

All Aboard the Citizen Ship

Aim

to identify the motivations for young people voting or not voting

Age

12 years and older

Time

40 minutes

Materials

Role cards, marker, flipchart paper.

Scenario

"Young people from around the world have been brought on the Citizen Ship to Temptation Island. Their task is to come up with a plan to tempt young people to vote. A media conference will be held following discussions to debate young people's attitude to voting and to make recommendations to the world's governments".

What to do

Brainstorm on the word 'voting' or 'politics'. Divide the participants into smaller groups and read out the scenario.

Give each group a role card. Ask the groups to discuss their character's attitude to voting and to come up with recommendations that their character would make to the government to tempt young people to vote. This depends on the role card they receive, some are positive about young people voting and some are negative.

After 10 minutes the groups take their places for the media conference to debate the reasons for young people voting or not voting and recommendations for encouraging young people to vote. Ask for a volunteer

to chair the media conference. Write down the reasons and recommendations on flip chart paper.

Following the media conference tell the participants that the Citizen Ship can only take some of the participant's home due to heavy cargo. Based on arguments put forward, ask the group to choose who should travel and who will be left behind. Ask those left behind on the island how they feel. How do the people on the Citizen Ship feel?

In the large group, ask the participants:

- Are the reasons that young people vote or don't vote the same for young people in your area?
- What are the barriers to young people voting?
- How do you think young people could be encouraged to vote?

Take Action!

In Northern Ireland:

- What age do you have to be to register to vote?
You can register to vote if you are 16 or 17 and will be 18 within the lifetime of the electoral register. You cannot vote until you are 18.
- Who can register? You can register to vote in all UK elections and referendums if you are a British, Irish or Commonwealth Citizen. European Union Citizens resident in the UK may register to vote in local and European elections.

- Where can you register to vote? Between August and October, an electoral registration form will be delivered to your home. When you receive it, you need to make sure your details are correct and send it back to your electoral registration office as soon as possible. If you don't receive a registration form, contact your electoral registration office to ask for one or you can download a registration form from www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Role Cards

My name is Francis and I'm from Sierra Leone, one of the poorest countries in the world after years of civil war. I participated in the elections as an election observer, to make sure the voting was fair and free. People were too scared to vote in the last election but this time the big difference is peace. It's very important to vote. Young people say they've been marginalised. But now we've been given this opportunity, we need to take advantage of it. (Source: CAFOD)

My name is Kiere and I'm from London. The feeling of going to vote for the first time was amazing. I wasn't only exercising my right to vote, but was also able to express the anger and disappointment I felt with the Government for the war with Iraq. It is so empowering to know you are playing a part, however small. It made me realise how disconnected we are as young people from politicians.

(Source: www.votesforwomen.org)

My name is Hungama and I come from Afghanistan. My sister and I queued in the cold for hours at our local high school to vote for a new president of Afghanistan. I am optimistic and believe that my vote will help to change Afghanistan for the better. Under the Taliban regime, women were not allowed to vote.

(Source: Care Canada)

My name is Daniel and I'm British. If the media are to be believed, young people are more interested in voting for the winner of Big Brother than the next government. When you ask a lot of young people who they are going to vote for they say "I'm not going to vote" or even: "I don't care about politics". If people don't vote when they have the chance, they don't have a right to complain that the government does something they don't like. It annoys me when people don't vote because they just can't be bothered. (Source: www.stateofthevote.org/survey)

My name is Olena and I'm from the Ukraine. I think voting should be compulsory. In this case everybody will be obliged to participate in voting by giving their opinion. It's really important. But unfortunately some people don't vote because they don't have time to make it to the polling station or it is very far away and travel is expensive. So it'd be great to have different types of voting: by post or Internet.

(Source: www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice)

My name is Nafisi and I come from Iran. Iran has the lowest voting age in the world at 15. It's good that we can vote at 15. Unfortunately it makes no difference if we vote or not as the officials do whatever they want. The opposition candidates were disqualified from the last election. I don't trust officials to help us. For this to happen the people must use their own ideas and thoughts. (Source: Bulb Magazine, Issue 1)

I'm Sarah from Wales. I live with my mum in a small flat in Cardiff. My mum never voted, so why should I? We never talk about politics so voting just isn't an issue. I wouldn't know how to vote and I don't really think my vote would make a difference anyway.

(Source: Electoral Commission)

My name is Liam and I'm from Ireland. I don't vote because I don't understand what politicians are on about and if I did I know it wouldn't be about any issues I'm interested in. Politicians ignore young people because we don't have any money and many young people aren't registered to vote.

(Source: Electoral Commission)

I'm Francisco and I come from Sao Paulo in Brazil. In my opinion, voting shouldn't be compulsory. Because where there is voting, in a democracy, then, you must have right of choose, including not vote. I'd like to vote by the Internet, because sometimes you need either to travel or are doing something else.

(Source: www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice)