



## Opinion Category

### **Revitalise the Vote: Reduce the Voting Age**

*By Katie Ní Mhóráin, Pobailscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, An Daingean, Co. Kerry*

I believe that the voting age should be lowered to sixteen years old in Ireland. Firstly, I feel by lowering the voting age there would be a much higher percentage of people voting in every election. According to [Presidentialelection.ie](http://Presidentialelection.ie), the turnout of the Presidential Election 2025 was 45.83 percent. This percentage upsets me and I strongly believe that if the voting age was lowered, the percentage would be much higher.

Allowing people to vote when they are sixteen would strengthen democracy and help to create lifelong voting habits. Studies show voters who begin young are more likely to become consistent voters throughout their lives. To remove some of the potential negatives, it makes sense to lower the voting age to sixteen, when youth are engaged and enthusiastic. The youth of Ireland are actively educated and open to many resources online and in school.

Ireland is considered to have one of the most highly educated populations in the world. The sixteen-year-olds of Ireland today have countless opportunities to learn. Every student in secondary school studies Civic, Social and Political Education. This ensures the students know how to vote, why we vote and the importance of voting. It also educates students on human rights, social responsibilities, the Constitution and elections. Hence, most sixteen-year-olds have more recent civic education than many adults.

Not all adults are informed voters, many adults don't follow politics, but their right to vote isn't removed. I believe age doesn't determine maturity - knowledge and motivation do. Plenty of sixteen-year-olds attend climate marches, organise local campaigns, debate politics on social media and volunteer in communities and for charities. If voting required maturity, there are adults wouldn't be allowed vote! Yes, I understand that there are definitely immature sixteen year olds out there, but I don't think that they would go to the bother of registering to vote.

Another compulsory subject Irish students must do is History. "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." This is a famous quote by George Santayana with which I

wholeheartedly agree. All through Ireland's history, ordinary people, people not much older than many sixteen year olds today, put their lives on the line so that we could have a voice in our own country. The best way to honour their sacrifice is to let young people vote to keep our democracy growing.

Lots of sixteen year olds today are in Transition Year . This gives students amazing opportunities to learn in different ways. They get work experience, they can try out new things, they have plenty of time on their hands to learn more about themselves and form their own opinions too. I am going to the Dáil for work experience and I assume it will teach me a lot about the Irish Government and how it works. Sixteen year olds can also get involved and participate in structured political parties such as Comhairle na nÓg, which gives young people a say in local policy decisions, and also Dáil na nÓg, which allows teenagers to debate national issues. Hundreds of schools run student councils which work with local politicians and attempt to solve any school issues. I myself am in the school student council and it helps me to understand real issues and it helps me connect with other students who feel the same way.

Some questions I ask myself are, if the state trusts sixteen year olds to choose leaving cert subjects that may determine their lives, leave school, open bank accounts, start full time jobs, pay taxes, start learning to drive and book a doctor's appointment - why can't the state trust them to vote? If sixteen year olds are responsible enough to handle these adult responsibilities, why can't they be trusted to vote?

I believe that youth voices are underrepresented on issues that affect them most. I cannot fathom the fact that young people are affected directly by political decisions but cannot vote on them for example: climate change policy, housing availability for young people, education funding, mental health services for teenagers and public transport. If you ask me, I believe that if they're old enough to suffer from the consequences, they're old enough to have a say. Think about the fact that a sixteen-year-old who works full time and pays tax has less political power than a seventy year old who pays none.

Other countries such as Australia, Scotland, Malta and Brazil have all have lowered the voting age to sixteen. For example, in Australia, the youth turnout is strong and political engagement has increased. Ireland wouldn't be the first, it would be joining a proven and successful trend. So what do we have to lose? Ireland is a democratic country. If we believe in fairness, if we believe in equality, and if we believe in the future of this country then we must believe in its young people. It's time to trust them. It's time to give them a vote.