

Political apathy among millennials needs to be tackled

Written by Matteo Bergamini on 14 February 2017



After Brexit and Trump victories showed younger voters did not vote in the same numbers as older people, Matteo Bergamini argues that better 'political education' is needed to counter voter indifference | *Photo credit: Fotolia*

Last year was an incredible year for politics, which saw two incredible anti-establishment votes. Britain decided to leave the EU, and Donald Trump was elected US President, both occurring after two tumultuous campaigns.

The Brexit result had a profound effect on the country and the British people. Yet were we qualified to make such a decision?

In the UK, the majority of people gain their political information from their parents, who mostly voted for Labour or Conservative, Britain's two largest parties, because of outdated beliefs in what the parties stood for years ago and vague social customs.

- [US President's "arbitrary ban" plays into the hands of Daesh and other extremists, says senior British MEP](#) [1]
 - [European Council President Donald Tusk's comments on Donald Trump have been echoed by MEPs](#) [2]
 - [MEP 'horrified' by rumoured next US ambassador to EU](#) [3]
 - [US ambassador to EU: World 'has lost sense of outrage](#) [4]
-

Politics unfortunately has remained the playground of the financially better off. While the sons and daughters of the higher echelons of society are educated in politics, the rest of us are not, creating a division, which can be seen when looking at the background of MPs and the ever expanding dominance of Oxbridge graduates in Westminster. Yet this issue becomes worse, because everyone in our democracy is entitled to vote.

The divide not only secures the political establishment for the elite, it lets loose a very politically illiterate electorate during elections and referendums, which leaves us vulnerable to decisions fuelled by misinformation, media spins and ignorance.

It is clear that this can't carry on, if we wish to have a healthy democracy. The real issue here is a lack of political education, in all but the top end schools.

From my experience, people, especially young people, are interested in politics, but lack an understanding.

Currently, we assume that once we hit 18 years of age we suddenly become enlightened with all the political knowledge one needs to vote and engage.

Of course, this is not the case, it needs to be taught and understood in schools as a compulsory subject. We treat English and maths in very high regard, as two of the most important subjects.

However, the one subject that allows us to be who we want to be, gives us a voice and creates a society we wish to live in, we give no time to in schools.

The issue is that political literacy would give us, the next generation, a clear understanding of what politics is, how our society works and why voting is relevant and important.

Recently there have been some initiatives launched by the UK government, around voter registration and getting young people to vote.

Yet, screaming at us to vote without telling us why or how society and politics works seems a little premature,. It's like asking someone to run a marathon before being able to walk.

You can't get an entire generation mobilised without first giving them the instruments to understand the system they are supposed to be influencing.

We at Shout Out UK aim to combat this, and this year we launched our course entitled Political Literacy.

The course aims to get more young people interested and engaged in politics, by teaching them about the processes in politics, public speaking, debating and that politics takes time. Only when you are taught this, will you have the patience to stomach it.

It's time we took this issue seriously, not just when there are elections and referendums. The issue is not apathy itself, it's why apathy happens.

Apathy among young people happens because the system has become so complex, that people no longer understand it and so get frustrated by it.

We must give schools the tools necessary to deal with this issue because no matter how many times you scream at someone to vote, if that person does not understand the system or why you should vote, he or she will never be engaged in the long run.

About the author

Matteo Bergamini is founder and director of Shout Out UK, a political literacy organisation

Tags

[Brexit](#) [5]

[US-EU](#) [6]

Categories

[Education and skills](#) [7]



Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [EU Elections 2019](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2019](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)
[MonitoringDods](#)
[ResearchDods](#)
[EventsDods](#)
[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)

[HouseThe
Parliament
MagazineHolyrood
Total PoliticsPublic
Affairs NewsCivil
Service
World
PublicTechnology
Training
JournalDods
Parliamentary
CompanionVacher's
Quarterly The
European Union and
Public Affairs
Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster
BriefingDigital
Health & Care
ScotlandMEP
AwardsThe Skills
SummitScottish
Public Service
AwardsPublic Sector
Procurement
SummitPublic
Sector ICT
SummitCyber
Security
SummitCyber
Security
2017Training
Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and
Care Innovation
ExpoCivil Service
LiveCivil Service
AwardsChief
Nursing Officer for
England's
SummitWomen into
LeadershipThe
Youth Justice
ConventionSocitm](#)

[Spring
ConferenceNHSCC
Annual Members'
EventDods at Party
Conference](#)

[Privacy PolicyTerms & ConditionsAdvertisingSponsorship Subscriptions](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/blog/political-apathy-among-millennials-needs-be-tackled>

Links

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/trump-travel-ban-condemned-during-eu-parliament-debate>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/eu-figures-continue-condemn-trumps-immigration-ban>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/mep-horrified-rumoured-next-us-ambassador-eu>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/us-ambassador-eu-world-has-lost-sense-outrage>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/brexit>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/us-eu>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/education-and-skills>