

Electronic Consultation for 11 – 18 year olds Executive Summary

The Community Education Branch of the Scottish Executive asked the International Teledemocracy Centre at Napier University to run an electronic consultation exercise as part of the Action Programme for Youth, Youth Summit initiative. From 2nd May to 12th June, any young person with access to the internet, whether from home, school, cybercafé or community centre, could participate in the electronic consultation by going to www.e-consultant.org.uk/ScottishYouth. At the web site they could do two things:

1. Have a look at the top 20 issues facing young people in Scotland today, read other peoples' comments and, importantly, add their comments on the issue.
2. Vote for the top 10 issues that they think are the most important ones for young people in Scotland.

This paper summarises the results of this 6 week on-line consultation exercise and provides important input to the Youth Summit 2000 being held on the 19th of June in Motherwell.

Summary of numbers taking part:

Total number of Comments	587
Total number of Votes	279
Number of male voters	146
Number of female voters	133
Number of voters in age group 11-14	178
Number of voters in age group 15-18	101

Electronic consultation is an innovative way to consult young people using the web. Over 500 comments for an electronic consultation is very high and, although we have still to evaluate the exercise, this figure suggests that young people are comfortable with this mode of communication. It is encouraging to see roughly equal male and female participation. The difference between the upper and lower age range participation is due to the timing of the exercise; during this period the majority of 15 to 18 year olds were on exam leave from school.

Voting

For both age groups **Drugs** was voted as the most important issue. For the 11-14 age group this was followed by **Bullying, Smoking, Alcohol** and **Crime**. For the 15-18 age group **Drugs** was followed by **Alcohol, Sex, Schools** and **Crime**.

Comments

Five issues **Alcohol, Smoking, Sex, Drugs** and **Schools** received the most comments.

A table of voting results is overleaf. The body of this report covers the following:-

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Please note that the report is of the outcomes of the electronic consultation, but does not cover the (ongoing) evaluation of it.

Voting Results

Results ordered by Votes Total				
Issue	Comments	Votes	Votes	Votes
	Total	Total	11-14	15-18
Drugs	62	222	149	73
Alcohol	87	192	124	68
Bullying	46	187	134	53
Smoking	70	175	127	48
Crime, trouble and the police	35	171	114	57
Sex, sexuality and sex education	69	166	100	66
Schools & education	48	144	85	59
Voice for young people	27	137	81	56
Sexual abuse and violence in the home	12	124	87	37
Prejudice and discrimination	10	123	72	51
Housing & being homeless	13	122	90	32
Work & unemployment	5	115	71	44
Money and poverty	6	101	61	40
Clean Environment	15	100	73	27
Tuition fees for students	12	100	50	50
Getting on with family & friends	6	97	65	32
Nowhere to go for leisure & sports	33	94	65	29
Health for youth	5	85	62	23
Transport to get you around	18	69	44	25
Car insurance for young people	7	39	25	14

Youth Summit Workshop Input

Please note that the comments were not corrected for spelling or grammar. Comments were only deleted from the *e-consultant* site if we deemed them to be gratuitously offensive or potentially libellous. Some typical comments are highlighted here but do not of course represent the views of the International Teledemocracy Centre, or any organisation involved in facilitating the consultation.

Alcohol

Ranked **2nd** / 20 by total votes cast, with **87** comments received:

More comments were received on this than any other issue, and it was a particular concern for 15-18 year olds. Many of the comments were in favour of young people especially over the age of 16 being able to drink small amounts in youth clubs, and participants felt it did not make sense for this to be illegal when they could buy cigarettes.

I think under 18's (like me) are going to get hold of alcohol unless the government goes down the road of a police state with curfews, ID cards etc. I believe that instead of this we should take a more liberal role by allowing young people to drink alcohol in controlled amounts and situations ie in youth clubs etc. This would have the effect of moving these people from the outdoors (parks etc) where they are more likely to get into trouble through either vandalism, getting pushed into illegal drugs, or just not getting the help they need and drinking too much etc. It is time to accept that drinking is going on, is not a bad thing, and that young people should be given a safe environment in which to enjoy themselves, and yes, be allowed to drink alcohol. Joel, 06/05/00

I can understand why bars and clubs ect don't allow under 18 in because of drink problems, but where I live there is no where for me and my mates to go. The clubs ect won't let us in without ID, but as we are only 16 we wouldn't get in anyway. All we want is to go somewhere to socialise at the weekends. We don't want to go and get drunk out of our skulls, but don't go to any under 18 discos as they are full of 12 year olds running about. What are we supposed to do? Elizabeth, 09/05/00

I think that the price of alcohol should be increased and the price of soft drinks decreased. Soft drinks have ridiculously high prices, and this has to be changed. Young people with little money are obviously going to buy the cheapest drinks they can when they are out with friends. Who wouldn't buy a beer, when it is half the price of a lemonade? Amy 26/5/00

At 16 I feel mature enough 2 drink in sensibly amounts Stacey 29/05/00

Bullying

Ranked **3rd** / 20 by total votes cast, with **46** comments received:

There were many comments on the unacceptability of bullying, and some participants related their personal experiences. The comments below highlight some ideas for improving support for those affected.

I think that there should be more supervision in playgrounds and if you see someone getting bullied you should tell someone straight away, lg011, 02/05/00

I think bulling has got out of hand in playgrounds nowadays and that some people have been affected though ... bully's are people that are afraid in case they get bullied them self. Bryan, 24/05/00

I think that teenagers should police themselves with bullies. Each school should employ an anti-bully team (with children of all different ages) that could really stop bullies. Stephen, 16/05/00

I think that schools should have an anonymous Bullying phone line. Catriona, 18/05/00

I think that a way to solve bullying is to make the victim and bullie talk in a room with 1 person to soopivise (but not to iterfeer inless nessary)and talk it out . Jenny, 12/06/00

Clean Environment

Ranked **14th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **15** comments received:

Comments did not separate everyday aspects of 'the environment' (e.g. litter) from concerns about planetary ecology. Several pointed to recycling as a practical measure that could be given greater support.

I think that it is very important for young people to take an active part in conserving our environment as we are going to be the people living in it in the next generation. You live in a house and you keep that clean and tidy so why can't you keep the environment clean too? The environment is part of us and we depend on it for survival, we are not the only ones who inhabit this planet. Ruth, 17/05/00

Having a clean environment is really important. The city's wildlife is under threat. Why don't we introduce those chewing gum walls. There is way too much rubbish so there should also be seperate wheely-bins for recycling. Then there will less waste and Scotlaand might even beat Germany and recycle 7/8 of its rubbish. I also think that Scotland should be against GM crops. Emma, 26/05/00

Lots of kids and teenagers don't care about the enviroment. it is not very hard to keep hold of your litter for a couple of minutes till you come to a bin, but most people don't bother.i think more recycling bins should be made because lots of people don't live near recycling bins. Jessie, 26/05/00

Crime and trouble

Ranked **5th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **35** comments received:

Most of those who commented felt that the police unjustly target young people on the basis of their age, where they live, or relatively minor past offences.

Police should not just assume that kids on the street at night r causing trouble. Discrimination in the police force should be stopped. Mike 03/05/00

We dont think it's fair because the council build parks etc for us. but when we make use of the parks someone always complains and then we get shifted on by the police kirsty and kathryn , 31/05/00

Why must the youth of today always be blamed for every single crime that happens?!?!? No matter what happens we are always the first a policeman will come to and the last to be ruled off the list of suspects! What ever happened to equality? Although the police aren't always to blame. Security guards are just as bad. Peolpe I know were searched by a security guard just for LOOKING suspicious. They hadn't stolen anything and the security guard just walked off. It is amazing that stuff like this still happens in the 21st century!!! Pam, 01/06/00

Drugs

Ranked **1st** / 20 by total votes cast, with **62** comments received:

This was rated the most important issue by both 11-14 and 15-18 year olds. Most participants commented on cannabis (hash) and were generally in favour of a more liberal attitude to this drug. There was disagreement about the likely effects of legalisation on the price, and the relative harm of cannabis and alcohol. "Harder" drugs were viewed with distaste by all who mentioned them, and in a minority of comments all drugs were condemned. There were calls for more realistic information on the consequences of drug taking. Some typical comments:-

I don't think hash should be legalised because then the prices would go up and i would be more skint than i am now. Keep it illegal and cheap. I do think research into medical uses is valid. Emmanuelle-Suzi, 03/05/00

I completely agree, but what if the Government decided to keep prices the same?Also what would happen to the dealers they would probably turn to dealing harder drugs. Is that a good thing? Allie, 02/06/00

I think that Cannabis should be legalised for use in controlled situations or in your own home (see my veiws on Alcohol for more). It does not have a worse affect than Alcohol and so should be decriminalised or legalised as soon as possible. It is an abhorrent that people suffering from serious illnesses should be jailed for smoking this medicine. Joel, 06/05/00

More people should be made aware of the consequences of drugs. Suzanne, 19/05/00

Equality

Equality issues were represented by **three** topics that emerged from the pre-consultation survey :-

Voice for Young People: ranked **8th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **27** comments received.

All spokespeople are nippy and geeky and posh and old and generally irritating and have nothing to do with real kids like us. us, 03/05/00

Well "us", I'm not really convinced about that one. I'm currently working on the executive of the Scottish Youth Parliament as a youth spokesperson, and I hope that I don't fit into your categories. If I am nippy it's because I care about the issues; if I'm geeky it's because I need to know my stuff; if I'm posh it's because I'm being diplomatic, not myself, making the issues heard politely; and If I'm too old, then I apologise, but it has taken me a good few years to be listened to, so I'm not going to stop because of my age. Chris, 17/05/00

I think it is about time some one stood up for us youths, preferably the youths.No one in the world knows what we want more than us.If we don't stand up and make people take notice of us, the future generatoin of adults, then we will be forever forced to hide in the shadows. mikkers, 12/05/00

I wish someone would stand up for the youth of today and explain that what we want is very different to what they think we want. Pam , 01/06/00

What is the point of giving us a chance to put our opinions forward if all we get is a bunch of promises that never get followed through. Adam 01/06/00

Sexual abuse and violence in the home: ranked **9th**, with **12** comments received. Comments mostly expressed sympathy for victims, with one highlighting the need for support in schools:-

I can't understand how people that suffer from violence and sexual abuse in the home can cope or concentrate on anything like schoolwork or normal everyday life. Schools should set up somewhere that people could go to discuss what is happening to them or a friend. Bush, 07/06/00

Prejudice and discrimination: ranked 10th, with 10 comments received, including these...

*Young people should not have to suffer any kind of discrimination, especially not AGEISM!!!!!!
Becky, 26/05/00*

We think that it is a crime more than anything else to discriminate someone. It happens at home, school and in the community and it definitely should not be allowed, there should be some kind of punishment if you do it. JKJ, 12, 08/06/00

There were also comments on discrimination under other headings. Under **crime, trouble and the police**, participants felt that they were often unfairly accused of causing trouble simply because of their age or the area they lived in. Under **sex, sexuality and sex education** there were many comments in favour of the repeal of Section 28.

Europe

Europe was not an issue that emerged from the pre-consultation survey and unfortunately could not be included late in the list of e-consultation issues. However some comments were received under other headings, including those highlighted below.

(schools & education) As we live in Europe, the school system should be, in a certain extent, similar to the others in Europe. I am from Germany and I can't do my homework here, because the German government does not accept them. The governments should sit together and work together for a Europe which is a bit more united. Antje 06/06/00

(Voice for Youth) Politics is never an important issue with youth societies. Yes, there are European youth parliaments but that is not close enough to home. Scotland comes before Europe and issues here have priority. They must be dealt with here and NOW. Iain 03/05/00

Youth Issues in Scotland are being dealt with NOW. That is the whole point of the Scottish Youth Parliament. Julie 01/06/00

(Alcohol) I agree [that the drinking age should be lowered to 16] like in MANY countries on the continent. Simon 11/6/00

Health

Ranked **18th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **5** comments received:

This issue ranked low in terms of votes, but may have been overshadowed by the health implications of **drugs**, **alcohol** and **smoking**, our top-ranked issues. Many comments were made about the adverse effects on health of smoking in particular. Most commentators on the subject of drugs thought that the health risks of cannabis were less than those of alcohol. Under the heading of Alcohol there were a minority of comments on the dangers of binge drinking. These issues apart, the following points were raised about healthy eating.

Healthy food is very expensive especially if you live in a rural area. I think that the government should do something about making healthy food cheaper. pauline, 01/06/00

I think schools should sell less junk food and have more P.E. James, 08/06/00

Housing and Homelessness

Ranked **11th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **13** comments received:

Participants were often uncertain about whether people apparently living on the streets were in fact homeless, although the issue was rated fairly highly.

I agree that it is often difficult to tell if someone is actually homeless. its actually quite sad that we live in a society where we need to be suspicious of such things. but, i believe that we should do all that's possible to help these people. most of them were put in circumstances that we may have no idea about that drove them unto the streets. we should remember that they should be given the chance to be given the quality of life that we have. they may have just ended up like that because of something they had no control over. its just chance, whether you're lucky enough to have a home and a caring family. we've been given this chance, we should give it others. Yoosun, 27/05/00

Lots of people think that sports and stuff like that are important but I think making sure that everyone has houses is more important. Some people think my house isnt very good but it is a lot better than some people who have to live in boxes. Rowenna, 26/05/00

There is not enough support given to young first time tenants. Getting a house for the first time is a big responsibility. Pauline, 01/06/00

Leisure activities

Ranked **17th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **33** comments received:

Although not ranked especially highly, "Nowhere to go for leisure and sports" had the 8th highest number of comments, coming especially from participants in rural areas.

There r lots of sport places but they r 2 expensive and not enough sessions 4 teenagers. Ben 03/05/00

In our area the only clubs for sport and leisure are very expensive and many children can't afford to go. Claire, 19/05/00

We live in a village which is growing fast in population. However the amount of leisure activities have not grown one bit. Also, things that have been promised to be built have not

been. The activities here are far too expensive for what they're worth and things that we enjoy doing for better value are in Aberdeen 24miles away. Ellie, Alison and Steph 13 , 08/06/00

I disagree, there are so many things you can do in your community! How about dancing, football, shinty, karate,.... I bet ya there are so many things you could be doing than lying on your sofa and watching T.V.! You go girl! Emma, 09/06/00

Money and Poverty

Ranked **13th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **6** comments received:

This issue did not attract many comments. This might reflect the fact that most participants were at the younger (11-14) end of the age range.

There should be more ways for young people to make money without being ripped off. my mate 'dave' makes a lot of money from selling things & i make f-all from doing a paper round. honest work for teenagers is crap. i would prefer to work then go to school i would learn more and get some money. Stephen, 16/05/00

It is really hard for young people who do not get any benefits until they are 18. It means that many young people are forced to stay in abusive home situations or go on the streets as homeless. Pauline, 01/06/00

Schools and Education

Ranked **7th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **48** comments received:

Many participants were concerned that money that has been directed at improving schools was being spent on physical works rather than on education itself. Proposals to change school hours in Argyll and Bute met with a lot of hostile comments from the participants. Others commented on the stress brought about by increased testing, particularly from Higher Still, and on representation of young people in Schools.

I am a 16 year old student at Wester Hailes Education Center in Edinburgh and i am about to sit my standard grades in 3 days. When we first started to revise for these very important exams i was appauled at the lack of materials we had to use. Many other schools around our areas also have this problem. Many schools are to busy spending money on the actual school well i am sorry but what use is the schools looks when the students can not study properly due to the fact that the schools are having money problems as they are spending all the spare money on the school. The students have a right to a decent education which means we need books and other study materials. Sheree, 12/05/00

Our education system is quite bad more so at primary than at secondry. What does the government hope to acheive by closing down schools? The key to tackling unemployment is through education. I think that teacher morale is very low and so they don't teach as well or are not as keen. A lot of my revision for standard grade was through books which I had to buy myself (the teachers recommended them) Surely this is not the way it should be? Ruth, 17/05/00

There is too much impoptance put on exam passes and school league tables. Because of this we have different classes of schools. Too much studying and presure can make you ill. Pauline, 01/06/00

I am sitting my higher still exams at the moment. I think the new system is really bad. End of unit tests mean resits for some people and this wastes valuable teaching time which is

needed at the end of the year. It also puts so much more stress on pupils to pass not just for a couple of months in the year but all year round. A lot of teachers in our school don't like it either and I don't know what the exam board are playing at this year. As for the exams, the only ones that people in our school haven't found difficult are languages and English. We are using the old English higher this year too. Anon, 05/06/00

Sex and sexuality (and sex education)

Ranked **3rd** / 20 by total votes cast, with **69** comments received:

Many of the comments related to Section 28, the subject of much media attention during the consultation period. There was very little support for its retention (though a number of homophobic comments were deleted). However sex education in general was seen as too little, too late. A number of suggestions were made, for example to include teenage mothers in education about teenage pregnancy.

I feel that young people need to have the right to say what they need to be taught about sex education. I also feel that Section 28 (2A) should be repealed and that it should be discussed in schools as it helps prevent homophobia. William (17) South Scotland, 02/05/00

I think condoms should be free because that would reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies, because scaffs will not by condoms because they are tight. Robbie De S. 03/05/00

U better reply to this message. I think that sex is an important issue of our lives. We all think about it and some people talk about it to their parents which I think is stupid. I mean imagine them. Yuk. But we still all need to know about sex and I think that it would be a good idea to have teenagers who have gone through teenage pregnancies to give talks because it would be easier to talk to them and listen to them. Thank you. Muggie (age 13), 07/06/00

I think we should be educated more about the risks of sex. The only times we hear of stuff like HIV and AIDS is on the news. I'm in S2 now and we have never been educated about these sorts of things. bob, 30/05/00

Smoking

Ranked **4th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **70** comments received:

This issue received many comments, most of which were expressions of disgust at the habit and its effects on health and personal hygiene. There was some discussion of the view that smoking should be banned in public places, but not much support for raising the price further through taxation.

Most smokers start because they think they look "cool" and when they decide; smelling, dying, wasting money and looking common is not so "cool" they can't stop Nikki&co, 02/06/00

I personally think that smoking is disgusting, but if people want to do that then I think that they should be free to do so. But, I think that it should be made more difficult for them, like in America where companies make their employees smoke outside. I don't think that prices should be raised, because people would still buy them, but just have to pay more. Elliot, 18/05/00

Transport

Ranked **19th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **18** comments received:

Comments were all critical, with the following being typical...

Public transport is a mess it is costly, unclean, unreliable and in our area there are few buses with disabled access or pushchair access. Suz & AI (ANGUS), 12/06/00

The transport situation is improving but it is still very bad, the worst thing is that people are so unwilling to try new ideas or put money in. When I went to Switzerland on holiday we didn't have to use a car at all because they have such a good integrated transport system similar to many other European countries. Why is Britain unable to do anything? Ruth, 17/05/00

.. although some areas are considered to be urban - this does not necessarily mean that the transport system will be good. Yes maybe in Ayr we have three buses an hour to Glasgow but some of the rural villages are lucky to get one bus every two hours and then they stop at 5 or 6pm and don't start again until 8 the next morning. This is a disgrace. It may be due to one bus firm having the monopoly in our area - STAGECOACH. Paul, 25/05/00

A related issue (ranked 20th) was **car insurance for young people**.

I think it should be cheaper and responsible child age 14 and over should be at least getting to drive a electric car that goes at least 30 mph Bryan, 24/05/00

...if you can't afford that much on the insurance you have to get a cheaper car which could be less reliant & even unsafe!

Work and Unemployment

Ranked **20th** / 20 by total votes cast, with **5** comments received:

The low ranking of this issue may be a reflection of the relatively low number of older teenagers who participated (the timing of the consultation coincided with exam leave).

I think that since a lot of unemployed people cannot get jobs because they do not have the education, I think that the government should provide free education services for those who want to use it. Also confidence-building schemes would be a good idea. Emma, 26/05/00

I think that unemployment is a problem. However, the thought that unless we work hard, we won't get a good, well-paid job is a driving force to achieve the best grades etc. possible. Angela, 26/05/00

Annex 1

Results Tables

Results ordered by

1. Total votes cast,
2. Number of comments received
3. Votes ages 11-14
4. Votes ages 15-18

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Money and poverty	6	101	61	40
Clean Environment	15	100	73	27
Tuition fees for students	12	100	50	50
Getting on with family & friends	6	97	65	32
Nowhere to go for leisure & sports	33	94	65	29
Health for youth	5	85	62	23
Transport to get you around	18	69	44	25
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Results Ordered by Votes, Ages 11-14

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Results Ordered by Votes, Ages 15-18

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Annex 2

Comments in Full

Copies available from ITC. All comments can also still be read at:-

www.e-consultant.org.uk/ScottishYouth