



Should kids be allowed to vote?

Some say young people should be able to cast a ballot in elections.

What you need to know

- Currently in the US, people have to be 18 by Election Day to vote.
- The voting age was 21 for most of US history. In 1971, the 26th Amendment to the US Constitution was passed, prohibiting states from making the voting age higher than 18.
- In January 2023, a bill was proposed in the US House of Representatives to lower the voting age to 16 across the country. It is currently pending.



America has a complicated history of democracy. Not everyone in the US, even over 18, has always had the right to vote. In the early days of our country, only white men who owned land were allowed to vote. Black people had to fight for the right to vote, and so did women. Now some people are saying it's time to extend voting rights to younger people too. They are advocating for the voting age to be lowered to 16 and say it will encourage people to get involved in our democracy at an earlier age. But some people feel that under 18 is simply too young. So what do you think? Do you think kids ages 16 and 17 should be allowed to vote?

Yes—young people have more at stake

People underestimate how informed kids are. With easier access to news, this generation is more knowledgeable than any before it. They also have more of a stake in issues that affect their future, like protecting the environment. Plus, studies show that people who vote at a young age are more likely to make voting a lifelong habit. When the city of Takoma Park, Maryland, lowered its voting age to 16 for local elections, 16- and 17-year-olds voted at twice the rate of people ages 18 and up. Younger people are clearly engaged in democracy. Why wouldn't we want to enhance that? Kids know what's going on and should have a vote.

No—kids aren't old enough to vote

Teenagers' brains aren't fully developed at 16, and their decisions can be impulsive. They also haven't had many life experiences that would help inform their choices. It's a mistake to assume they're able to make a decision as important as choosing our elected officials. Most kids under 18 are still legally considered minors and live with parents or guardians. Those adults can heavily influence who their teens vote for, which means those young people aren't really exercising their rights at all. And do we really want politicians advertising to children to try to win their vote? Let kids stay kids a little longer and vote at 18.

YES

Three reasons why kids should be allowed to vote

- 1 This generation of young people is well informed and can use their knowledge to decide which candidates to vote for.
- 2 Kids have a lot at stake and should have a say in who will shape their future.
- 3 Research shows that when people start voting at a young age, they are more likely to become lifelong voters.

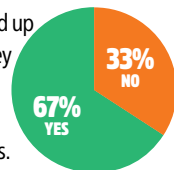
NO

Three reasons why kids should not be allowed to vote

- 1 Kids' brains aren't mature enough at 16 or 17 to make a decision that has consequences for all of society.
- 2 Children under 18 are still in the custody of adults, who could influence their vote.
- 3 Kids should get to be kids for as long as they can, without politicians advertising to them to try to win their votes.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if it's OK if students miss school to protest. Most of you said kids should be able to stand up for what they believe in, even during school hours.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think kids should be allowed to vote or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.