
Call to reduce voting age to 16

The voting age should be dropped to 16, according to a major think-tank.

Demos claims that one million people aged 16 and 17 are disenfranchised by "outdated" attitudes, and that the case for change is "stronger than ever".

Demos director Richard Reeves said at 16 young people can work and pay tax, or even "take a bullet" for their country but cannot vote in an election.

"They are denied the political capital and social responsibility of voting," he said.

As the nation prepares to face decisions with "profound" consequences for young adults, those young adults should be given the right to vote, the report said.

Demos's research paper warned that an ageing population and the fact older people are more likely to vote meant older people would form the most powerful voting block in future elections.

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Richard Reeves Demos

Demos's research suggested that if 16 and 17-year-olds could vote, 41% would vote Labour, 30% would vote Tory and 21% would vote Liberal Democrat.

Mr Reeves added: "Of the first 100 British soldiers to die in Iraq, at least six were too young to have ever voted in a general election.

"They are able to take a bullet for their country before they are old enough to cast a ballot for who governs it."

There have been numerous calls for the voting age to be lowered in the UK.

Following a review in 2004 the Electoral Commission concluded the voting age should remain at 18, but said it should be reviewed again in five to seven years.

Outlining wider plans for electoral reform in February, Prime Minister Gordon Brown said he was in favour of lowering the voting age "but it would be better combined with better citizenship education and people assuming citizenship at that age".

Demos commissioned Ipsos/Mori to interview 594 people aged 16 and 17 by telephone between January 2009 and February 2010.

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