

**In the UK, only around 43% of 18- to 24-year-olds vote in general elections. Are you interested in politics, or do you change the TV channel when politicians appear on the screen?**

### Leaders and parties

The Prime Minister is the head of government in Britain and the queen (or king) is the head of state. British people vote in elections for Members of Parliament (MPs) to represent them. There are lots of political parties in the UK but the big three are the Labour Party (the main left-wing party), the Liberal Democrats (the main centre party) and the Conservatives (the main right-wing party). There are also parties representing different parts of the UK, such as the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru in Wales.

### Voting

The UK voting system operates on a majority vote system. The political party that wins the most votes wins the election. For a political party in the UK to form a government, they need an overall majority. This means that the ruling party needs to have more Members of Parliament than all the other parties put together. If the winning party does not have an overall majority then there is a hung parliament.

### Coalition government

What often happens in the case of a hung parliament is that one large party will join up with a smaller party to form a coalition. By doing this, they exclude the main opposition and still have power – although it is now shared between the two coalition parties.

### Young people and politics

All British citizens over the age of 18 can vote in general elections. Some people think that young people in Britain are apathetic and don't care about politics. About 43% of 18- to 24-year-olds voted in the 2015 general election. The overall turnout is usually around 65% of the population.

This is what some young people said about British politics.

'I can't relate to any of the politicians. They all seem fairly similar and rarely listen to young people. If politicians really listened to the voters, I think more young people would vote.'

**Fiona, 20, from London**

'I didn't vote in the last election but I do care about my country. Thousands of people protested on the streets against the government's plans to cut financial help with university fees earlier this year. Only rich people will be able to go to university if we have to pay thousands of pounds to study! I was at the protest and so were most of my friends at uni. I'll vote in the next election if things don't change.'

**Sean, 19, from Leeds**

'Politicians need to start listening to us. We would get engaged in mainstream politics if we felt that our opinions were respected.'

**William, 24, from Sheffield**

'Of course I voted in the last election. Everyone should vote! Young people need to start voting in general elections. If we don't vote, we won't change anything.'

**Pippa, 23, from Fleet**

General elections are held approximately every five years. Will more young people decide to vote in the next election? We'll have to wait and see.