



# The big debate

## 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.
- Vote16USA is a nationwide campaign led by young people. It supports lowering the voting age to 16 for local and state elections.
- The voting age was 21 for most of US history. In 1971, the 26th Amendment prohibited states from making it higher than 18.
- A bill proposing the voting age be lowered to 16 died in the US House of Representatives in March 2019.



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. 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 easy access to news online, this generation is more knowledgeable than any before it. It also has more at stake over issues, such as protecting the environment, that affect their future. Studies show people who vote young 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. This suggests younger people are engaged in democracy. Why wouldn't we want that? Kids know what's going on and should have a vote.

### No—kids aren't old enough to vote

Lowering the voting age is not a good idea. Kids' brains aren't fully developed at 16, and their decisions are sometimes impulsive. They don't have many life experiences yet to help inform their choices. To pretend they're able to make a decision as important as who our elected officials should be is a mistake. Kids who are under 18 are still under the custody of their parents. Parents will heavily influence who their children vote for, which isn't exercising one's rights at all. Also, do we really want politicians advertising to children to try to win their vote? Kids can stay kids a little longer and vote at 18.

### YES Three reasons kids should be allowed to vote

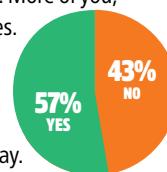
- 1 This generation of kids is well informed and can use their knowledge to decide which candidates to vote for.
- 2 Kids have a lot at stake in who gets voted into office. They should have a say in choosing who will shape the future.
- 3 Research shows that voting early makes it more likely to become a lifelong habit.

### NO Three reasons kids should not be allowed to vote

- 1 Kids' brains aren't mature enough at 16 to make a decision with consequences for all of society.
- 2 Children under 18 are still in the custody of their parents, who will strongly influence their vote.
- 3 Politicians will advertise to kids. Kids should get to be kids as long as they can.

### LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if we should do away with handshakes. More of you, 57%, said yes. But 43% of you want handshakes back someday.



### What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about it, tell us what you think by voting in our poll at [theweekjunior.com/polls](http://theweekjunior.com/polls). 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.