

## Young people and politics

### Always connected

Young people today get news in ways that are different from their parents and grandparents. With smartphones, they are always connected and can use social media, search engines and news sites to find out what's happening around the world 24/7. They are aware of problems, and many want change. But unlike previous generations, these people are less likely to turn to government to make changes. Many take action themselves.

### Taking action

While young people are less likely to be engaged in formal politics, many are engaged informally. In fact, it is estimated that 70 per cent of Generation Z, which includes today's teenagers and young adults, are involved in a social or political cause. This might involve boycotting companies (for example, because they're worried that a company is harming the environment), attending protests or signing petitions. And these methods can work. Two teenage sisters from the UK organised a petition to ban single-use plastic in the UK. The campaign led to a ban on single-use plastic straws and other items.

### Using technology

Technology makes it easy for young people to organise boycotts, protests and petitions. They can also use digital spaces to share news and opinions (by uploading a video to a social media platform, for example) or they can participate in online movements. In 2019, people began adding the hashtag #TeamTrees to their social media posts, with the aim of planting 20 million trees by the end of the year to fight climate change. The campaign is still going strong, and over 24 million trees have been planted so far!

### Inspiring young leaders

The internet inspires many people to take action, and it helps them to feel that their voices matter. And people are being inspired at younger ages than past generations. Greta Thunberg began protesting against climate change when she was 15 years old, and many others have followed. Licypriya Kangujam was 10 years old when she began to take action. She led a campaign to clear plastic waste from the area around the Taj Mahal in India and raised awareness about the issue of plastic pollution. Lesein Mutunkei, a keen footballer from Kenya, was just 12 years old when he set up Trees4Goals. Eleven trees are planted each time he scores a goal!

### Caring about issues

Climate change and plastic pollution are just two of the issues that encourage young people to act. Young people also care about reducing inequality, defending peace, and improving education and employment opportunities. Since the age of 11, Malala Yousafzai has campaigned for girls' education and for peace around the world. Young people are not just watching what's happening around the world, they're taking action and changing the world that we live in.