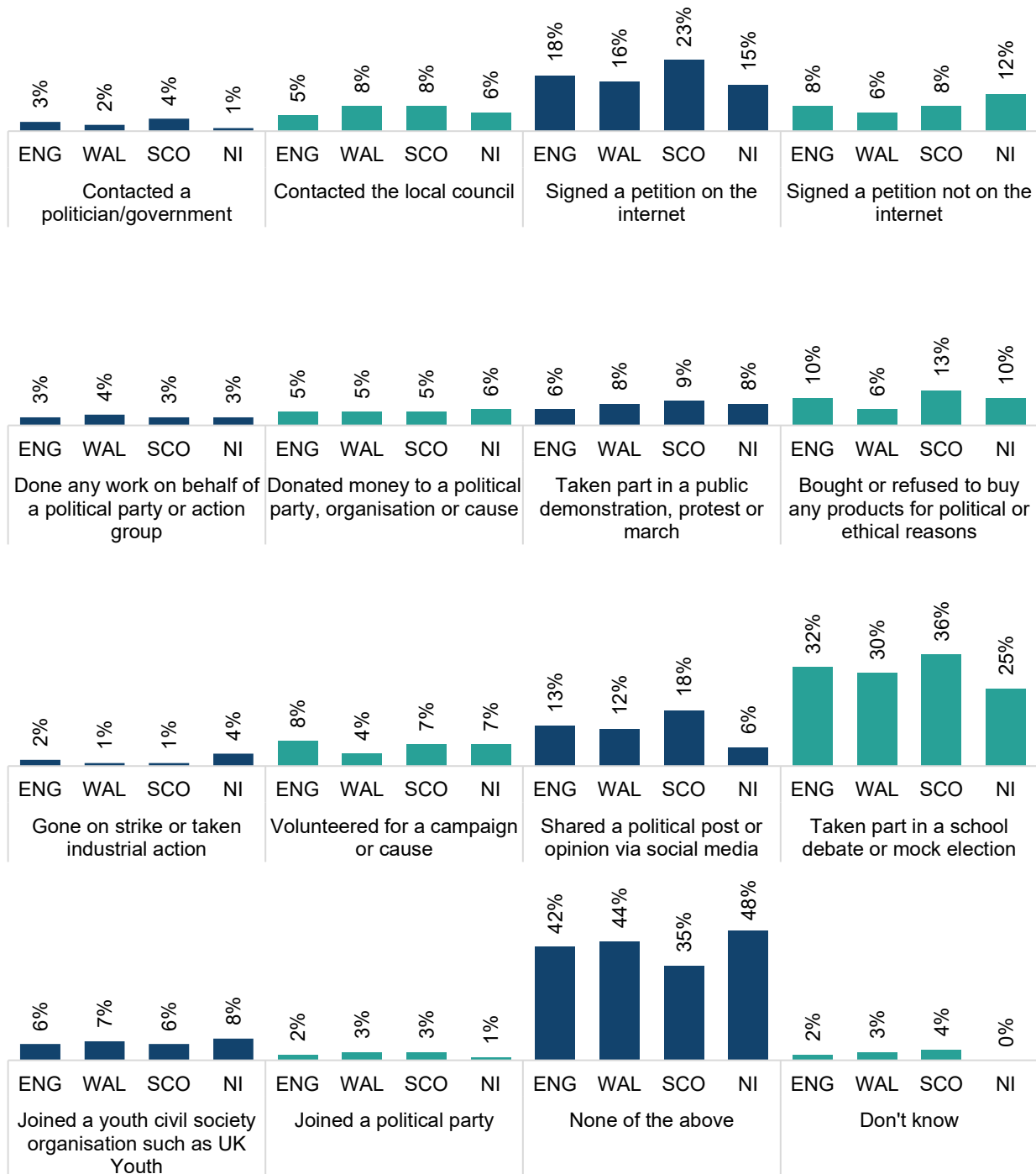
Participation in wider political activities

- 6.57. To understand their wider engagement with democracy, survey respondents were asked about specific activities related to politics and community affairs in which they have ever taken part.
- 6.58. There were no statistically significant differences between the four nations of the United Kingdom in terms of the activities related to politics and community affairs in which survey respondents had taken part.
- 6.59. Figure 6.5 shows that, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, a plurality of more than two in five respondents in the survey had not taken part in any of the

political activities from the list provided (42%, 44% and 48% respectively). In Scotland that figure was 35%.

- 6.60. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, the higher the number of different activities related to politics and community affairs in which respondents have ever taken part, the greater the respondent's reported likelihood of voting at the next general election. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the number of different political engagement activities and likelihood of voting, with the magnitude of the correlation small to moderate.

Figure 6.5 - Thinking about how active you are in politics and community affairs, have you ever done any of the following?



Base: All respondents = 2,506 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Respondents were able to select as many responses as applied.

Shortened labels for nations have been used for brevity of formatting

- 6.61. In all four nations of the United Kingdom ‘taken part in a school debate or mock election’ was the most common activity from the list provided (England 32%, Wales 30%, Scotland 36% and Northern Ireland 25%).
- 6.62. In England, ‘taken part in a school debate or mock election’ was more likely to be selected by respondents aged 14 to 15 (37%), respondents in London (41%), respondents from ABC1 households (37%), respondents who have an interest in world (39%), UK (39%) or local (40%) politics, respondents who will probably or definitely vote (39%) and respondents who attend a private school (46%).
- 6.63. In England, fewer than one in five respondents had taken part in any of the other activities tested. In Wales and Northern Ireland that proportion is one in six, in Scotland it is one in four.
- 6.64. Participants in the qualitative research were asked whether they had engaged with any elected members or campaigning organisations and whether they had engaged in any other political activities. In line with the quantitative findings, participants had generally not engaged in any political activities, and few described themselves as ‘activists’. A small number of young people, spread across all four nations of the United Kingdom, had engaged in cause-based action: whether via social media, attending marches, protesting on a single issue or as part of school-led events.

“I went to a climate march with school.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

“I signed petitions during COVID but nothing big.” (Scotland, Female, 16 to 17)

- 6.65. Whilst there were few differences nationally, the disability focus group (which included participants with a physical impairment, mental health condition or neurodiversity) were the most active when it came to campaigning. Access to structured, supported pathways (such as youth councils, inclusive school opportunities and MP work placements) played a critical role in fostering political engagement among these young people with disabilities.

“We’ve done campaigns about school lunches and accessibility stuff... trying to get ramps put in at one of the local buildings.” (UK, Female, Disability group)

“I’m part of a youth council thing, and we do consultations with the local council sometimes... like on transport and stuff.” (UK, Female, Disability group)

7. Identification and Document Ownership

Chapter Summary

- 7.1. The following section looks at identification and document ownership among respondents, focusing on forms of identification relevant to electoral participation. It analyses overall levels of ID ownership, differences between nations and demographic groups, awareness and certainty around ID ownership, and attitudes towards Voter Authority Certificates and Electoral Identity Cards. It also looks at attitudes to possible alternatives to showing identification such as someone vouching to confirm an elector's identity, an option proposed for consideration by external organisations such as the Electoral Commission.
- 7.2. Among both respondents aged 14 to 15 years and respondents aged 16 to 17 from England, Wales and Scotland, ownership of accepted ID that can be used to verify identity in a polling station or a bank card was widespread. At least one accepted form of ID or physical bank card was held by 92% of respondents in England, at least 89% in Wales and at least 97% in Scotland, with no statistically significant differences between age groups.
- 7.3. In England, Scotland and Wales, most respondents had either their full name or their first initial and surname printed on their most-used physical bank card, though the exact proportion of respondents varied slightly by age and nation. The respondent's full name was the most common format used. This question was not asked in Northern Ireland.
- 7.4. In the survey, respondents aged 14 to 15 in Scotland recorded the highest levels of ownership, largely reflecting the prevalence of the Young Scot PASS card, while respondents aged 14 to 15 in Wales recorded the lowest overall ownership levels of the nations in Great Britain.
- 7.5. Among respondents in Northern Ireland, ownership of accepted forms of photographic ID was slightly lower than in Great Britain, reflecting their different list of accepted IDs; 76% of respondents aged 14 to 15 years and 78% of respondents aged 16 to 17 years held at least one accepted form of ID. Ownership levels were broadly similar across age groups.
- 7.6. Birth or adoption certificates (which are not accepted forms of ID that can be used to verify identity in a polling station) and passports were the most commonly owned documents across all nations of the United Kingdom, though the exact proportions of respondents who held these does vary by nation. In addition, passports were held by around four in five respondents with at least one form of

ID in England and Wales, and by three in four respondents with one form of ID in Scotland and Northern Ireland. While passports remain common in Scotland, the Young Scot PASS Card was the most widely held form of identification.

- 7.7. Carrying passports routinely was not a preferred option for many focus group participants, however, with smaller or less valuable forms of identification preferred. This includes when it comes to presenting photo ID to vote.
- 7.8. Socio-economic differences were evident in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, respondents from C2DE households were less likely to have reported an accepted ID or a bank card, while ABC1 respondents were more likely to hold passports and digital bank cards. Scotland is the key exception as the widespread availability of the Young Scot PASS card means socioeconomic gaps were far smaller. In Wales and Northern Ireland, however, the differences were not statistically significant.
- 7.9. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, most respondents knew whether they held the IDs tested, with between 66% and 86% of respondents not selecting 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say' for any forms of ID. However, those respondents aged 16 to 17 were more likely to select 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'.
- 7.10. In England, Wales and Scotland, awareness of Voter Authority Certificates was limited, with around two in five respondents aware that one can be applied for free of charge. In Northern Ireland, awareness of the Electoral Identity Card was similarly limited, with around half of respondents knowing that it can be applied for free of charge. Despite moderate awareness that free forms of accepted identification can be applied for, those aged under 18 are not currently eligible to vote in any elections in either England or Northern Ireland, and voter identification is not required for devolved or local elections in which young people can currently vote in Wales and Scotland. It is therefore not expected that awareness would currently be high.
- 7.11. Respondents aged 14 to 15 showed greater willingness to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate than older respondents, and a majority of all age groups expressed a preference for a digital rather than paper version.
- 7.12. Most survey respondents aged 16 to 17 knew their National Insurance number or where to find it. Awareness of Unique Learner Numbers in England and Wales, however, remains limited, particularly in England.

Introduction

- 7.13. To cast a vote in-person at reserved elections in the United Kingdom, an elector must present a form of identification. There is a list of accepted forms of identification, set out in legislation and published on GOV.UK and by the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland also publishes the Northern Ireland list on their website.
- 7.14. The government has recently brought forward legislation to amend the accepted ID list to include bank cards, alongside the existing list of photographic identification, as accepted forms of ID when voting in a polling station. If electors do not have a form of identification, they can alternatively vote by post or proxy or can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate in England, Wales or Scotland, or apply for an Electoral Identity Card in Northern Ireland.
- 7.15. Separate to Voter ID requirements when voting in person, identity is also checked at the point of registering to vote. Following the introduction of Votes at 16, 14- and 15- year olds will be too young to cast a vote, but will be able to register to vote ahead of reaching voting age.
- 7.16. Understanding levels of identification and document ownership amongst 14- to 17-year-olds is thus very important in order to inform decisions on whether policy adjustments, operational changes, or amendments to the list of accepted IDs for voting at a polling station or registering to vote are necessary or appropriate to ensure this age group is able to easily meet requirements.
- 7.17. The following sections set out young people's ownership of different forms of identification and other documents, examining how this varies across the four nations and across age groups. It also outlines levels of awareness of alternative forms of voter identification and explores comfort and confidence in using these documents when required.

Forms of identification and documents tested

- 7.18. In order to understand the patterns of identification and document ownership among 14- to 17-year-olds in the United Kingdom, various forms of identification were tested, selected based on the nation of the participant. The specific forms of identification tested in each nation with the survey are set out in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 - Table of IDs tested in each nation

	Accepted forms of Voter ID			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Passport (UK, Irish, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, British Overseas Territory, Commonwealth or EU/European Economic Area)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Full or provisional photocard driving licence (UK, Crown Dependency or EU member state)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National identity card issued by a member state of the European Union/European Economic Area	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UK biometric immigration document (Biometric Residence Permit or eVisa)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Physical PASS card (Proof of Age Standards Scheme) (e.g. NUS or TOTUM)	Yes	Yes	Not asked	Yes
Digital PASS card (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Physical Young Scot PASS card	Not asked	Not asked	Yes	Not asked
Other Physical PASS card (Physical Proof of Age Standards Scheme) (e.g. NUS or TOTUM)	Not asked	Not asked	Yes	Not asked
Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Translink travel pass	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
A PHYSICAL/PLASTIC bank card with your name on it	Not currently but set to change	Not currently but set to change	Not currently but set to change	Not asked
A DIGITAL bank card (such as through Apple Pay or Google Pay)	No	No	No	Not asked
School or College Photo ID card	No	No	No	No
National Railcard (physical)	No	No	No	No
National Railcard (digital)	No	No	No	No
Photographic Oyster Card / Zip Card	No	No	No	No
Birth or adoption certificate	No	No	No	No
Bank statement	No	No	No	No

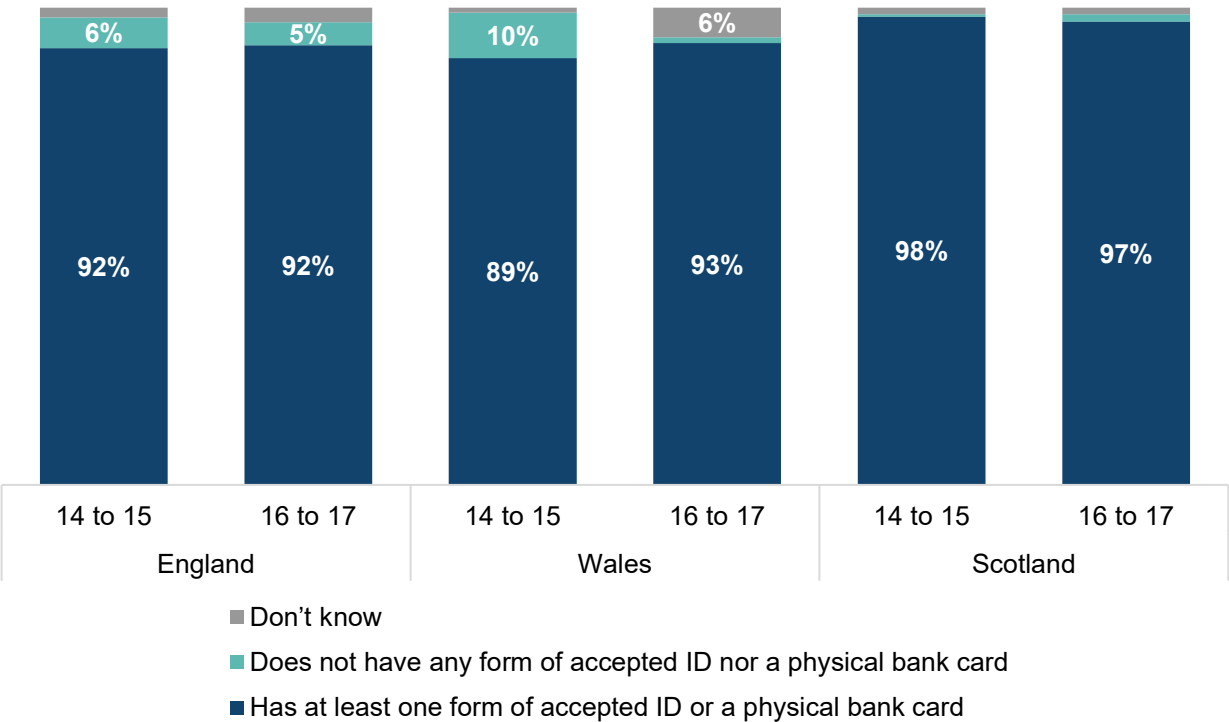
- 7.19. In England and Wales, fifteen different forms of identification were tested, eight of which are currently accepted as identification for voting at a polling station in those nations. In Scotland, sixteen different forms of identification were included in the list, ten of which are currently accepted as identification for voting at a polling station in that nation. In Northern Ireland, fourteen different forms of identification were included in the list, five of which are currently accepted as identification for voting at a polling station in that nation. This research included a range of documents not currently accepted at the polling station, in order to inform decisions on whether the list should be expanded. Notably this included bank cards. These are not currently an accepted form of ID at the polling station, but they had been suggested as a document that would be widely held and could increase ownership of accepted forms of ID if added, and the government has since brought in legislation to do this.
- 7.20. This list was provided by MHCLG. It comprises of the currently accepted documents most likely to be held by young people (for example many documents have age criteria that would prevent young people from applying for them) as well as a range of documents that are not currently accepted. The list of documents that are not currently accepted arose from feedback and suggestions from a range of stakeholders and the public, and again are those that are more likely to be held by younger people.
- 7.21. Within the questionnaire, respondents were presented with a list of different forms of identification, and for each individual form of identification, they were asked whether they have or do not have this form of identification. Respondents could also select 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say' for each form of identification and document tested.
- 7.22. One key area of analysis is how commonly each specific form of ID is owned compared to the other forms of ID. This analysis was conducted only among those respondents with at least one form ID in order to allow for greater granularity in the relative ranking of different forms of identification. The full list of options presented was rebased to respondents who have at least one form of identification.

Great Britain: Overall identification and document ownership

- 7.23. Figure 7.1 shows, in England, Wales and Scotland, up to 11% of respondents aged 14 to 15 did not specifically state they have an accepted form of ID including a physical bank card.

- 7.24. Respondents were shown a list of different forms of ID relevant to their nation, as outlined in Table X. For each ID, respondents were asked whether they did or did not have this ID, or whether they did not know or would prefer not to say. This number is equal to the percentage of young people who did not select that they have any form of ID from the accepted list including a physical bank card. Respondents may, however, have selected a mixture of the other available responses (Do not own, Don't know or Prefer not to say) across the different types of ID. This number, therefore, represents the total percentage of young people who do not have ID in each nation.
- 7.25. Similarly, in England, Wales and Scotland, up to 8% of those respondents aged 16 to 17 did not specifically state they have an accepted form of ID including a physical bank card.

Figure 7.1 - Percentage of respondents who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card



Base: All respondents = 3,226 14- to 17-year-olds in Great Britain
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded. Don't know includes respondents who selected Don't know or Prefer not to say.

- 7.26. Of the four nations of the United Kingdom, Scotland had the lowest proportion of respondents who did not specifically state they have any of the forms of ID from the accepted list tested or a physical bank card. This was a total of 2% of those respondents aged 14 to 15 and 3% of those respondents aged 16 to 17. In

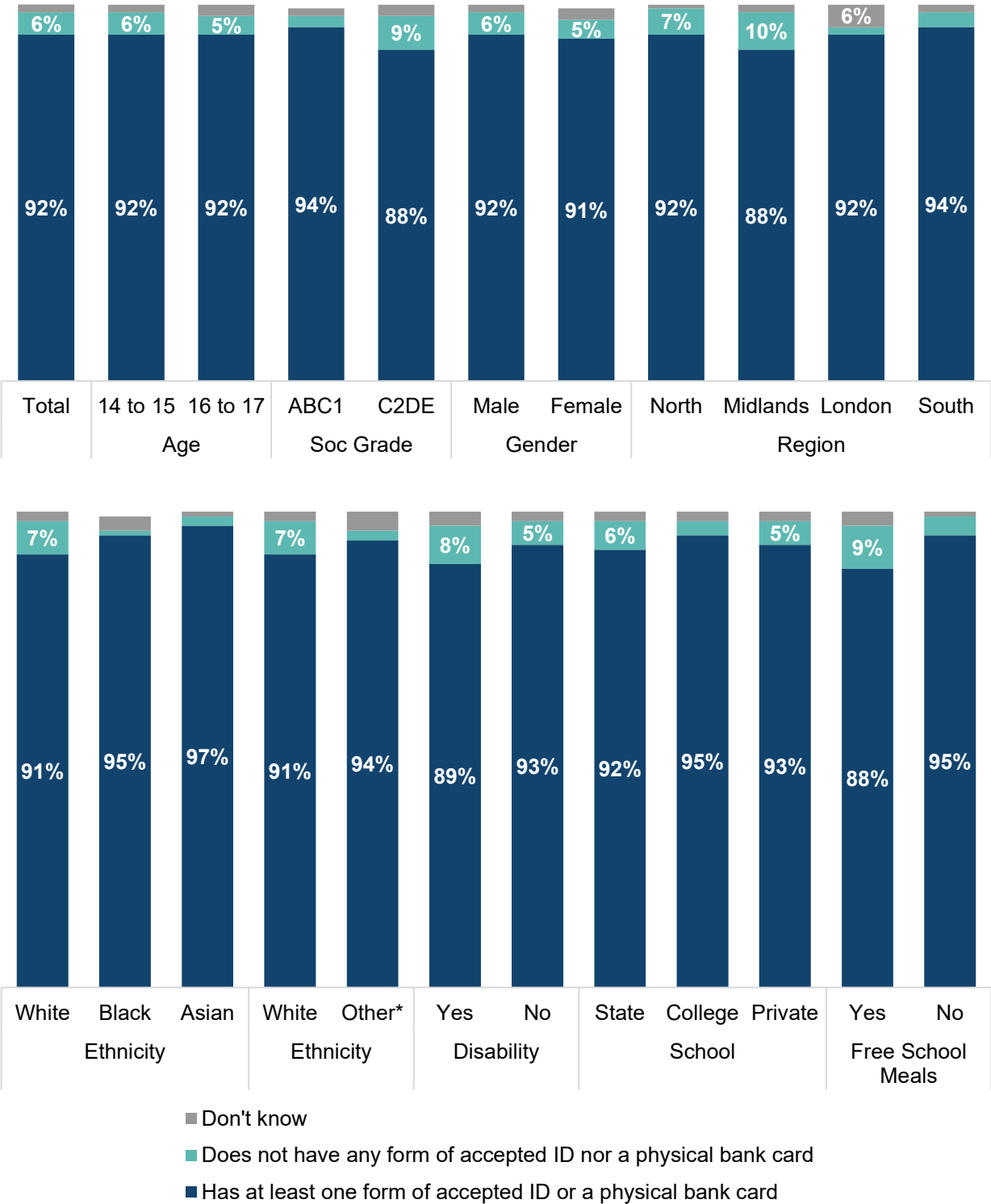
England it was 8% for both age groups and in Wales it was 11% and 7% respectively.

- 7.27. Similarly, of the four nations of the United Kingdom, Scotland had the largest proportion of respondents to have at least one of the forms of ID from the accepted list tested or a physical bank card. In Scotland, 98% of those respondents aged 14 to 15 and 97% of those respondents aged 16 to 17 had at least one of the forms of ID from the accepted list tested or a physical bank card. In England it was 92% for both age groups. In Wales it was 89% and 93% respectively.
- 7.28. When it comes to definitely having at least one accepted form of ID or physical bank card, there was not a statistically significant difference between the age groups.
- 7.29. A chart presenting the percentage of respondents who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list, and not including physical bank cards can be found in Appendix C. This illustrates that in Wales, where ID ownership was lowest of the three nations, 86% of those respondents aged 14 to 15 and 84% of those respondents aged 16 to 17 had at least one of the forms of ID from the accepted list and the inclusion of a physical bank card increased that number 3 points and 9 points respectively. In England the increase was 6 points for both age groups. In Scotland, where the Young Scot card is extremely common, there was no change.

Great Britain: Identification and document ownership by socio-economic and demographic groups

- 7.30. This section explores patterns of identification and document ownership across different demographic groups in England (Figure 7.2), Wales (Figure 7.3) and Scotland (Figure 7.4). Northern Ireland is addressed separately in their own subsequent section, because it operates under a different voter ID policy and has a separate list of accepted forms of identification from those used in Great Britain.

Figure 7.2 - Percentage of respondents in England who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card



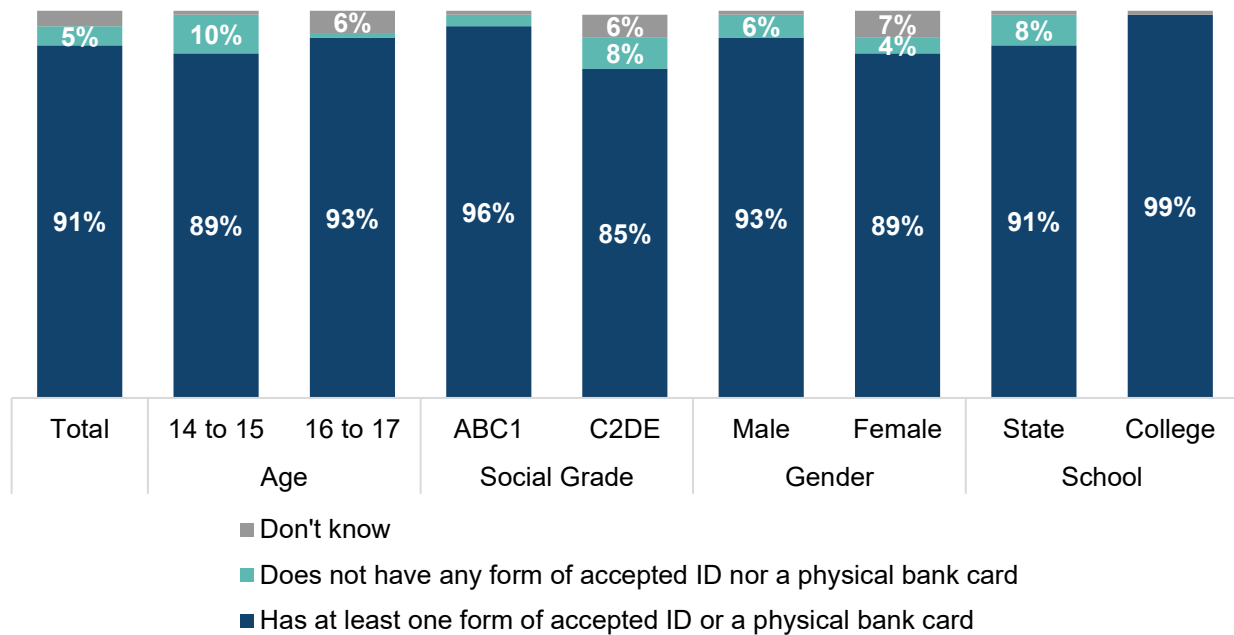
Base: All respondents = 2,348 14- to 17-year-olds in England

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded. Demographic groups with 100 or fewer respondents are excluded.

* 'Other' refers to All Other Ethnic Groups Combined.

Figure 7.3 - Percentage of respondents in Wales who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card

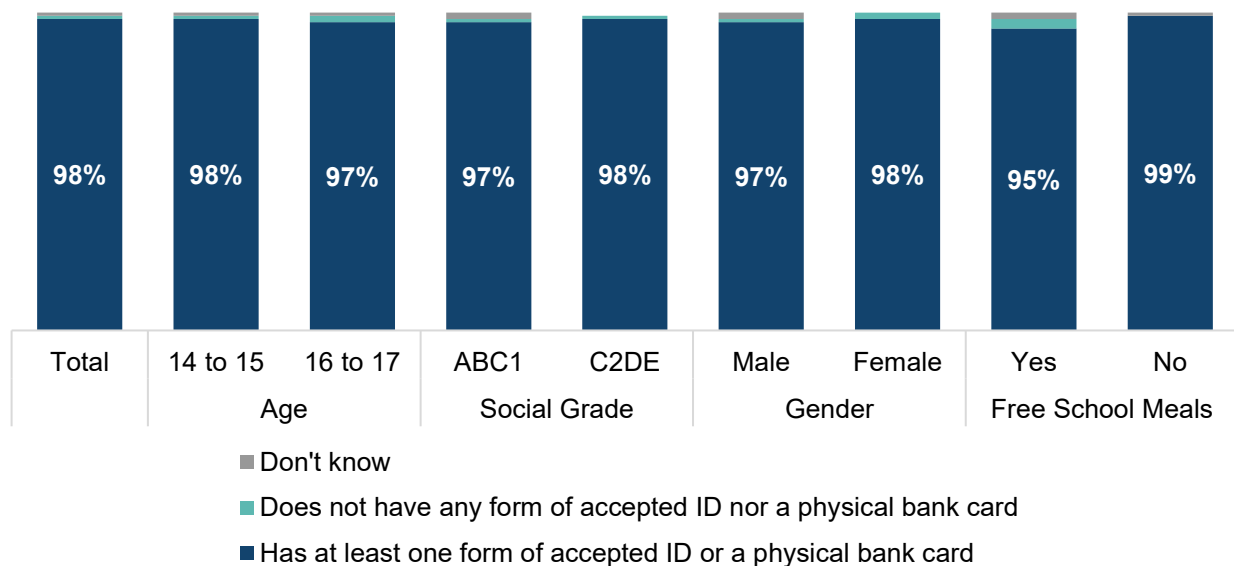


Base: All respondents = 397 14- to 17-year-olds in Wales

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded. Demographic groups with 100 or fewer respondents are excluded.

Figure 7.4 - Percentage of respondents in Scotland who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card



Base: All respondents = 481 14- to 17-year-olds in Scotland

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded. Demographic groups with 100 or fewer respondents are excluded.

- 7.31. As seen in Figure 7.2, Figure 7.3 and Figure 7.4, across Great Britain, reported ownership of at least one form of accepted ID or a physical bank card was consistently high across all three nations, though the specific socio-economic and demographic groups less likely to own a form of ID vary by nation.
- 7.32. As seen in Figure 7.2, in England, across all demographic groups tested, very high proportions (at least 88%) of respondents reported definitely having an ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card. The demographic groups that were statistically significantly less likely to report definitely having an ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card were respondents from an C2DE household (88%), from the Midlands (88%) and respondents entitled to free school meals (88%).
- 7.33. As seen in Figure 7.3, in Wales, across all demographic groups tested, high proportions of respondents (85%) reported definitely having an ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card, though this was slightly lower than in England. The demographic group that was statistically significantly less likely to report definitely having an ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card was also respondents from a C2DE household (85%).
- 7.34. However, the highest rates of ID ownership are in Scotland where, as Figure 7.4 shows, across all demographic groups tested, overwhelming majorities (at least 95%) of respondents currently have an ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card. The demographic group that was statistically significantly less likely to report definitely having an ID from the accepted list or a physical bank card was respondents entitled to free school meals (95%).
- 7.35. The popularity of the Young Scot PASS card, which is not available outside Scotland, meant that 98% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 97% of those aged 16 to 17 had at least one of the forms of ID from the accepted list tested. In contrast to England and Wales, the inclusion of a physical bank card did not increase that number.
- 7.36. Subsample sizes for several groups in Wales and Scotland (including respondents from all ethnic groups other than white, those living with a disability, and those not in school or college) were too small for firm conclusions.

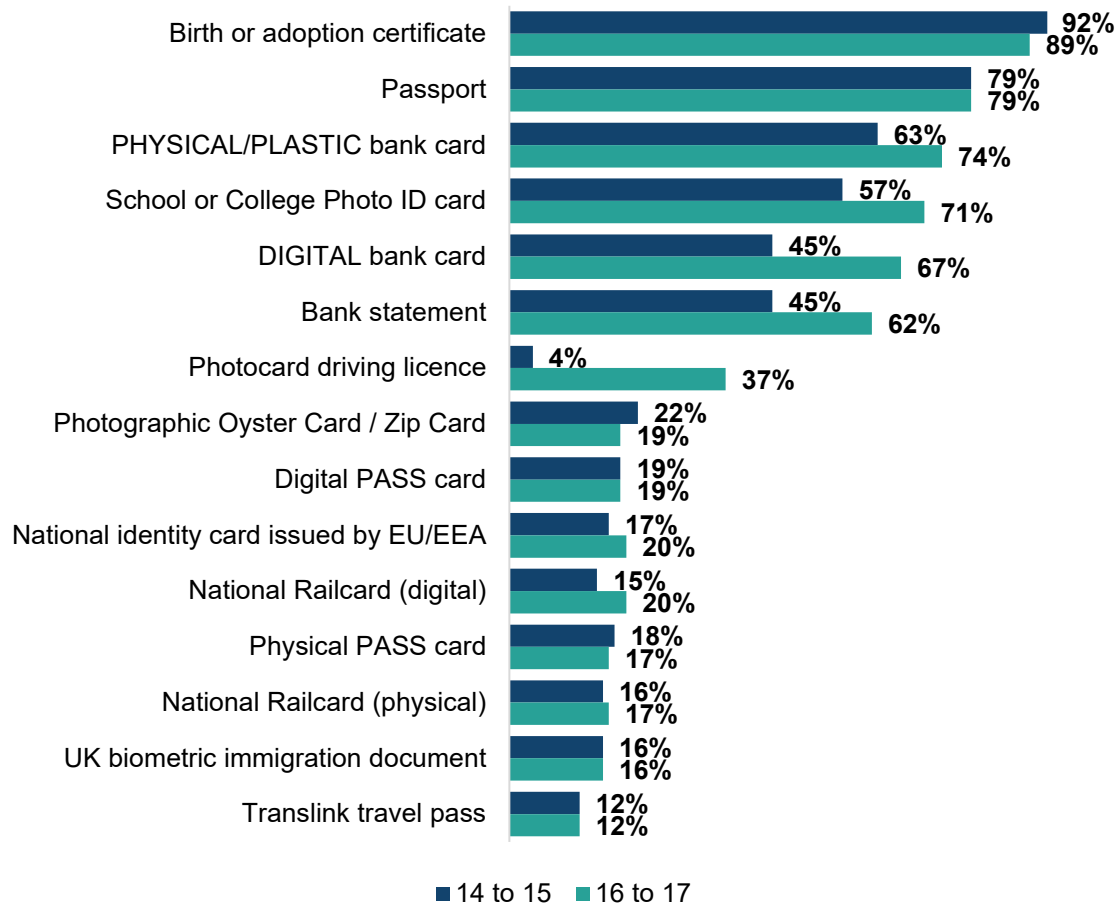
Great Britain: Prevalence of each form of identification or document

- 7.37. Figure 7.5, Figure 7.6 and Figure 7.7 highlight that there was variation in which forms of identification and documents were held most commonly across England, Wales and Scotland among those with at least one form of ID. Across Great Britain, birth or adoption certificates and passports were the most commonly held forms of identification among respondents aged 14 to 17 who had at least one form of listed ID. Physical bank cards were also widely owned across England, Wales and Scotland.
- 7.38. While the most and least common forms of ID were broadly similar across age groups, respondents aged 16 to 17 were statistically significantly more likely to hold forms of ID associated with greater eligibility with age, such as photocard driving licences, digital bank cards and school or college photo ID.

England

- 7.39. Figure 7.5 shows that in England, birth or adoption certificates, passports and physical bank cards were the most commonly owned forms of ID among respondents with at least one form of ID. Birth or adoption certificates were held by 92% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 89% of respondents aged 16 to 17. Passports were held by 79% of respondents in both age groups. Physical bank cards were the third most common form, with ownership higher among respondents aged 16 to 17 (74%) compared with 63% of respondents aged 14 to 15.

Figure 7.5 - Which, if any, of the following forms of identification or documents do you have? [England]



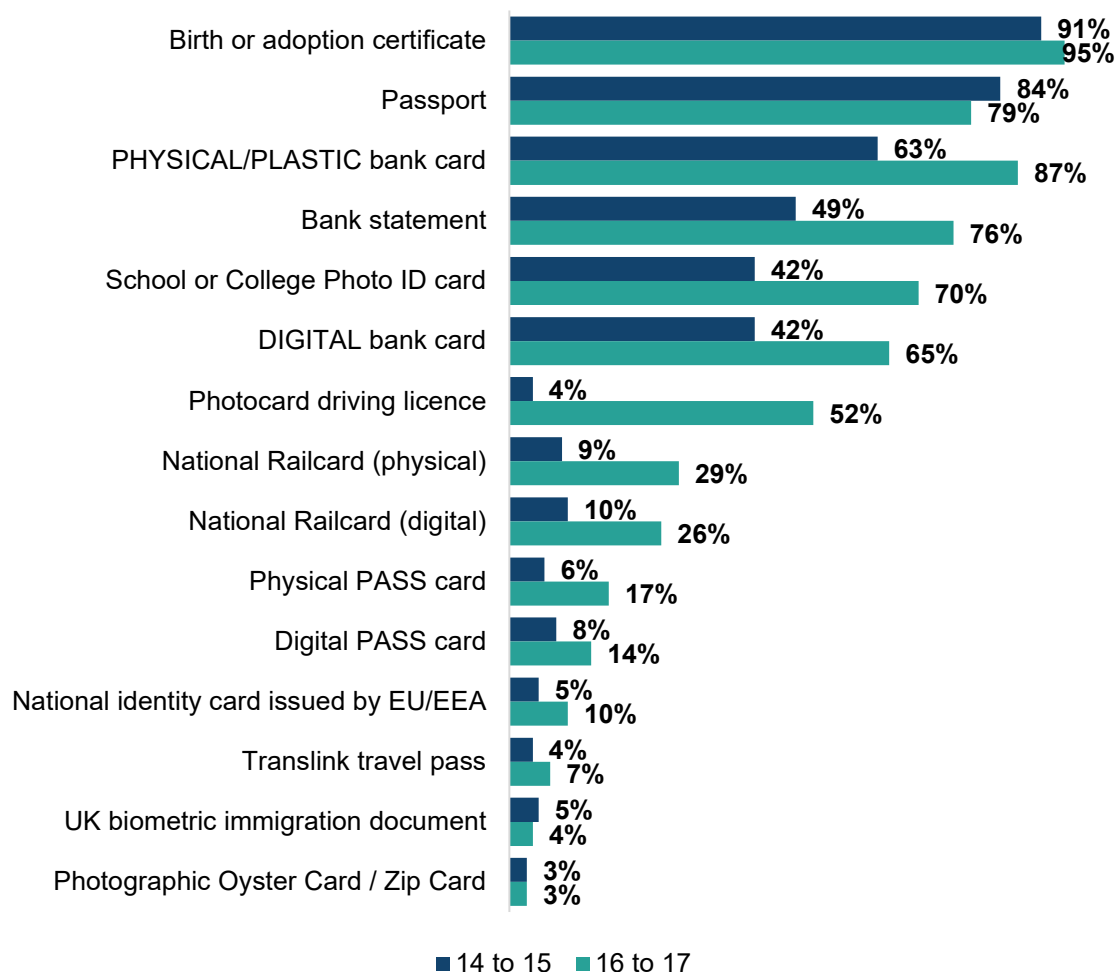
Base: All respondents with at least one form of listed ID = 2,317 14- to 17-year-olds in England
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

7.40. In England, passport ownership was higher among respondents from ABC1 households (83%), those whose daily activities are not limited by disability (81%), and those not entitled to free school meals (84%). Physical bank cards were more commonly held by respondents not entitled to free school meals (71%) and respondents aged 16 to 17 (74%), while digital bank cards were more common among ABC1 households (59%) and 16- to 17-year-olds (67%). School or college photo ID were more prevalent among respondents aged 16 to 17 (71%), those living in London (83%), ABC1 households (69%), those not limited by disability (66%), those who attend a college (93%) and those who are entitled to free school meals (68%).

Wales

- 7.41. As shown in Figure 7.6, Wales follows a similar pattern to England, with birth or adoption certificates, passports and physical bank cards the most commonly held forms of identification. Among respondents with at least one form of listed ID, 91% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 95% of respondents aged 16 to 17 had a birth or adoption certificate, while passports were held by 84% and 79% respectively.

Figure 7.6 - Which, if any, of the following forms of identification or documents do you have? [Wales]



Base: All respondents with at least one form of listed ID = 390 14- to 17-year-olds in Wales
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

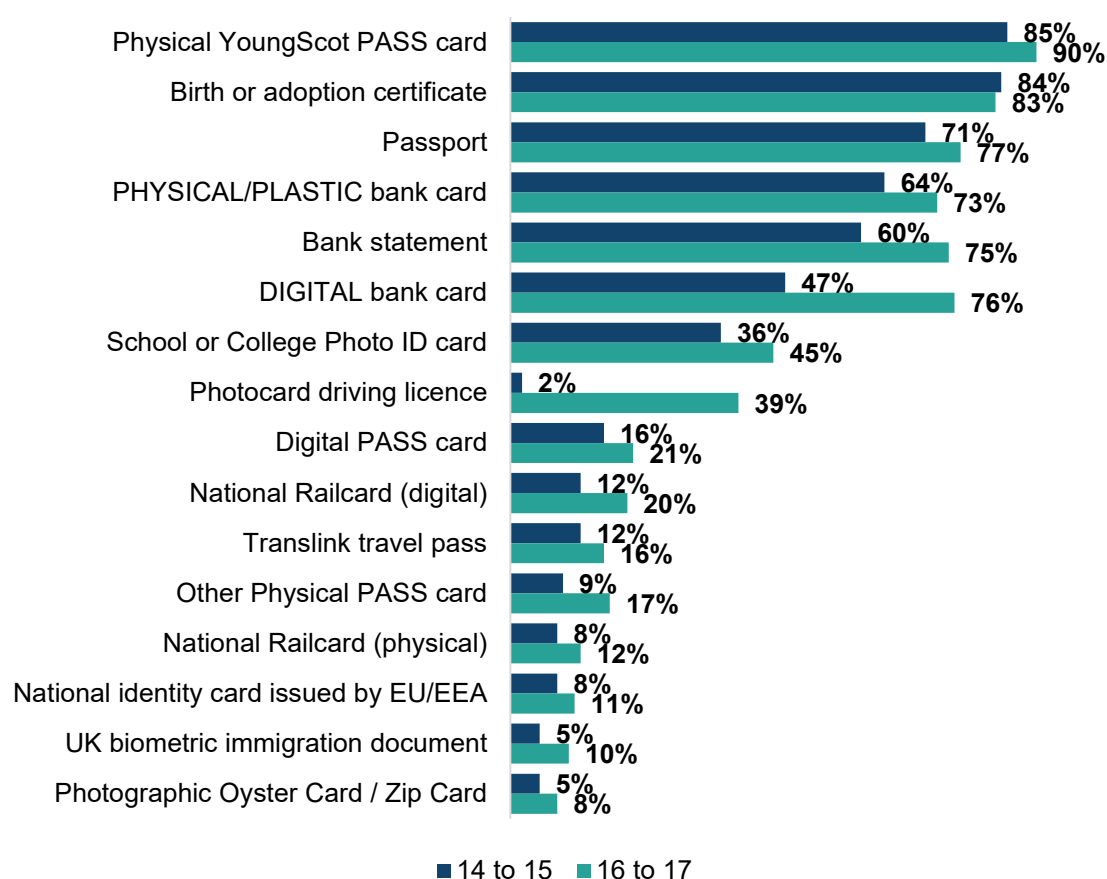
- 7.42. As in England, the most and least common forms of ID were broadly similar across age groups, but respondents aged 16 to 17 were more likely to hold certain forms, such as physical bank cards (87%), digital bank cards (65%), bank statements (76%), school or college photo ID (70%), physical railcards (29%),

digital railcards (26%) and physical PASS cards (17%). Passport ownership was also more common among respondents from ABC1 households.

Scotland

7.43. Figure 7.7 shows that Scotland stands out due to the central role of the Young Scot PASS card, which was among the most commonly held forms of ID alongside birth or adoption certificates. Among respondents with at least one form of listed ID, 85% aged 14 to 15 and 90% of those aged 16 to 17 held a Young Scot PASS card, with no statistically significant demographic variation.

Figure 7.7 - Which, if any, of the following forms of identification or documents do you have? [Scotland]



Base: All respondents with at least one form of listed ID = 473 14- to 17-year-olds in Scotland
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

7.44. Passport ownership was more common among respondents from ABC1 households (81%) and those not entitled to free school meals (82%), while digital bank cards were also more common among ABC1 respondents (67%), those not entitled to free school meals (65%), and among 16- and 17-year-olds (76%). In

focus groups, participants frequently referenced the Young Scot card as their primary form of photo ID, with respondents aged 16 to 17 also mentioning provisional driving licences, while the younger participants noted their ineligibility to apply.

- 7.45. Young Scot Card (formerly the Young Scot National Entitlement Card) is available free of charge and can be used for proving identity, accessing local authority services and receiving discounted or free public transport. These benefits help explain its widespread ownership across Scotland.
- 7.46. In the focus groups, participants in Scotland mentioned the Young Scot card, and highlighted its significance. Provisional driving licences were also mentioned, primarily by participants aged 16 to 17 years:

“Most will have the Young Scot Card. If you are 16 or 17, maybe a provisional licence too.” (Scotland, Male, 16 to 17)

“We have only got a passport, we are not old enough for driving licences yet.” (Scotland, Male, 14 to 15)

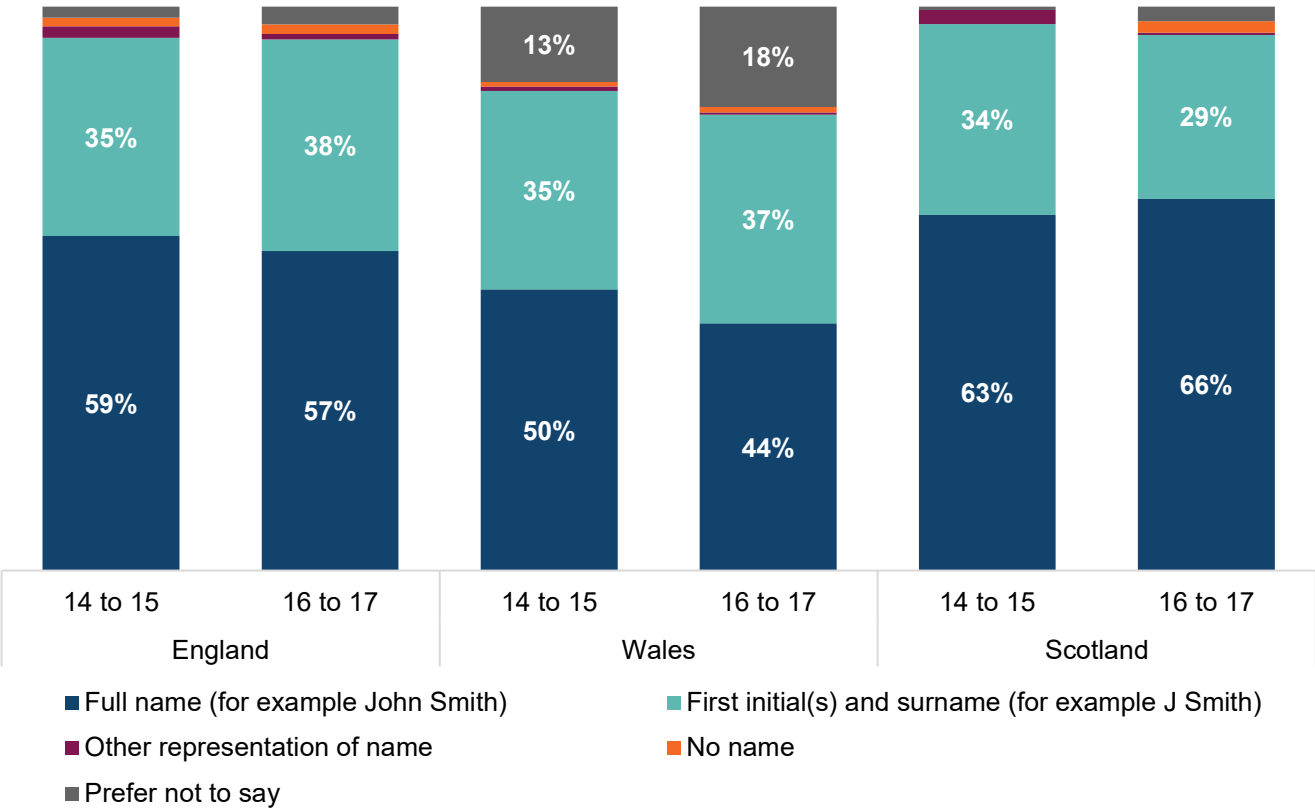
- 7.47. Birth or adoption certificates continue to be commonly held in Scotland (84% for respondents aged 14 to 15 and 83% for respondents aged 16 to 17). As in England and Wales, respondents aged 16 to 17 were more likely to have bank cards, bank statements, railcards or PASS cards.

Great Britain: Format of cardholders’ name on bank cards

- 7.48. The Government intends to add Bank cards to the list of eligible IDs to vote at a polling station. However, bank cards show name information in a range of formats - e.g. John Smith, J Smith, Mr Smith, and so understanding which formats of name are commonly listed on bank cards was important for policy design in order to strike the right balance between allowing as many formats as possible to maximise accessibility, and restricting cards with more ambiguous names (e.g. Mr Smith) that might be used to vote by other individuals.
- 7.49. Those respondents who have at least one physical bank card were asked in the survey the format in which their name is presented on the card that they use most frequently. Respondents were asked to provide their best guess if they did not have access to their card. This question was not asked in Northern Ireland, where different voter identification rules are in place, and allowing the use of bank cards is not being considered.

7.50. As seen in Figure 7.8, in England and Scotland, across both age groups, the respondent’s full name was the most common format used for names on physical bank cards. Although it was also most popular in Wales, that finding is not statistically significant. A sizeable minority, however, used a physical card with a first initial and then a surname.

Figure 7.8 - Thinking about the one PHYSICAL / PLASTIC bank card you use MOST FREQUENTLY, what is the format of your name on the card?



Base: All respondents = All respondents with a physical bank card = 2,273 14- to 17-year-olds in Great Britain

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 7.51. In England, 59% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 57% aged 16 to 17 had their full name on the physical bank card they used most frequently. In Wales, it was 50% and 44% respectively, and in Scotland it was 63% and 66% respectively.
- 7.52. A further 35% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 38% of respondents aged 16 to 17 had their first initial and surname on the physical bank card they used most. In Wales it was 35% and 37% respectively, and in Scotland it was 34% and 29% respectively.

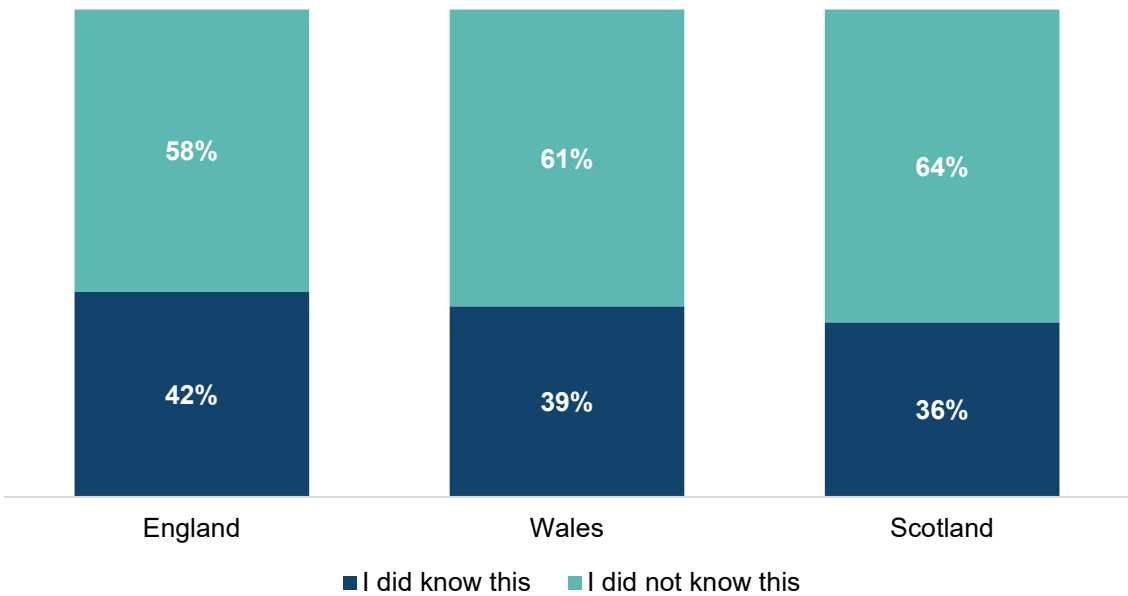
7.53. Therefore, across all three nations, most young people had either their full name or their first initial and surname printed on their most-used physical bank card, though patterns varied slightly by age and nation.

Great Britain: Voter Authority Certificates

7.54. Respondents in the survey were asked if, before they began the survey, they knew that anyone who does not have a valid form of photo ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. However, it should be noted that those aged under 18 are not currently eligible to vote in any elections in England and that voter identification is not required for devolved or local elections in which young people can currently vote in Wales and Scotland, and so it may not be surprising that awareness of this election focused ID is currently not high.

7.55. Figure 7.9 shows that across England, Wales and Scotland, around two in five respondents knew that anyone who does not have a valid form of ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate (42%, 39% and 36% respectively).

Figure 7.9 - Please say if, before this survey, whether or not you knew each of the following about voting and elections in the UK? Anyone who does not have a valid form of photo ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate, free of charge, so they can vote



Base: All respondents = 2,421 14- to 17-year-olds in England, Wales and Scotland

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

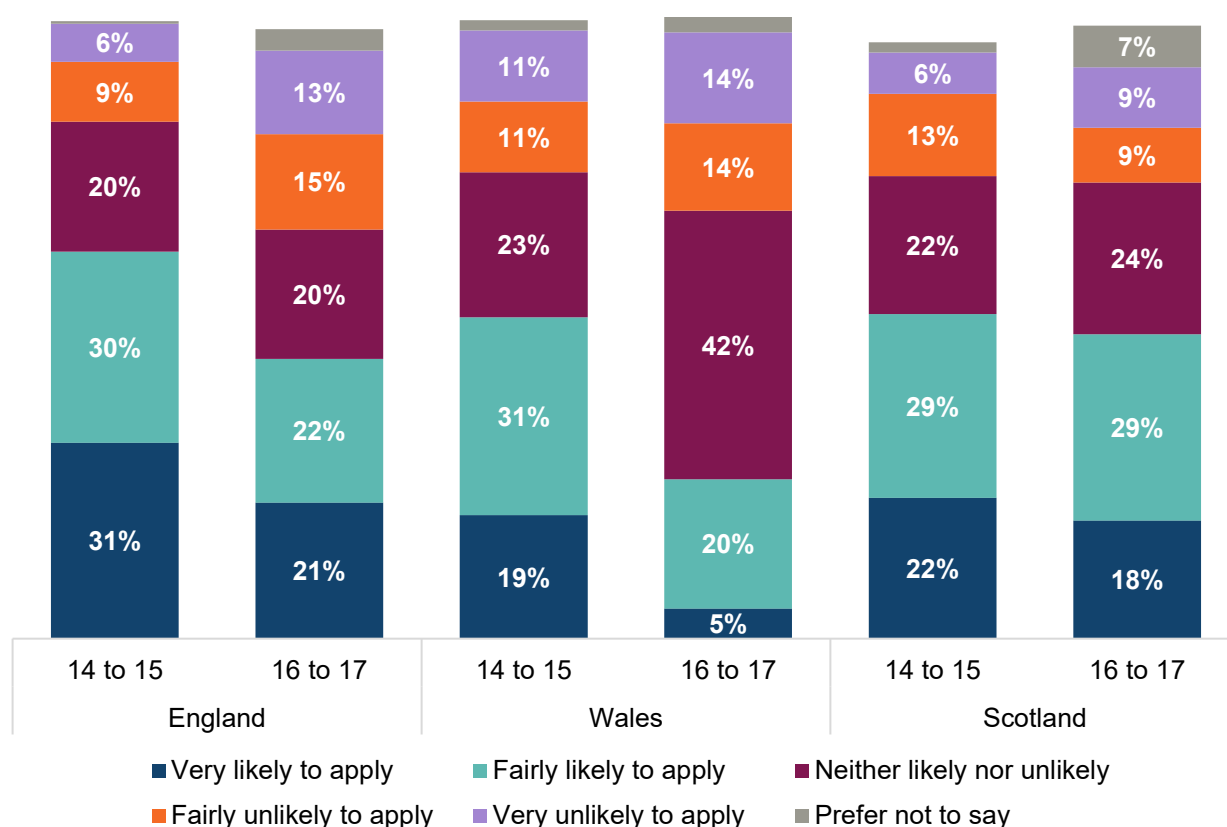
Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

7.56. Respondents in England, Scotland and Wales were also asked in the survey, hypothetically speaking, how likely it would be that they would apply for a Voter

Authority Certificate. In Deltapoll's past experience, the results from questions which ask respondents to predict their behaviour in future hypothetical situations should be treated with caution as people are often poor at predicting their behaviour, particularly in circumstances where they have limited knowledge.

- 7.57. As Figure 7.10 shows, in England, Wales and Scotland, at least half of respondents aged 14 to 15 said they were likely to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate (61%, 50% and 51% respectively). In England and Scotland, a plurality of respondents aged 16 said they were likely to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate (44% and 48% respectively). In Wales, a plurality of respondents aged 16 to 17 (42%) said they were neither likely nor unlikely to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.

Figure 7.10 - If you did not have a form of ID and there was an upcoming election you were able to vote in, how likely or unlikely is it that you would apply for a Voter Authority Certificate?



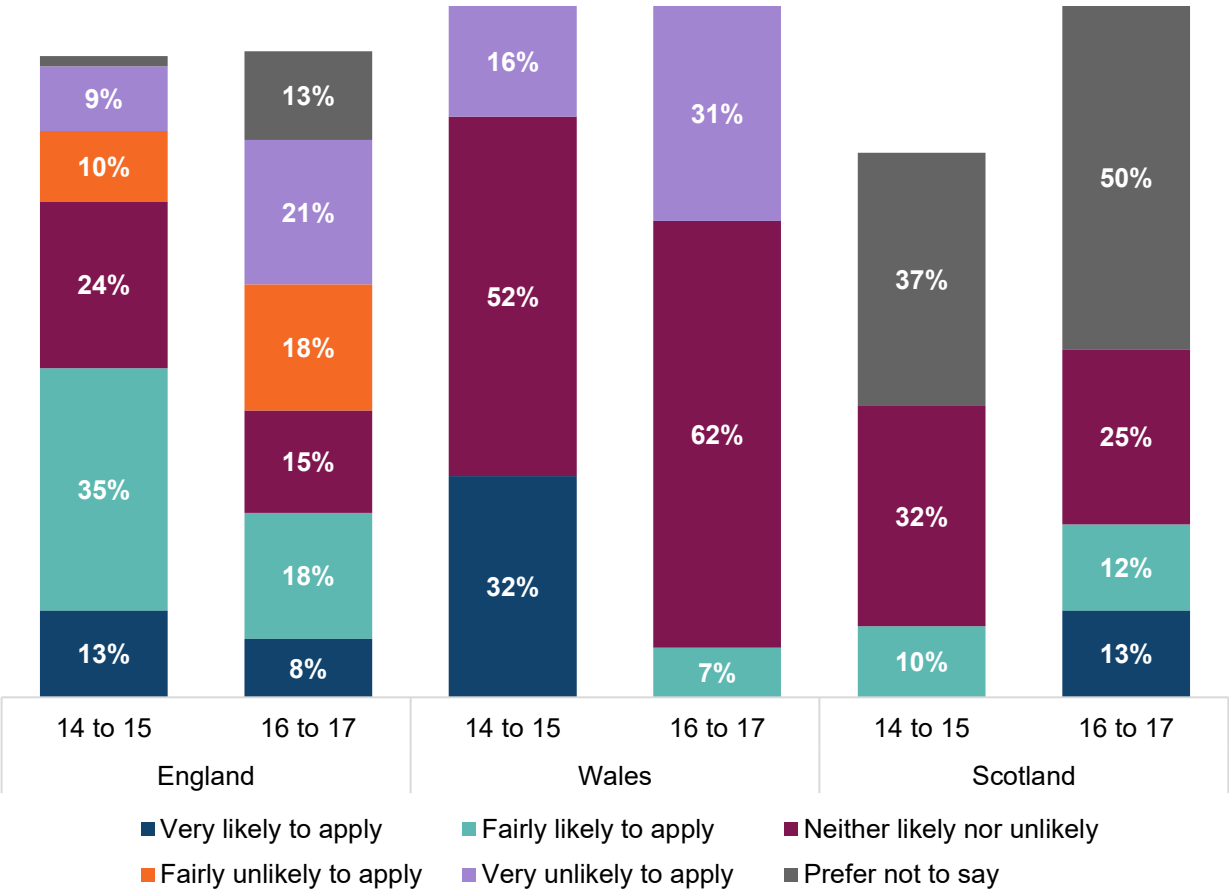
Base: All respondents = 2,421 14- to 17-year-olds in Great Britain

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

7.58. Figure 7.11 shows that, in England, a plurality of respondents aged 14 to 15 who did not have an accepted ID or bank card (48%) said it was likely that they would apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. In contrast, a plurality of respondents aged 16 to 17 who did not have an accepted ID or bank card (39%) said it was unlikely that they would apply for one. The sub-sample sizes for Wales and Scotland were too small for this question to draw valid conclusions.

Figure 7.11 - If you did not have a form of ID and there was an upcoming election you were able to vote in, how likely or unlikely is it that you would apply for a Voter Authority Certificate? [No accepted ID or bank card]



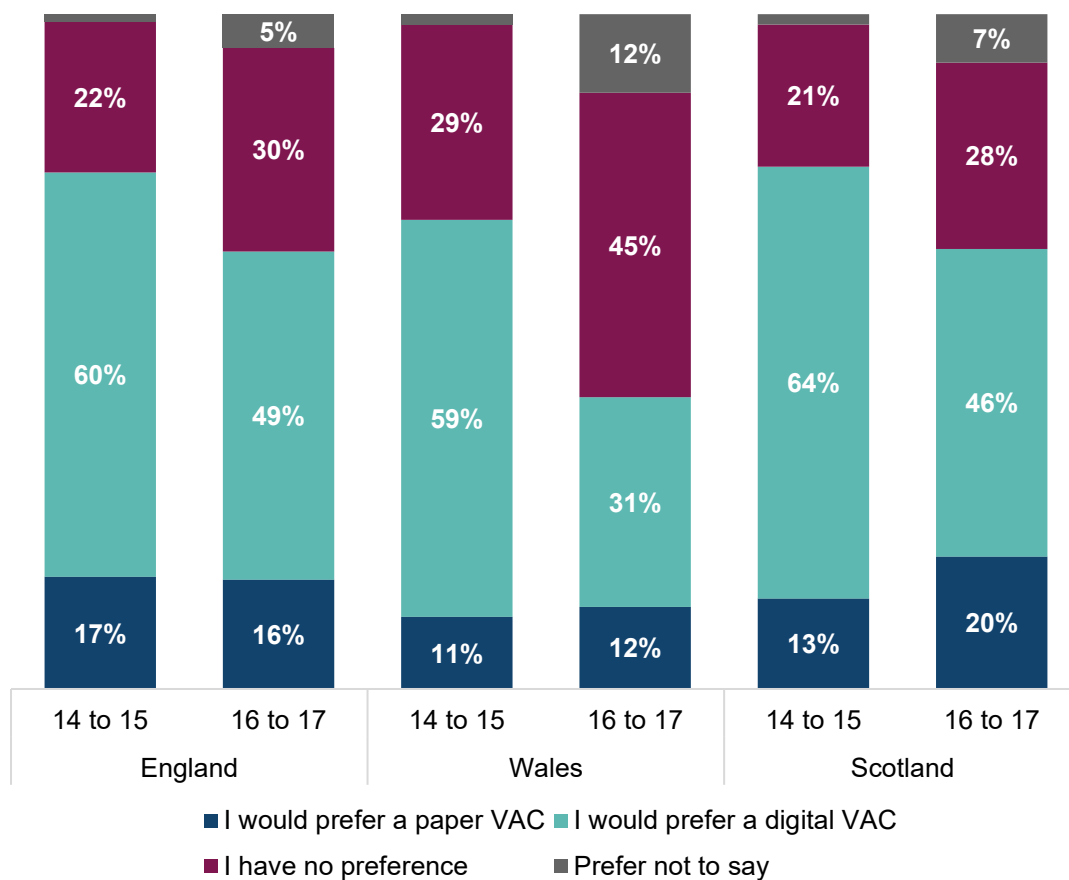
Base: All respondents = All respondents who do not have an ID or bank card = 159 14- to 17-year-olds in Great Britain
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

7.59. Although Voter Authority Certificates are currently only available in paper format, the demand for an online version has been tested, as an online Voter Authority Certificate might be more convenient or preferable to some electors, such as younger voters. Respondents in the survey were asked if they would, hypothetically speaking, prefer a paper or online version. As detail on the precise process for applying for a Voter Authority Certificate was not provided, the results

should only be interpreted as support for the principle of an online version compared to a paper version.

- 7.60. Figure 7.12 shows that a majority of respondents aged 14 to 15 in England, Wales and Scotland would prefer a digital Voter Authority Certificate (60%, 59% and 64% respectively). A plurality of respondents aged 16 to 17 in England (49%) and Scotland (46%) would prefer a digital Voter Authority Certificate, whereas in Wales, a plurality of respondents aged 16 to 17 (45%) had no preference.

Figure 7.12 - If a Voter Authority Certificate could be provided in a digital format, which option do you think you would prefer?



Base: All respondents = 2,421 14- to 17-year-olds in Great Britain

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 7.61. Only a small proportion in any nation would prefer a paper Voter Authority Certificate.

Great Britain: Vouching

- 7.62. Some external organisations such as the Electoral Commission have proposed an option of someone vouching to confirm an elector's identity, as an alternative to showing identification if an elector does not have an accepted form of ID. This research tested attitudes to this approach in the focus groups.
- 7.63. Vouching was explained to participants in the focus groups as a theoretical potential alternative available to young voters who do not possess any form of photo ID. They were informed that this process could allow voters to take someone, such as a family member or neighbour who has an accepted form of ID, to the polling station with them to confirm their identity.
- 7.64. Some young people were supportive of vouching, believing it would be helpful for people without official forms of photo ID. They viewed vouching by a trusted adult as a mechanism that could enable electoral participation among those without ID. This perspective was expressed consistently across participants from all four nations of the United Kingdom.

"If you know they are trustworthy and they are going to vote for who they want to, it is a positive." (Northern Ireland, Male, 14 to 15)

"I think that's good because not everyone has a passport and not everyone has an ID." (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

- 7.65. Many participants, however, responded negatively towards the concept of vouching. They expressed concerns that vouching would risk fraudulent or unlawful behaviours. They worried that adults acting as vouchers would have undue influence over how young people vote. They also worried that individuals would act as vouchers to fraudulently cast multiple votes. These concerns were expressed consistently across all four nations of the United Kingdom.

"There is a risk of voter fraud, possibly you could vote at more than one polling station." (Wales, Male, 16 to 17)

"Could you not just pretend you are someone you are not, and get someone to vouch for you?" (Northern Ireland, Male, 14 to 15)

- 7.66. Young people suggested a range of safeguards, including restricting the role of trusted adult vouchers to parents only, or requiring those vouching to present accepted photo identification themselves (the latter of which would likely be a requirement under this policy):

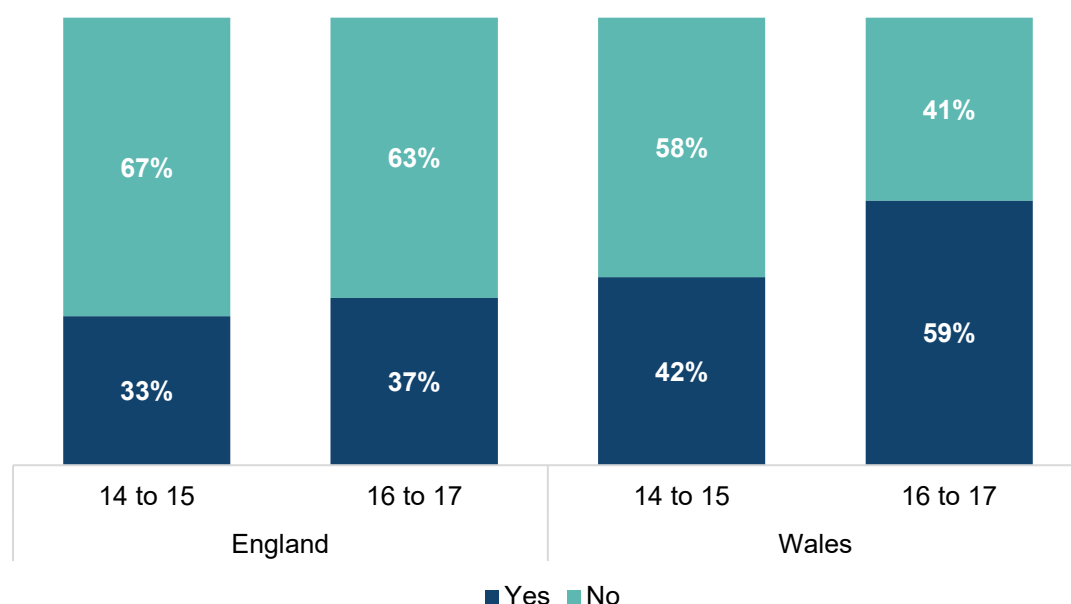
“It should just be your parents who can vouch.” (England, Female, 14 to 15)

“The person vouching should also have ID on them.” (England, Male, 14 to 15)

England and Wales: Unique Learner Number

- 7.67. Respondents in England and Wales were asked in the survey about their Unique Learner Number (ULN). This is a 10-digit reference number used by the Department for Education in England and in Wales to index a person's education and training qualifications. It is assigned to anyone over the age of 13 in education and populates their Personal Learning Record (PLR), which is used for verifying achievements with providers and on UCAS.
- 7.68. Questions relating to ULN were included in the survey for respondents from England and Wales to understand the extent in which ULNs could be used to assist with the registration process.
- 7.69. As seen in Figure 7.13, in England, a majority of respondents from both age groups had not heard of a Unique Learner Number (67% for respondents aged 14 to 15 and 63% for those aged 16 to 17). In Wales, a majority of respondents aged 14 to 15 (58%) had not heard of a Unique Learner Number, but in contrast, a majority of respondents aged 16 to 17 (59%) had heard of it.

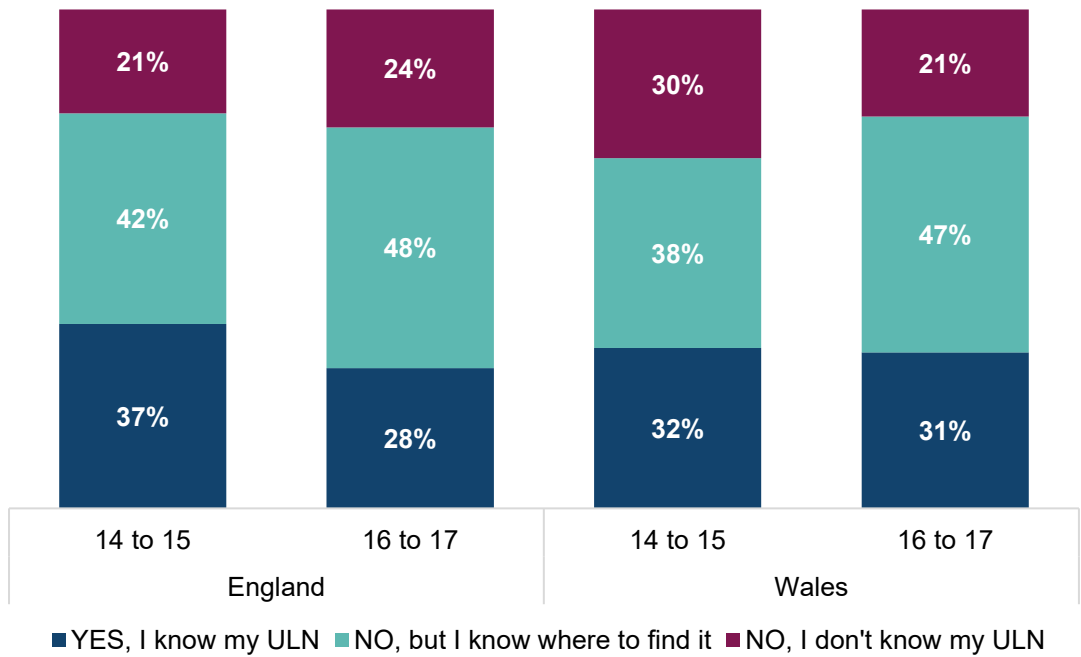
Figure 7.13 - Before this survey, have you heard of a Unique Learner Number (ULN)?



Base: All respondents = 2,745 14- to 17-year-olds in England and Wales
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

7.70. Figure 7.14, shows that, in both England and Wales, a plurality of respondents from both age groups who had heard of a Unique Learner Number did not know their Unique Learner Number, but did know where to find it. In England, the proportion was 42% for those aged 14 to 15 years and 48% for those aged 16 to 17. In Wales, the proportions were 38% and 47% respectively.

Figure 7.14 - Do you know your Unique Learner Number (ULN)?



Base: Respondents who have heard of a Unique Learner Number = 1,135 14- to 17-year-olds in England and Wales.

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

7.71. In both England and Wales, a strong majority of respondents from both age groups who had heard of a Unique Learner Number either knew their Unique Learner Number, or where to find it. In England, the proportion was 79% for those aged 14 to 15 years and 76% for those aged 16 to 17. In Wales, the proportions were 70% and 79% respectively.

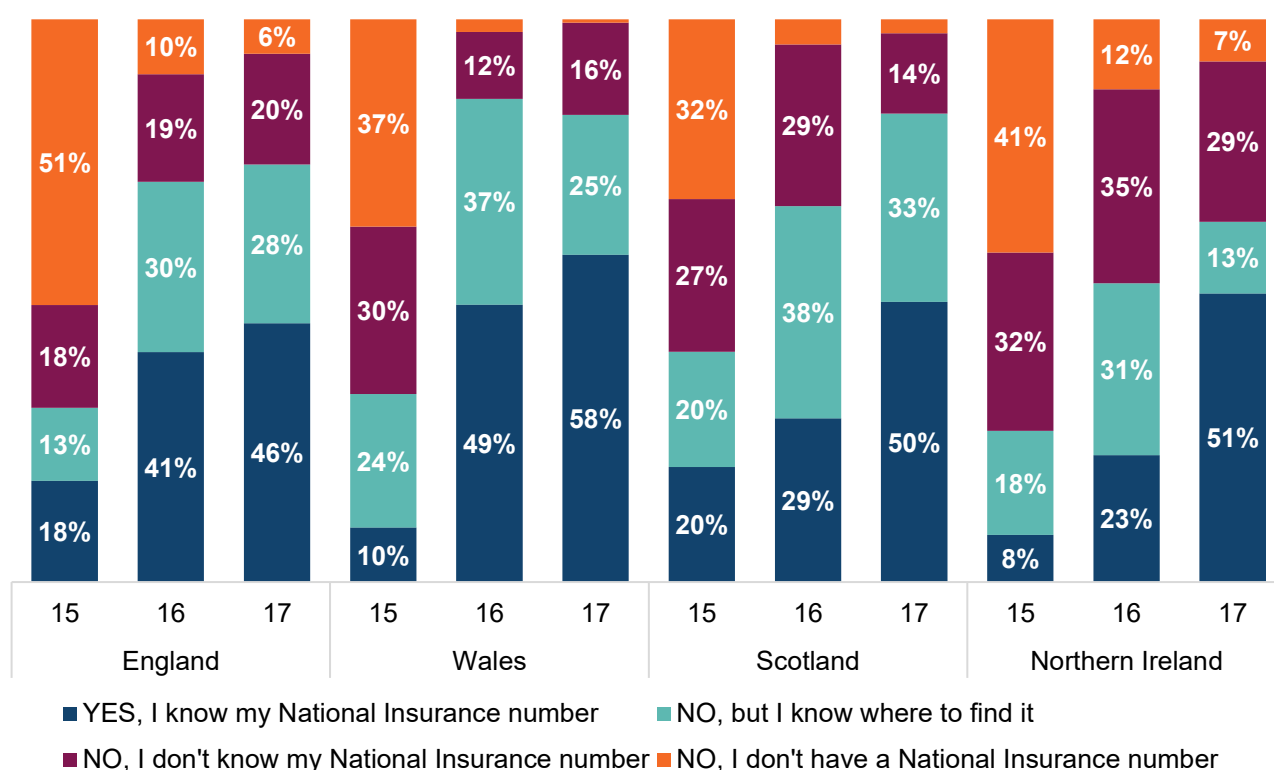
7.72. In both England and Wales, a minority of respondents from both age groups who had heard of a Unique Learner Number did not know their Unique Learner Number. In England, the proportion was 21% for respondents aged 14 to 15 years and 24% for respondents aged 16 to 17. In Wales, the proportions were 30% and 21% respectively.

United Kingdom: Knowledge of National Insurance Number

7.73. When registering to vote, applicants are required to provide a National Insurance number or a reason why they are unable to do so. A National Insurance number is generally allocated at age 15 years and nine months. Therefore, respondents aged 16 to 17 are overwhelmingly more likely to have already been allocated theirs. In the survey, respondents were asked about their National Insurance number, specifically whether they know their National Insurance number or not.

7.74. Figure 7.15, shows that, across all four nations a minority of respondents aged 15 knew their National Insurance number, which is as expected given the age of allocation. In contrast, in all four nations of the United Kingdom, a majority of respondents aged 16 and 17 either knew their National Insurance number or knew where to find it. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, the proportion of respondents who knew their National Insurance number was correlated with increasing age. The difference was greatest in Northern Ireland (53% for those aged 16 and 64% for those aged 17)

Figure 7.15 - Do you know your National Insurance number?



Base: Respondents aged 15 to 17 = 2,788 15- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

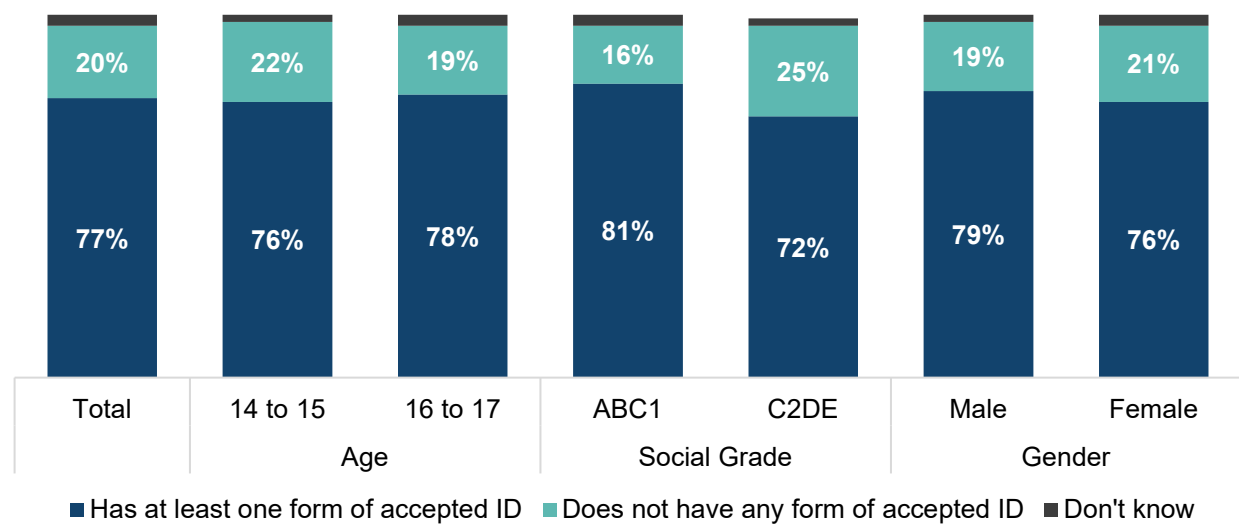
Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 7.75. In all four nations of the United Kingdom, a majority of respondents aged 15 either did not know their National Insurance number or did not have one (England 69%, Scotland 59%, Wales 67%, Northern Ireland 73%).

Northern Ireland: Identification and document ownership by socio-economic and demographic groups

- 7.76. This section explores the pattern of ownership of forms of identification and documents across different demographic groups in Northern Ireland. Unlike in Great Britain, physical and digital bank cards were not included in the list of IDs surveyed in Northern Ireland due to the specific rules covering the use of photographic ID at elections. In addition, Northern Ireland has a reduced list of forms of ID tested to reflect those available to use as voter ID in this nation.
- 7.77. In Figure 7.16, in Northern Ireland, across all demographic groups tested, a high proportion (at least 72%) of respondents currently have an ID from the accepted list. However, Northern Ireland showed noticeably lower levels of ID ownership compared with England, Wales and Scotland. While all three Great Britain nations reported very high proportions of young people holding at least one accepted form of ID (typically above 85–95% depending on the group), ownership rates in Northern Ireland were consistently lower across demographic groups.

Figure 7.16 - Percentage of respondents in Northern Ireland who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list



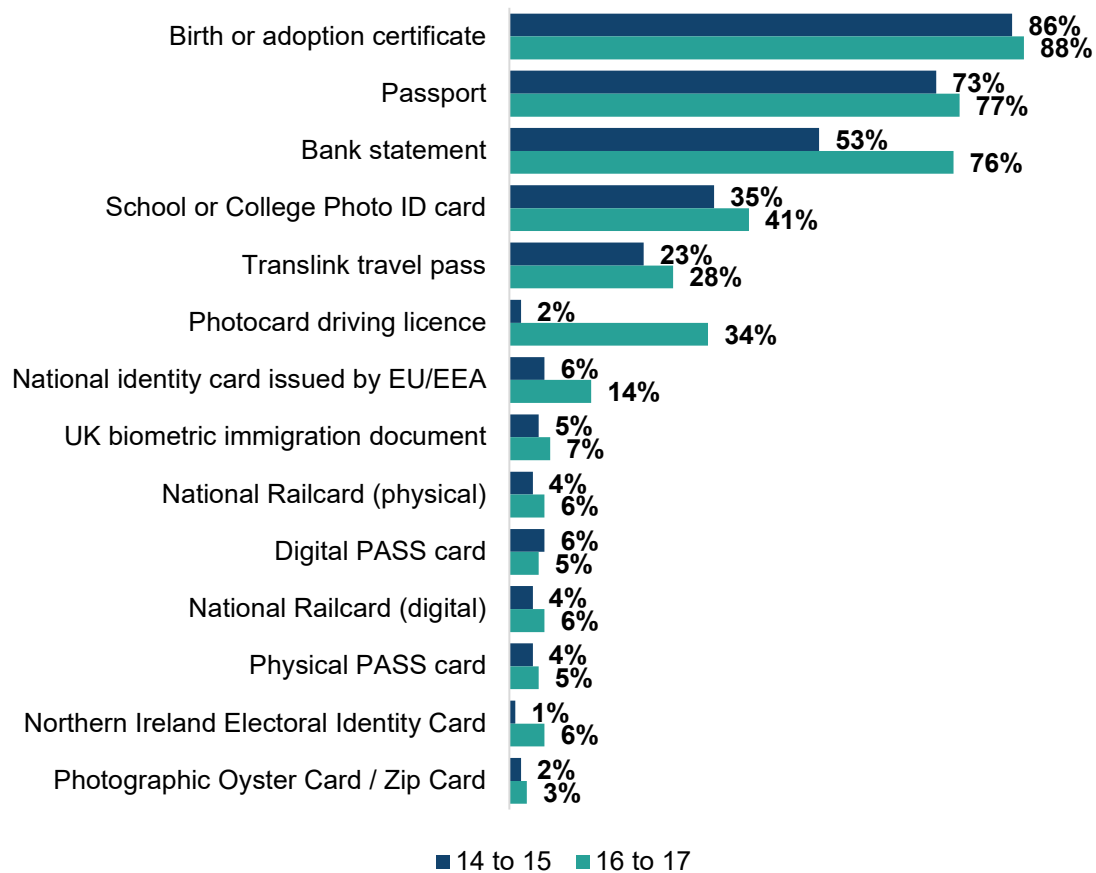
Base: All respondents = 339 14- to 17-year-olds in Northern Ireland
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded. Demographic groups with 100 or fewer respondents are excluded.

7.78. Please note that the sub-sample sizes for non-white respondents, those living with a disability, those not at school and those who are entitled to free school meals were too small to draw substantive conclusions.

Northern Ireland: Prevalence of each form of identification or document

7.79. As seen in Figure 7.17, in Northern Ireland, birth or adoption certificates were the most commonly held form of ID among respondents, followed by passports and bank statements, mirroring the overall pattern observed in England, Wales and Scotland. Among those with at least one form of listed ID, 86% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 88% of those aged 16 to 17 held a birth or adoption certificate. Passport ownership was also high, at 73% for respondents aged 14 to 15 and 77% for 16 to 17.

Figure 7.17 - Which, if any, of the following forms of identification or documents do you have? [Northern Ireland]



Base: All respondents with at least one form of listed ID = 326 14- to 17-year-olds in Northern Ireland
Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

- 7.80. Respondents aged 16 or 17 were more likely than those aged 14 to 15 to have bank statements (76%), a national identity card issued by an EU/EEA member (14%) or a Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card (6%). Respondents from ABC1 households were more likely to have a passport (78%).
- 7.81. In Northern Ireland, 2% of respondents aged 14 to 15 with at least one form of listed ID and 34% of respondents aged 16 to 17 with at least one form of listed ID had a full or provisional driving licence. This is in line with all four nations of the United Kingdom, where eligibility rules meant respondents aged 16 to 17 were also overwhelmingly more likely to hold a photocard driving licence.

Northern Ireland: Electoral Identity Card

- 7.82. Questions covering the issue of Electoral Identity Cards in Northern Ireland were only asked to online respondents. The Electoral Identity Card is a free of charge photographic identity card which is intended for the purpose of voting at elections. Electors can apply to the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland for an Electoral Identity Card where they have no other valid photo ID.
- 7.83. Respondents in the survey were asked whether, before they began the survey, they knew that anyone who does not have a valid form of photo ID can apply for an Electoral Identity Card, free of charge, so they can vote. 50% of respondents in Northern Ireland knew this and 50% did not.
- 7.84. More respondents in Northern Ireland were likely to apply for an Electoral Identity Card than were unlikely (50% compared to 20%). At a maximum of 85 respondents, however, the total sample size for these questions was too small to draw statistically significant conclusions.
- 7.85. The consultation stage focus group in Northern Ireland confirmed that ownership of an Electoral Identity Card is likely to be very limited, with no participants being in possession of one. However, as those aged under 18 are not currently eligible to vote in any elections in Northern Ireland it is not expected that ownership would currently be high. When asked if they might apply for one, affirmation was observed but commitment was evidently lacking and the conversation quickly moved onto passports and driver's licenses being the more likely document used to prove identity.

Analysis of ‘Don’t know’ and ‘Prefer not to say’ responses

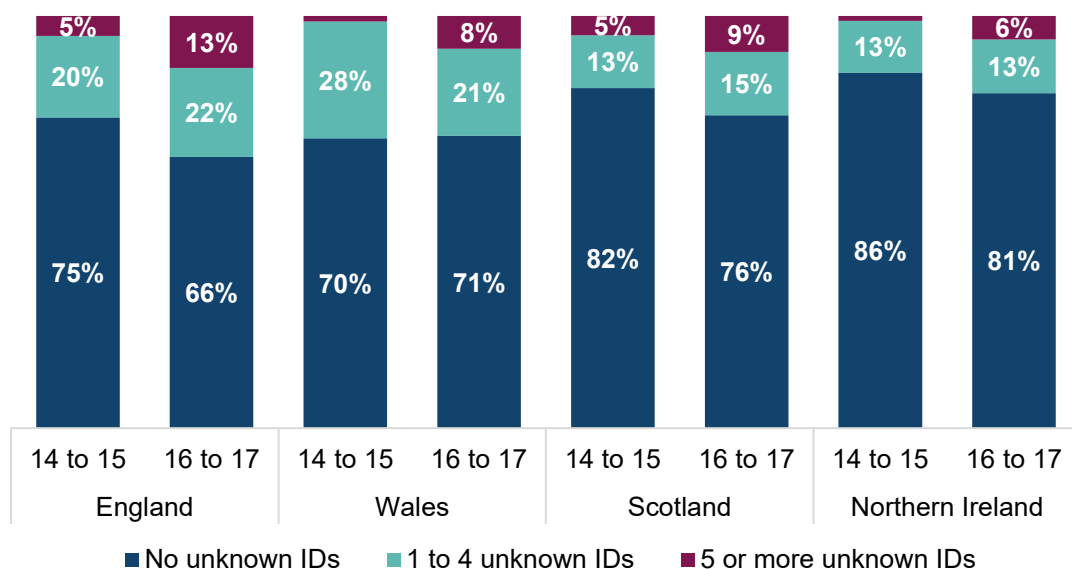
7.86. This section explores the total number of times that an individual respondent selected that they either do not know or would prefer not to say if they have a specific form of ID from the list provided. This form of analysis can be helpful in establishing details of the limits of awareness and understanding across different groups. This, in turn, can be used for targeting of messages.

7.87. To form this analysis all respondents were divided into one of three distinct groups based on the total number of IDs for which that respondent selected either ‘Don’t know’ or ‘Prefer not to say’. Testing each form of ID individually enabled this type of analysis. The three groups are:

- ‘No unknown IDs’
- ‘1 to 4 unknown IDs’
- ‘5 or more’

7.88. As seen in Figure 7.18, across all four nations of the United Kingdom and across all age groups surveyed a strong majority of respondents knew whether or not they owned all forms of ID tested, and were willing to say so.

Figure 7.18 - Percentage of respondents with different counts of ‘Don’t know’ or ‘Prefer not to say’



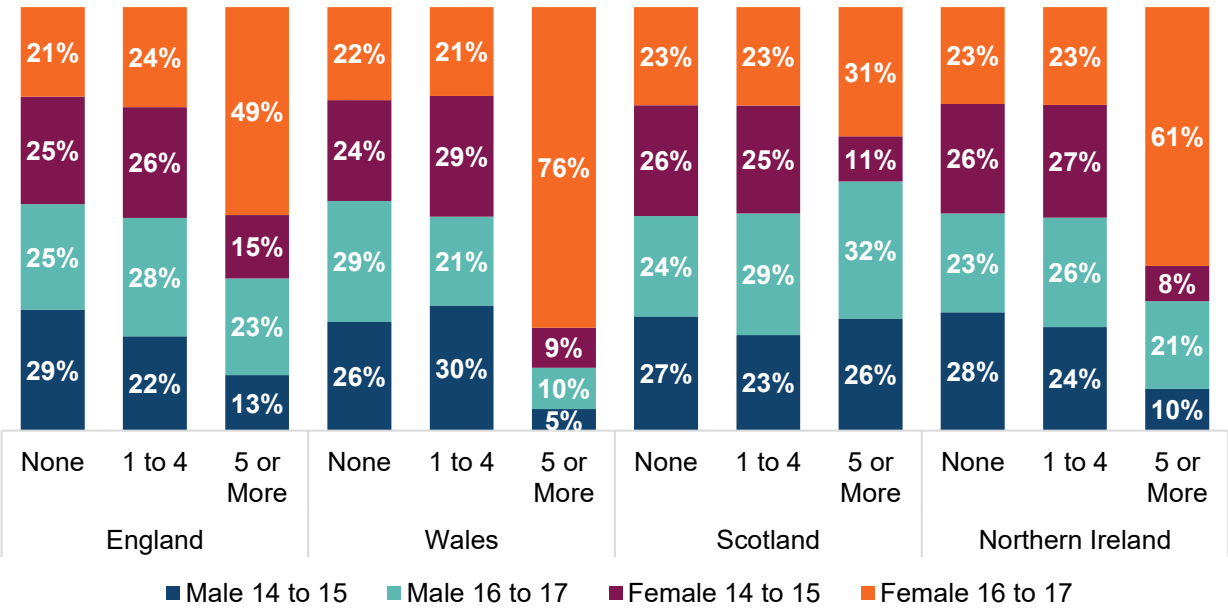
Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK

Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025

Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 7.89. Across the UK, most young people knew whether they owned the forms of ID tested, though levels of certainty varied by nation and age group. Overall, respondents aged 16 to 17 were more likely than those respondents aged 14 to 15 to have selected five or more forms of identification from the list provided that they either did not know if they had or would prefer not to say if they had.
- 7.90. In England, 75% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 66% of those aged 16 to 17 reported knowing whether they held all the IDs asked about, compared with 70% and 71% respectively in Wales, and 82% and 76% in Scotland. Only small proportions had five or more IDs they were unsure about, though this again increased with age: in England, 5% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 13% of those aged 16 to 17 fell into this category, compared with 1% and 8% in Wales and 5% and 9% in Scotland.
- 7.91. Northern Ireland showed the highest certainty overall, with 86% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 81% of those aged 16 to 17 knowing whether they possessed all the IDs tested, possibly reflecting the smaller set of ID types included in the survey there.
- 7.92. Figure 7.19 provides a more detailed breakdown of ‘don’t know’ and ‘prefer not to say’ responses, showing how uncertainty about ID ownership varied by both age group and gender.

Figure 7.19 - Percentage of respondents in with different counts of ‘Don’t know’ or ‘Prefer not to say’



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded.

- 7.93. Figure 7.19 shows that, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, those respondents who either did not know if they had or would prefer not to say if they had five or more different forms of ID tested were more likely to be female. In Scotland, however, they were more likely to be male. In past research conducted by Deltapoll, it has been a similar case that female respondents have been more likely to select 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say' in quantitative surveys, regardless of the subject being covered.
- 7.94. On the specific forms of ID that respondents were most uncertain of, across the UK, uncertainty about ID ownership tended to relate to niche or less commonly used forms of identification, such as national identity cards, biometric immigration documents and PASS cards. In every nation, respondents aged 16 to 17 were more likely than respondents aged 14 to 15 to select 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say'.
- 7.95. Patterns were broadly consistent across nations: in England, 8% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 17% of those aged 16 to 17 were unsure whether they had a physical PASS card, while in Wales 14% and 17% respectively were unsure about holding an EU/EEA national identity card. In Scotland, 8% of respondents aged 14 to 15 and 13% of respondents aged 16 to 17 were unsure about holding other physical PASS cards other than the Young Scot PASS card. Overall, these findings show that while most young people knew which IDs they possessed, the uncertainty was concentrated in specific, less familiar forms of identification and was consistently higher among the 16 to 17 age group.

Attitudes to presenting forms of identification and documents

- 7.96. Participants in the focus groups were asked about their experiences using or showing forms of identification. For example, passports were typically associated with overseas travel, rather than being acknowledged as a general form of photo ID. In a small number of cases, participants reported having used their passport as proof of identity when opening a bank account, creating a social media account or applying for jobs.

"This is gonna sound really silly, but, um, I play Roblox, so I had to use my, like, photo ID to like get voice out on." (England, Female, 14 to 15)

"I have a fishing ID for my licence. It has my face on it." (England, Male, 14 to 15)

- 7.97. The majority of young people did not carry their passports around with them day to day, although a small number had a photo of their passport stored on their

mobile phones. Furthermore, participants also expressed reluctance to use passports as proof of identity online, citing concerns about scams, data misuse and online fraud:

"It feels less risky taking it with you to vote, than sharing it online where open to risks of fraud." (Northern Ireland, Female, 14 to 15)

"I have a passport, but I don't take it everywhere." (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

- 7.98. Young people expressed a clear preference for carrying photo ID that was smaller in size and less valuable than a passport. Those aged 16 to 17 years were more likely to carry a provisional driving licence around with them than a passport, in part because it fits neatly in their phone cases. Passports were viewed as costly and difficult to replace, making young people reluctant to carry them on a daily basis. Note that most of those aged 14 to 15 years were too young to hold a provisional licence, meaning that a passport is often, but not always their main form of Government issued photo ID.
- 7.99. A number of other ID forms that can be used for ID purposes were held by many, including things like birth certificates and bank cards, but were not necessarily carried around regularly. PASS cards, school ID cards and travel passes were also common.

"I carry my provisional everywhere." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

- 7.100. Important documents - especially passports - were often retained by parents at home for safe keeping, or else stored in a 'drawer' known to all household occupants. For other documents that are routinely carried around - especially provisional driving licences - they often carried them inside their phone cases. Others collected digital records, for example taking photos of their passport page, to use as proof of age when required.

"My passport is in a drawer with other things ready for our holidays." (Northern Ireland, Male, 15 to 17)

"I have a Provisional. I have it in the back of my phone case so if like I wanna get like, an energy drink or something. I mostly use it for that." (England, Female, 15 to 17)

"I have a picture of my passport on my phone just 'cause I have not got my provisional licence yet. So if they ask me in the cinema or something how old I am, I can show them my passport." (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

7.101. In Scotland, young people also tended to carry their Young Scot PASS Cards outside the home, largely because it was used for free bus travel. In Scotland, young people suggested that they were more likely to carry their Young Scot PASS Card than their provisional licence or passport.

"We get free bus travel with it as well, so I usually always have it [Young Scot PASS Card] on me." (UK, Female, Disability group)

7.102. Participants were also asked how comfortable they felt carrying and presenting photo identification. Across all four nations of the United Kingdom, participants generally reported feeling at ease taking photo ID out of their home, including theoretically bringing a passport with them to a polling station on the day of a General Election.

"Yeah, it is just to prove who you are." (England, Female, 14 to 15)

"I don't see what problem could come of it." (England, Male, 14 to 15)

7.103. A small number of participants expressed specific anxiety about carrying a passport on their person, citing feelings of vulnerability and concerns about the risk of losing it:

"Passports cost a lot of money, so if I lost it, I would struggle to replace it." (Scotland, Male, 16 to 17)

"Not everyone will want to carry it round... it could put people off." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

"Depends who's asking. I get nervous with people I don't know." (UK, Female, Disability group)

7.104. Some discomfort was mentioned about having to present official ID, but this related more to passports than (provisional) driving licences. The former was perceived to be depended on for travel rather than other uses, and rarely otherwise carried, making the latter the most likely form of ID that they would be comfortable using at polling stations.

"Some people don't like showing ID. They think it's invasive." (Wales, Female, 16 to 17)

"I've got a passport. Only for holiday I use my passport." (England, Female, 16 to 17)

“I’ve got a passport but I wouldn’t take it with me. I wouldn’t want to bring my passport just to vote.” (England, Male, 16 to 17)

- 7.105. Overall, within the focus groups, young people generally recognised passports as formal ID, but rarely carried them, viewing them as valuable and risky to use day-to-day. Instead, they preferred more practical forms such as a provisional driving licence or PASS cards, which could be kept within phone cases or stored safely at home. While most felt comfortable showing ID when needed, some were uneasy about carrying passports due to cost, loss or privacy concerns. Scottish participants were especially reliant on the Young Scot PASS Card for everyday identification.

7. Annex

Annex A - Research with Young People

In considering a methodological approach with young people, in this case specifically between the ages of 14- to 17-years-old, appropriate research conventions and research tool interventions needed to comply with ethical and accepted standards to ensure that participation was informed and understood by every young person who took part.

The Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society provides a comprehensive framework that ensures that ethical practices are implemented throughout research design decision-making, and at all points in this process we followed the principles objectively. This included conscious decisions around voluntary informed consent, honesty and objectivity in the use of materials, confidentiality assurances and compliance with data protection and with other legislative rules.

Such considerations guided all quantitative and qualitative methods deployed. On the qualitative side we were also conscious not to overburden young individuals on any level, cognisant that online focus groups on a subject matter that many might not have previously experienced or even considered might be a daunting prospect. In addition, focus groups with young people present a number of additional challenges. For example, in Deltapoll's past experience younger focus group participants can be reluctant to express themselves, and sometimes lack confidence in articulating their opinions. However, Deltapoll's researchers are experienced in moderating groups with young people and employed a range of proven strategies to facilitate robust discussions. These strategies included reducing the size of the groups to between six and eight participants, keeping the length to one hour and recruiting "friendship pairs" so that participants took part in a group alongside someone they already knew to help them feel at ease.

Further, we created and adapted youth-friendly materials to create a sympathetic impression and casual atmosphere to encourage healthy contribution. This included a cartoon-based pre-task that both introduced the subject and encouraged thought on their individual gut reactions towards Votes at 16. This involved participants selecting a single cartoon character's facial expression to best represent how they felt about Votes at 16. This acted as a visual proxy to symbolise and explain their gut reaction toward the subject matter. In then offering an explanation of why they selected their preferred character, the device ensured that all participants had an initial contribution to make early in the discussion. This encouraged sustained engagement throughout and helped establish a light-hearted tone conducive to open and honest conversation.

On the quantitative side the formality of a structured questionnaire was adapted to ensure it was fit for purpose in both online and face-to-face data collection contexts. Online research allows for longer interviews with respondents due to their presumed comfort and familiarity with their own (home or school) environments. Intercept in-street interviews patently do not offer those same comfortable conditions, so as a result an abridged version of the online questionnaire used to mitigate any kind of increased quit rate due to length of time standing in perhaps inhospitable weather conditions.

In addition, in-street intercept interviews tended to only take place in busy high street locations where footfall – and hence availability - of young people was maximised. On this basis, face-to-face interviews were typically conducted on weekends, or on weekdays during narrow windows outside school hours.

Annex B - Accessibility

Focus on accessibility informed every aspect of the quantitative and qualitative design. In practice, this meant ensuring that all questions were worded in simple, unambiguous English that could be understood by the youngest respondents, those with English as a second language, and neurodivergent young people.

Accessibility was carefully considered in the design of the survey to ensure that young people with disabilities were able to participate and have their views represented. In particular, all questions and consent materials were designed to be screen-reader compatible for sight impaired participants. Before the survey was fielded, it was tested on mobile, desktop, and tablet devices to ensure that the presentation was clear and accessible in every format.

On the qualitative side, digitally hosted focus groups facilitated a process that encouraged wider and more diverse ranges of young people to be willing to take part in online research (compared with face-to-face research focus group sessions). This effect is particularly pronounced among young people living with disabilities, for whom we also ensured participation by recruiting two mainstage focus groups comprised entirely of young people self-reporting a physical or mental health condition.

During group sessions, the availability of a text chat function also made the groups accessible to participants who had difficulty communicating verbally.

To further enable active participation from a diverse range of young people, moderators were informed in advance of any physical or mental disabilities participants might have. This allowed appropriate adjustments could be made to ensure that all participants were able to contribute.

8. Appendix

Appendix A – Full Counts of Quantitative Sample

		England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Total	All Respondents	2348	397	481	339
Data Collection Method	Online	2090	127	204	85
	Face to Face	258	270	277	254
Age of Child	14 Years	477	90	125	85
	15 Years	483	99	91	83
	16 Years	683	83	123	80
	17 Years	705	125	142	91
Aggregated Age	14 to 15	960	189	216	168
	16 to 17	1388	208	265	171
Individual Region in England	North West	331			
	North East	127			
	Yorkshire and the Humber	230			
	West Midlands	276			
	East Midlands	208			
	London	358			
	East of England	227			
	South East	347			
	South West	244			
Aggregated Region in England	North	688			
	Midlands	484			
	London	358			
	South	818			
Social Grade	ABC1	1569	253	248	183
	C2DE	739	138	228	155
Gender	Male	1196	206	246	153
	Female	1137	188	232	184
	I identify in another way	11	3	3	2
Ethnicity	White	1739	358	397	308
	Black or Black British	267	11	28	11
	Asian or Asian British	196	6	30	9
	Mixed race	100	18	22	9

		England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
	Chinese	10	2	2	1
	Other	29	2	1	0
Aggregated Ethnicity	White	1739	358	397	308
	All other ethnic groups combined	602	39	83	30
Disability	Yes, limited a lot	90	9	15	8
	Yes, limited a little	274	41	53	53
	No	1949	345	407	275
Aggregated Disability	Yes	364	50	68	61
	No	1949	345	407	275
School Type	A state secondary school	1229	235	346	269
	A college	840	130	67	49
	A private school	185	15	31	19
	I don't attend school or school or college	94	17	37	2
Free School Meals	Yes	741	73	131	87
	No	1522	312	330	238
Registered to Vote	Yes	305	108	148	27
	No	775	215	244	84
Accepted ID from Accepted list	Definitely has (Any)	2052	353	467	262
	Definitely has not (All)	227	35	7	68
	Don't know (Any)	69	9	7	9
Accepted ID from Accepted list or Physical Bank Card	Definitely has (Any)	2189	371	468	262
	Definitely has not (All)	107	19	6	68
	Don't know (Any)	52	7	7	9
Any ID from Full List	Definitely has (Any)	2317	390	473	326
	Definitely has not (All)	4	2	3	9
	Don't know (Any)	27	5	5	4
Interest in World Politics	A lot or some interest	1219	71	117	37
	Not much or no interest	842	54	84	47
Interest in United Kingdom Politics	A lot or some interest	1385	77	136	43
	Not much or no interest	683	49	67	40

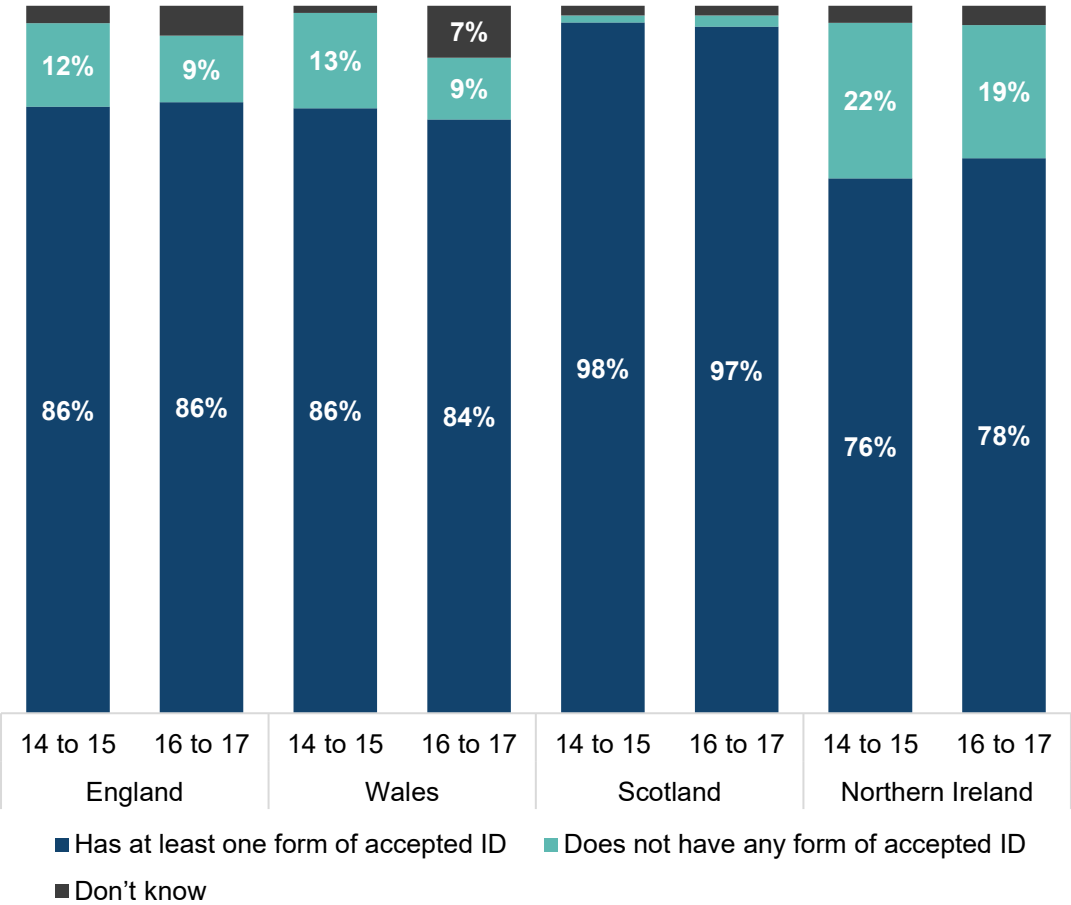
		England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Interest in Devolved Politics	A lot or some interest	0	71	147	50
	Not much or no interest	0	55	54	35
Interest in Local Area Politics	A lot or some interest	1135	63	126	41
	Not much or no interest	922	61	74	43
Intention to Vote	I will definitely vote	873	163	177	51
	I will probably vote	694	115	161	81
	I'm not sure yet	466	72	100	122
	I will probably not vote	159	29	21	50
	I will definitely not vote	85	9	11	18
	Don't know	71	9	11	17
Aggregated Intention to Vote	Will probably or definitely vote	1567	278	338	132
	Will probably not or won't vote	244	38	32	68

Appendix B – Full Counts of Focus Groups

Consultation Stage				
Focus Group	Nation	Number of Participants	Age range	Gender Split
1	England	7	15 to 17	3 x Female and 4 x Male
2	Scotland	9	16 to 17	6 x Female and 3 x Male
3	Scotland	8	14 to 15	3 x Female and 8 x Male
4	Wales	9	16 to 17	4 x Female and 5 x Male
5	Wales	9	14 to 15	5 x Female and 4 x Male
6	Northern Ireland	6	15 to 17	3 x Female and 3 x Male

Main Stage				
Focus Group	Nation	Number of Participants	Age range	Gender Split
1	England	8	14 to 15	4 x Female and 4 x Male
2	Wales	8	14 to 15	3 x Male and 5 x Female
3	England	8	14 to 15	4 x Female and 4 x Male
4	Northern Ireland	8	14 to 15	6 x Female and 2 x Male
5	England	7	16 to 17	3 x Male and 4 x Female
6	Scotland	8	14 to 15	5 x Male and 3 x Female
7	England	8	16 to 17	4 x Male and 4 x Female
8	Wales	8	16 to 17	4 x Male and 4 x Female
9	Scotland	8	16 to 17	4 x Male and 4 x Female
10	England	8	16 to 17	5 x Male and 3 x Female
11	Northern Ireland	8	14 to 15	6 x Female and 2 x Male
12	Wales	7	16 to 17	6 x Male and 1 x Female
13	England	8	14 to 15	3 x Female and 5 x Male
14	Scotland	7	14 to 15	6 x Male and 1 x Female
15	Wales	7	16 to 17	3 x Female and 4 x Male
16	England	8	14 to 15	4 x Female and 4 x Male
17	England	8	16 to 17	4 x Female and 4 x Male
18	Scotland	7	16 to 17	3 x Female and 4 x Male
19	Northern Ireland	7	16 to 17	3 x Female and 4 x Male
20	England	7	16 to 17	4 x Female and 3 x Male
21	Northern Ireland	6	16 to 17	1 x Male and 5 x Female
22	Wales	8	14 to 15	4 x Female and 4 x Male
23	Scotland	8	16 to 17	4 x Male and 4 x Female
24	Northern Ireland	8	16 to 17	6 x Female and 2 x Male
25	Disabled (UK)	5	14 to 17	1 x Male and 4 x Female
26	Disabled (UK)	7	14 to 17	2 x Male and 5 x Female

Appendix C – Percentage of respondents who have at least one form of ID from the accepted list



Base: All respondents = 3,565 14- to 17-year-olds in the UK
 Fieldwork dates: 1st October to 2nd November 2025
 Note: Percentage labels for categories where responses are below 5% are excluded. Don't know includes respondents who selected Don't know or Prefer not to say.