

**Political Participation of Young People in  
Europe – Development of Indicators for  
Comparative Research in the European  
Union (EUYOUPART)**

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All working papers are based on the qualitative research that was undertaken by the consortium partners in all participating countries in January and February 2004. The qualitative research consisted of 2 parts: Interviews with politically active young people and focus groups with politically non-active young people. Various approaches were taken to analyse the data. The national working papers follow a common structure (themes) that was designed prior to the analyses. National results will form the basis for a comparative analysis of the qualitative results across countries.

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## **Introduction**

The following national report presents an analysis of qualitative research into the participation of young people in democracy from the UK perspective. Through a combination of focus groups (with 'non-activists') and in-depth interviews (with 'activists'), the report offers a snapshot of the young people's feelings about 'belonging and identity', their participation in 'organised activities', their views on 'politics and democracy', their own relationships to 'political participation', and the 'opportunity structures' for that participation (and 'barriers' for non-participation). The report, thus, illustrates political participation, and the issues surrounding it, in the language and through the vocabulary of young people themselves.

## Data Collection

The qualitative work was undertaken in accordance with the quality guidelines laid down by the EUYOUNGPART team (D7). Recruitment and selection was carried out by The Market Research Group (the research sub-contractor) for the University of Birmingham. The focus groups and in-depth interviews were carried out in and around Bournemouth in Southern England between January and March 2004.

The qualitative research used the sampling scheme set out in the qualitative guidelines, as far as possible, for both the focus groups and the in-depth interviews. The five focus groups lasted for approximately 90 minutes each and were comprised of the following strata of 'non-activists':

1. 18-25 year old, males, low level of education.
2. 18-25 year old, females, low level of education.
3. 18-25 year old, males, high level of education.
4. 18-25 year old, females, high level of education.
5. 15-25 – 'mixed participants' (men, women, high level education, low level education).

The focus group participants were each offered a fee of ten pounds to compensate for their time, and to help guarantee attendance. A researcher from the national partner (University of Birmingham) was present at these five sessions. The discussions broadly followed the themes set out in the qualitative guideline 'grids'. The aim was to create group dynamics within the five main thematic categories, assisted by the moderator, using prompts and examples to ignite conversation.

The focus groups presented a number of difficulties. First, in terms of recruitment, around double the number of participants needed to be recruited as only approximately half of the participants showed up on the day. The obvious problem here, from the perspective of bias, is that those on the edges of society tended to be those who were least reliable and – thus – excluded themselves from the groups.

Second, a lot of the 'participants' were reluctant to say much/ or were afraid (too shy) to speak openly in a group. The problem with this was that it often led – if left unchecked – to one or two more articulate (or more self-confident) participants to dominate. Therefore, what became very important was the moderator's ability to involve as many participants as possible by simplifying questions, tying them to current examples etc.

The five in-depth interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes (although the time was sometimes extended given the keenness of some of the participants to continue) and was comprised of the following 'activists'.

1. Male, 22 years old, full-time worker, educated to degree level.
2. Male, 15 years old, school student, studying for GCSEs.
3. Female, 22 years old, full-time worker, educated to GCSE level.
4. Female, 17 years old, student (vocational), educated to GCSE level.
5. Female, 18 years old, sixth form student, educated to GCSE level.
6. Female, 17 years old, sixth form student, educated to GCSE level.

The in-depth interviews were offered ten pounds each as recompense for their time. The interviews followed the 'narrative' of the young people, which were only lightly 'steered' towards the themes identified by the project by the interviewer. The interviews flowed naturally, reflecting the nature of the 'activism' of the individual interviewee.

The in-depth interviews caused no problems at all for the interviewer/ moderator, because of the amount the interviewees had to say (a lot) and their generally high levels of communication skills. Here, the interviewer could remain quite passive, since the idea was to follow the narratives of the – in these cases – very interesting interviewees.

Comparing the focus groups and in-depth interview, it was important to tackle the interpretation of data in slightly different ways. Whilst, with the focus groups, it was possible and helpful to summarise the 'overall meaning' of the discussions, more caution had to be applied to the in-depth interviews (given their rich and varied nature),

so that the interpretation sought to follow the narratives of the individual after which comment 'trends' were observed.

## Interview Summaries

The focus groups – despite the obvious lack of experience/ expertise of 'non-activists' in talking about such issues – were particularly informative. Participants in these groups appeared to have similar levels of 'disconnection' with regard to their conception of 'politics' (the political system) and political participation. Indeed, participation in organised groups played very little role in their 'individualised' lifestyles. Their activities centred around interaction with a small groups of friends (and family) in leisure-based pursuits (e.g. going to the pub, playing/ watching sport). The participants were very similar in their negative views of politics (the conventional political process as they saw it) and politicians, and the focus groups kept telling a clear story about a lack of trust in politics and the political process and a feeling of powerlessness (e.g. 'politicians don't listen' (f322), 'I cant change anything' (f83), the parties 'are all the same' (f544), 'my vote wont make any difference' (f663)). These supposed 'non-activists' nevertheless showed significant (often strong) interest in a variety of political issues: mostly local, some national, one European (the Euro) and one foreign (Iraq). In short, these *non-activists* are interested in politics (issues) but alienated and disconnected from the political process and the political system.

The in-depth interviews cannot be summarised in much detail as they followed the distinct, individual narratives of the interviewees. The personal narratives were more interesting to read as they had immediate relevance to subject in hand. The main contrast with the focus groups was their feeling of 'empowerment' – the 'activists', not unsurprisingly, thought that they could *make a difference*. They nevertheless showed consistently high levels of frustration with conventional politics and politicians and their inability to relate to young people, as illustrated below.

## Theme 1: Belonging and Identity

In both focus groups and in-depth interviews, there was a confusion of blurred, multiple levels of identity, ranging from an individual level (i.e. family and friends), to the local community, to the town/ city, to the nation (England) or state (Britain), ultimately to a European and even global level. The research nevertheless showed a clear trend – the higher the level of identification, the more contentious it is and the more diverse opinion becomes among young people.

The participants in both the focus groups and the in-depth interviewees – as a norm – first described themselves as coming from their locality (Bournemouth). On the next level, a small majority considered themselves English while some saw themselves as British (Britain refers more to the state while England has more of a cultural meaning). A few saw themselves as European, but they were in a very small minority and decent proportion of those had European parentage/ family connections. Many focus group participants interestingly saw Europe as something external to England/ Britain and disliked the idea of further European integration. Despite (or maybe because of) the diverse ethnic mix in British society, those with foreign parentage still considered themselves British: ‘Being born in Britain makes you British’ (f35). The same could be said of their parents – ‘My dad came from Iran and he considers himself British, because he’s been here so long’ (f36); ‘My mum is Israeli... she considers herself to be British’ (i493).

One real difference between the focus groups and the in-depth interviews, however, was that the ‘non-activists’ identified themselves most clearly with their friends and ‘spending time with my friends’ (‘friends and family’ was the group they most identified with), and ‘activists’ with their community. This difference reflected the fact that the ‘activists’ were more involved with their locality outside interactions with a small group of friends. The ‘activists’, thus, had a greater *sense of community* (illustrated by their involvement in community work and local issues): for example, ‘I feel very attached to my local community, because I do a lot of community work within it’ (i542).

One participant in the focus groups made an interesting point: your identity and where you come from ‘depends on the situation, it depends on who you’re talking to... If I was talking to an American I wouldn’t say I was from the West country. I’d say I’m from England or Britain (f386, 388). This argument (probably unconsciously) made the important point that identity relates to exposure to ‘outsiders’, which perhaps explains the greater openness of the ‘activists’ to the higher levels of identification e.g. Europe. It also explains why – in the focus groups – a discussion of the subject of belonging, was on a couple of occasions followed by a discussion about immigration (and alleged problems of foreigners coming in and taking jobs and benefits away from locals) and Europe (here, *Euroscpticism* was common) i.e. ‘people not like us’.

The ‘activists’ from the in-depth interviews were broader in their outlook – more of them (although certainly not all) considered themselves ‘European’ or even belonging to ‘the world community’ (i1). They also seemed to have a clearer picture of the different levels of identity (‘English, British and European... so we’ve got three tiers rather than two’ – i5) and offered much more of a distinction between being ‘English’ and ‘British’ (tending to opt for ‘British’, which implicitly offers allegiance to the state rather than the nation, or at least a more multicultural national identity). They also recognised the cultural aspects of identity.

## Theme 2: Organised Activities

A distinctive characteristic of focus groups participants was their lack of participation in organised activities. Their activities in general centred around a few common leisure-oriented pursuits: going to 'pubs and clubs', 'socialising with anyone my age' (f492), 'going for a drink', going to the cinema, playing sport. Sport was perhaps the one area where there was a significant participation in organised activities, and these covered a wide range of different events – football, basketball, tennis, going to the gym, running, mountain-biking, martial arts, Thai boxing, swimming and life-guarding, dancing. One frequently cited problem for young people in their participation in organised activities (but also in their activities in general) was a lack of 'time and money' (f495). In the focus groups there was strong, though not overwhelming, feeling of individualism and scepticism about participation in organised activities: e.g. aside from small groups of friends, 'I wouldn't join an organised club, I'd just do it myself' (f511). As the target group for the focus groups was young people over 18, it is impossible to estimate their engagement in activities in schools, but – as a guide – the participants who were university students took advantage of the large selection of organised activities in their institutional settings (something most 'non-activists' lacked).

The in-depth interviewees had a wider range of activities that included football, netball, guitar, flute, piano, dance, television, books, caving, and hiking. The 'activists' were, furthermore, sometimes involved in arranging these activities for others. They also participated in a greater number and variety of organised activities and groups (environmental groups, youth clubs, community groups). This is to be expected as most of these interviewees were not just activists in one group or organisation, but were involved in a number of activities that constituted a large proportion of their free time. Even so, time and money were again cited as important issues: 'the increased pressures in students' lives' (i23); 'that takes up a lot of time and effort – but it's all fun.' (i582).

### Theme 3: Politics and Democracy

The focus group participants had very conventional views of politics – for instance, ‘international and national affairs, things like that’ (f69). ‘Politics’ was only once or twice related to other types of activity such as ‘petitions’ or ‘demonstrations’. This had more to do with ‘non-activists’ very narrow perception of politics than their knowledge of/ or even participation in, these ‘alternative’ activities.

As mentioned above, a central feature of these ‘non-activists’ views of politics and democracy was their complete lack of trust in politicians. On this issue, there was a numerous amount of commentary: ‘I couldn’t trust any politician’ (f75); ‘they are known for lying’ (f76); ‘they’re always lying to make the other ones look worse’ (f77); ‘politics? – Bigwigs, running things. Government. Lining their pockets’ (f525-7); ‘cover stuff up... stealth taxes’ (f548); ‘I’m not interested in politics massively because I feel let down by them all’ (f645); ‘they are really dull’ (f676); ‘They just lie to you, just give you that illusion, an ideal world’ (f979).

They also showed a general lack of interest in, suspicion of, and frustration with politics. They were particularly adamant that politicians did not listen or were not engaged with people like them: ‘I think politics is a waste of time... they want to be right and don’t want to listen to anyone else’ (f149); ‘it’s all common sense, it’s something politics lacks’ (f196); ‘how many times have you been asked by the Government what you want?... I’ve never during the last general election where I lived, we weren’t even counted. So we didn’t see an MP or anything like that which I think is terrible’ (f536-7); ‘all the parties really before an election need to actively tell people what they’re about. Because really everybody should vote’ (f670); ‘my opinion on like the political broadcasts is generally they’re not saying what they’re going to do, but what’s bad about what the other parties are arguing’ (f686). The key themes here, therefore were a lack of appreciation for young people’s views, a lack of politicians’ involvement at a local and personal level, a lack of information, and a general lack of belief in the integrity of politicians and political parties. With regard to the question of integrity, the Iraq conflict was cited a number of times as

a key example of politicians' *moral bankruptcy* (though support for the conflict itself was fairly evenly mixed).

A further problem from the perspective of political participation was that the focus group participants thought that the parties were all the same: 'They're all saying the same sort of thing just working differently and nothing ever changes. So you're voting for the same person who just stands there and talks' (f161); 'there isn't much difference between the parties really... it all seems to be the same' (f920).

Therefore, these young people were not only disaffected with individual politicians and parties, but saw the all the parties and the system itself as tainted with the same or similar characteristics. They complained that politicians didn't represent them and were not representative of them: 'I know a lot of people don't like them' (f71); 'It must be the same with all the parties, you just don't get the youth element' (f700).

Most focus groups respondents had little interest in or time for politics, and many got all the information they needed or wanted from the TV news. Nevertheless, the problem of a lack of information was actually something that concerned these 'non-activists', who – on the whole – felt that politicians were not engaging with them enough: 'We need more information about political groups in our area, we don't have any information like flyers or anything' (f117); 'I wouldn't say I'm not interested... I don't go out of my way to know everything about... You don't get any information' (f922-3). This suggests that young people might still be receptive to politics and political ideas, if they were presented in a different way, in a different spirit, and in a different tone.

This is evidenced by the fact that they showed a great deal of interest in a number of political *issues*. The focus group participants were mostly concerned by local or personal issues that were tangible and had some real (and clear) meaning for their daily lives: for example, 'there's going to be loads and loads of people out there that need the benefits that need the help... they should be more strict on who gets benefits' (f279); 'If you need time off, you're allowed time off [for pregnancy]... If you do need childcare, have a little crèche' (f303); urban regeneration of bad

areas; 'We just see councils put in a million speed bumps down a little road, six months later take them out and yet still not fix the road around the corner that's the main road full of pot-holes' (f759). There was a general feeling that politics and government did not cater to their needs and was not working for the little people: 'if they [politicians] are going to support everyone, then they should support everyone not just big communities, big businesses who have enough money' (f157); 'they don't care enough because it was just Bournemouth' (f230).

Although the 'non-activists' oriented towards these local issues, they had a wide ranges of strongly-held views on a number national, political issues – on the *minimum wage*, taxes, education, employment, welfare benefits, university top-up fees, and immigration – which they related to local/ personal experiences: 'I feel strongly about education, employment and stuff' (f163); 'there are people who sit at home and say "Oh yeah, yeah I'm disabled and really claim money for it" and they're not... they're tightening up... but it's not going quick enough' (f615); 'I'm paying so much tax I can hardly afford to pay it. And yet I don't see any benefit from it' (f751). On the European level, only one issue was present beyond vague comments about the merits of European integration, and that was the question of Britain's (non-) membership of the Single Currency, yet only in terms of simple support or rejection of the Euro. The one international issue that appeared was the conflict in Iraq. Given the in-depth media coverage of this event (and – as we found out above – the TV media was where most of the focus group participants received their information), strong feelings were observed on this issue (often against British involvement): 'I don't think we've justified going to Iraq' (f98).

The in-depth interviewees provided more varied and analytical views on politics, but nevertheless also carried a generally negative message about politicians and the political system. This was despite the fact that a couple of the interviewees were actively involved in party politics themselves. Interviewee One claimed that 'It used to be more content. It's presentation and content' now (i61). They also articulated their frustration with the general *perception* of conventional politics: 'I don't like the word politics anymore, I've got really fed up with it. It immediately implies it's a negative word. It's now seen as a negative word because of

politicians... the reputation of politicians... for breaking promises, for lying, which I don't see a massive [amount]... I think you have to find a new word, politics doesn't work anymore. An alternative word. I think representation is a good word' (i63-4, 72). They particularly disliked the way partisan politics was practised in Britain today: 'Our political party system is failing very, very badly... you need to go back to independents' (i96-7). Again, the point was raised that politicians are not audible over local issues: 'How can I elect an MP in that constituency there on the manifesto, and elect him on local issues?... People should not be able to hide behind political parties' (i99-100). Interviewee Two similarly had a poor opinion of politicians in general: 'they should be doing what they said they'd be doing... not what they're doing for themselves... I do think they're all in it just for the power' (i257-8). On a personal level, however, this interviewee got on well with local councillors (from all parties) who they worked with, because these local politicians were able to identify with issues closer to home.

Interviewee Three – an active participant in local politics – agreed with the case made frequently in the focus groups that politicians did not listen: 'that's one thing that really annoys me about local politicians, I don't think half the time they actually listen. Councillors as well, they don't really listen to what the public want... people don't listen to them, and they tend to feel that all the large political parties are all the same, when there are differences between them' (i338, i340). They stressed, furthermore, that the way politics is conducted turns young people off: 'I think there is a lot of back-stabbing in politics – you just have to look back at two of the previous cabinet ministers' (i423).

In terms of young people's views of politics and democracy, Interviewee Five stated that 'People just see politics as people just getting paid well, and doing nothing but arguing about things that aren't even important' (i647). For this reason, they argued convincingly: 'I'm definitely much more into local politics, cause you meet and see the people there and aren't influenced by the media so much... ' (i650), emphasising – once more – the importance of the local level. To this interviewee, national politics 'seems so much more bigger and more confusing, messy and catfighty' (i652). The 'activists' had more sophisticated views of what

politics meant – rather than just vague notions or buzzwords – but still had big problems with politics as it is conducted on the national level: Interviewee five, for instance, saw politics as ‘changing things through policies and laws’ about ‘decisions that affect us directly’ (i697-8); Interviewee Four saw politics as ‘Mainly at the moment... Iraq and tuition fees and things like that’ (i472). Perhaps because of the negative connotations of the term ‘politics’ for young people, there was a reluctance to contaminate anything beyond the conventional party system and government with this word. Interviewee Four, for instance, would not describe her work on the school council as ‘political’ (i472).

All the in-depth interviewees were concerned with political issues of one form or other. Whilst their positions on the issues – like the ‘non-activists’ – tended to relate to a local level, these views were not as clearly linked to direct benefits for the young person themselves, but to a broader *common good*. Interviewee One, for instance, while having nothing to gain personally (in a direct manner) emphasised the need for nurseries in the university.

## Theme 4: Political Participation

For the focus groups – as the issues they are interested (see above) would suggest – the likelihood of any participation would be greatly increased if the young people could feel a real impact from the political decisions: for instance, ‘If something happened that did affect me like the government decided to build a motorway through my house or something... then I’d be more likely to get involved. Until that happens... I’ve got to think about like my friends, my family, getting my work done’ (f119). The negative view of politics and politicians was also a great disincentive for young people to participate, as one focus group participant explained: ‘because people’s experience of politics is negative... they’re not going to try to get involved’ (f205).

The number of ‘political’ activities that the focus group participants were involved in were quite limited, but they included: ‘petitions’ (f128); ‘helping out charity events’ (f129), ‘helping out at a child’s youth centre’ (f140); work in a student union. There was, however, a general belief in the ineffectiveness of demonstrations and direct action. Here, the inability of the mass demonstrations against British/ US-led intervention in Iraq was cited as evidence that the government (or politicians as a whole) would not change their minds through such action. The running theme was that these ‘non-activists’ were particularly reluctant to participate because they saw no tangible (immediate) benefits in participation, preferring to invest time in ‘something that I know is going to achieve something’ (f129).

These views reflect the greater individualism and heterogeneity in society today in comparison to previous decades, marking both a diversity of interests and a reduction in ‘solidarity’ (support for common benefits for society): ‘Until they [politicians] actually stick to something no-one’s... going to start voting. They’re not going to want to vote because they’re not going to see that it’s going to benefit anything’ (f336). One focus group participant put this more explicitly: ‘They [people] just go for the people that their family have been voting for and they’ve been told by their dad... it’s changing because people are becoming individuals... discovering they’ve got their own voice, they’ve got their own ideas’ (f345). Focus

group participants' therefore saw participatory activities, notably voting, as a 'chore' – something that had little point given their views on politicians and political parties described above.

The 'activists', by contrast, seemed to have a much better history of and opinion voting. Furthermore, the young 'activists' tended to have a long history of activism (despite their age) in a wide range of areas: for instance, Interviewee One worked full-time for the student union, but before that was involved in environmental issues, and now is 'involved in a massive number of things... the free education campaign... several demonstrations this year... 20 to 30 letters to MPs... lobbying local councillors... press releases, speaking to lots of students about the issues... heavily involved in all the local and national stages of politics' (i48-51). They also participated previously in a environmental groups work for issues like recycling and campaigning against globalisation.

Interviewee two was a member of Bournemouth Youth Council (which aims to 'give a voice to young people' – i279), acts as a 'champion' in their local community, did community service, took their Duke of Edinburgh's award, participates in community meetings, and attends political conferences. Interviewee Two was strongly in favour of other young people participating and strongly criticised them – 'stop moaning and start voting' (i267). Other 'activists' were also critical of their contemporaries' unwillingness to participate in the political process, and opposed simply making the process of voting easier (though the introduction of various forms of e-voting), because if people could not be bothered to go down the polling station they should not be allowed to vote.

Interviewee Three placed a high level of importance on voting, and had voted in the last three elections ('two local, one general' – i301). They had also taken part in a large number of participatory activities: secretary of the local Labour party; council candidate for Labour Party at last local elections; campaigning at local elections; organising local meetings at the community centre; trying to set up a Young Labour group (15-27 year olds) in Bournemouth and helping improve on national network; working on Bournemouth Labour Party website. Furthermore, they had also – in the

past – worked closely with Friends of the Earth (in their party work) on recycling, with the wildlife organisation IFAW, and on the banning of ‘fox hunting’. Interviewee Four had a similarly broad experience of participatory activities: secretary of the school council (issues they dealt with included the change of school uniform and various fund-raising activities), involvement with the local youth club (where they had made an *alcohol awareness* video for young people).

Interviewee Five participated in an extraordinary range of activities, and it is beneficial to list them as a vivid illustration of what different *social animals* these ‘activists’ were to the ‘non-activist’ peers. Interviewee Five did a lot of local community work, worked at a youth club (an example of their activity was a ‘litter pick’); was a member of the national Youth Parliament (the Southwest MPs met once a month and national sittings took place once a year – they were currently dealing with the ‘fair trade’ issue and had recently helped organise a ‘peace one day’); was a member of the Bearwood Youth project and Community Centre Steering Group (working to start up community centre); was involved in a church-based youth project (Thursday night café for young people, Friday youth club for Years 7 to 9); was chairperson of the Poole youth forum (which meets once a month and is presently discussing the issue of bullying); attended ward councillors’ meetings every six weeks; and, worked with the Tear Fund and Fair Trade (e.g. were trying to sell fair trade chocolate at the Youth Centre).

## Theme 5: Opportunity Structures

The overwhelming feeling of 'non-activists' was one of a lack of power in the political system. This idea was a recurrent theme in all the focus groups when politics was discussed: 'I'm one of those people who doesn't think I can make a difference no matter what' (f82); 'I'm just one person I cant change anything' (f83); 'I don't think that individuals can change it, it's got to come from someone who's high up' (f183); 'I would become a part of politics if I had a choice, if I was allowed to I would' (f197); 'our voices don't count' (f265); 'everyone's got their own opinions and that but I don't really voice them as such... I've got things to say but I don't say them to the right people... I wouldn't have a clue how to put my view across... I couldn't get involved easily, no' (f657-60). The view of the 'non-activists' was that it was very difficult if not impossible to change things: 'it is possible to do but its very hard... The only way you can do it in this country is to contact your local MP... It's very hard to do unless you're persistent... It's a full-time job' (f945, f947, f950).

In short, focus groups participants displayed not only disillusionment with the political process, but also a lack of knowledge about how it works. The lack of knowledge or information is illustrated by the following: 'There's been all this stuff about an election coming up or something... When? Who? Where? Local, national, what? I don't know a thing about it' (f661); 'I would vote if I knew exactly what I was voting for' (f664). The information deficit was highlighted in a more general fashion in the language used when discussing politics and democracy (see above) in the focus groups. Statements and keywords very much reflected stereotypes that had no real detail – vague reference points which offered a very blurred picture of the political system. The clear communication of information about politics and the political process would therefore seem to be a starting point for reconnecting young people to democracy.

The perception of lack of power, irrespective of the notions of politics and democracy, was a very live theme for young people. This feeling in the groups related, however, not just to conventional political action but also to alternative action like demonstrations and petitions. The mass demonstration against the 'War

on Iraq' was therefore cited both as proof that politicians were not listening and the futility of such direct action – 'it's a way of getting heard by the media but protesting doesn't work' (f105).

Opinion about voting in elections in the focus groups was mixed, but the overwhelming feeling reflected the negative views about politics and politicians articulated above. While some thought it was your duty to vote, most took the view that there was no point because either a) 'I'm not going to make much difference to the number of votes that are going in', 'I'm probably among the many in feeling that my vote is one vote among many, so it probably won't make any difference at all' (f663); or, b) the parties are all the same (i.e. these participants did not distinguish between politicians of different parties, and between parties and government).

'Non-activists' perceptions of lack of power in the political system contrasted sharply with the 'activists': 'I think politics can change everybody's lives... If they went along to surgeries, if they wrote letters to their MPs, if they actually gave MPs a way of judging public opinion... people would then see a real change in politicians' (i124, i126). Interviewee One was clear about the main barrier to participation: 'a lot of the democratic bodies that people can participate in aren't widely publicised or recognised... MPs having surgeries... phone up local councils... go into Westminster and Green Card an MP. I've only learnt all that stuff this year' (i146-8). This point supports the complaints made above in the focus groups about a lack of information.

Many examples may be used to underscore 'activists' feelings of empowerment, that their views are listened to, and can lead to change. For Interviewee Two, participation brought concrete benefits: 'Me and my friends... we were transport leaders and we've brought the transport prices down for the young people. Yeah, we can change things' (i285). Interviewee Three emphasised the point that participation in the local community and local government 'can change your life' (i421-2). Interviewee Four stated: 'I do like putting my ideas forward and arguing for my rights... Yeah, in school definitely, but because I don't do it out of school I don't know. Yeah, in school I'm definitely listened to' (i535). With a view to 'non-

activists', another interviewee argued: 'I think if you don't think you can change your life through politics, then why even get involved' (i676).

The view reflected in the in-depth interviews, was that local engagement was the most stimulating as it reconnected people with the local community, was more attractive than national politics, and could more easily lead to concrete results. Interviewee Five argued that: 'it's really important that young people get involved with things in their local area... Michael Howard [the Conservative Party Leader] said in his speech the other week that people reckon if you pay higher taxes then that's your community service... Well I think that's a really wrong way of thinking. If you don't get involved you can't have an impact so you've got no right to moan' (i611-13). This statement was also indicative of young 'activists' frustration with their peers, and of their belief that it was the *responsibility* of young people themselves to get involved (rather than just moan) as much as the *responsibility* of politicians to become more engaged.

Age was also cited as an important barrier. Not just for 'activists' under the age of 18, but also for young people trying to make their way in politics: 'I don't understand why you can vote at 18, but can't be a candidate until you're 21' (i656), but 'I don't think the voting age should be lowered to 16 without proper political education' (i657). In other words, the non-participation of people under 18 must be dealt with rather differently (by those seeking to engage more young people in politics) than over-18s, because of the real and obvious lack of 'ownership' of the political process in the 15-18 age bracket (i.e. no voting rights).

For 'activists', it was clear that the differences between themselves and people of their own age who did not participate was the perception of *empowerment*: thus, 'I think it's more of an attitude, I think that you need to be of the attitude and the opinion that you can make a difference' (i669). People needed to realise that small things could make a difference – 'In my year as MYP [Member of the Youth Parliament], I got asked "what have you done?", "what have you changed?". I couldn't say "well hey, there's a new youth club over there", because in a year you don't have the time, money, power... But little things like the Council listening, and

organising a youth conference... setting the Peace One day and working with Connexions to make sure that young people's voices are heard' (i670-1). If there is a lesson here for policy-makers, it is that young people in general can only feel a sense of *empowerment* on a consistent basis if they are engaged at a local (or, perhaps, regional) level, because it is only at these lower levels that the fruits of their engagement may become clear.

Young 'activists', furthermore, commonly talked – in their narratives – about how they became involved. Here, activism was often the result of 'mobilisation' – being actively encouraged to engage. An interviewee stressed the impact of one particular *mobilisation* activity: 'One of the best experiences ever was on the 1<sup>st</sup> May – we were invited to go and see the counting of our local elections and we got to see all the councillors exited... That was a really big *eye opener* in the whole sense of understanding politics... being able to talk and interact with them I learnt a great deal... That was a real big turn for me, and I suppose that now I see politics at a local level' (i692-4). A second explained that: 'Politics is changing me, the last six months I've gained so much knowledge, so much self-confidence, so much expertise, and a wide range of views... I think politics can change everybody's lives' (i123-4). Another interviewee stated: 'I've learnt a lot actually [from time on school council]. I used to be quite shy as well, I didn't used to want to say anything... So I think it's improved my confidence, commitment, a lot really. Put more ideas forward as well' (i520, i522).

## Focus Groups vs. In-Depth Interviews

This national report has compared the results from the focus groups with ‘non-activists’ to the in-depth interviews with ‘activists’ in the previous sections, but will summarise the key points in this section.

- ? In terms of general values, both sets of participants had a negative view of politics, politicians and the political process – though for the ‘non-activists’ this feeling was far stronger. The ‘activists’ had a much clearer understanding/greater knowledge of politics, although it is not certain whether this is *cause* (the reason why they are ‘activists’) of *effect* (a result of them being ‘activists’). The values and goals of ‘non-activists’ were, in addition, more individualistic than the ‘activists’, who were more willing to see their engagement in and relationship with society in the framework of *common goods* (i.e. *solidarity*).
- ? The central difference between the focus group participants and the in-depth interviewees was the feeling of ‘empowerment’ – the ‘activists’, not unsurprisingly, thought that they could *make a difference*. Even in school, one said ‘I reckon I could do it if I put my mind to it. If I really wanted to get myself heard, if I really had a strong view, I’d be able to do it... If it was something big, I don’t reckon that people are going to listen. But if it’s something that we could change, people might listen’ (i501, i507). Because they did not think they had any power or any say, ‘non-activists’ were not – following a rational choice model – going to participate. Here, engagement by politicians (‘mobilisation’) could play a key role. One focus group participant implied that this was the case with them: ‘I can’t see myself getting involved in politics at all. I’m not that kind of person... I’m sure somebody else would start something and I’d join in’ (f996-7).
- ? Both sets of participants had strong feelings about political issues, even if the ‘activists’ were able to articulate their views more convincingly. The Focus group participants were concerned with tangible issues, representing the *here*

*and now*, like Iraq. In-depth interviewees, on the other hand, had a broader outlook and perception of important issues on local, national and international planes. One 'activist' stated that they were interested in 'Issues that are affecting everyone really, what I think is going to be best for everyone' (i503).

- ? A further point that became apparent was the importance of local politics. This was not only the 'activists'' primary or preferred form of engagement. It also seemed to reflect the level where many young people found the most pressing political issues.
  
- ? Finally, 'mobilisation' is a key point. Although the 'non-activists' were not asked directly whether they had been approached to participate, there was an overall feeling that they would not be as opposed (as some might think) to getting involved if they were actively asked to participate. This feeling was supported by evidence from the 'activists' which suggested that efforts to *mobilise* them – whether from family, local community groups or even politicians and political parties – were key moments (*critical junctures*) in the development of their participatory tendencies.

## Key Concepts and Terms

This section deals with key concepts and terms from the point of view of young people with regard to participation (the concepts and terms important for the interpretation of the research have been looked at in previous sections and will be further tackled in later sections). The concepts and terms are drawn mostly from the focus groups, because the ‘activists’ in the in-depth interviews were more analytical and varied in their responses. Whilst the central goal of the focus groups was to examine the language of young people, the in-depth interviews provided more of the raw data for the interpretative terms and concepts looked at in the other sections of the report.

### Belonging

- ? ‘friends’, ‘family’ (primary level of attachment).
- ? ‘Bournemouth/ Poole’.
- ? ‘England/ Britain’.
- ? ‘European’.

Note: multiple levels were not only found to be key features in terms of attachment and belonging, but in all areas of participation, so must be included in the quantitative analysis.

### Organised activities

- ? ‘going for a drink’, ‘playing football’ (leisure based activities – main/ frequently sole area of activities for ‘non-activists’).
- ? ‘community activities’ (common among ‘activists’).
- ? ‘time and money’ (barriers to participation for all young people – ‘activists’ think it is worth the sacrifice).

### Politics/ Democracy

- ? ‘parties’, ‘politicians’, ‘government’ (key actors in political system conflated by ‘non-activists’, but – to a far lesser extent – by ‘activists’).

- ? 'lying' (very common charge from 'non-activists' – lack of trust in politicians and political system).
- ? 'arguing' (common view of bickering politicians among all young people).
- ? 'don't want to listen' (very common charge again among 'non-activists' against politicians, but also common among 'activists').
- ? 'all the same' (very common among 'non-activists', refuted by 'activists').
- ? 'benefits' ('non-activists' do not see any *benefits* for themselves in participation, 'activists' obviously view participation differently and *benefits* are viewed in a less individualistic sense).

### Participation

- ? 'demonstrations' (one of the two forms of direct action identified, but seen as ineffective by 'non-activists' and barely mentioned by 'activists' – not a major part of their participatory life).
- ? 'voting' (seen as a key participatory act by all – whether viewed negatively (as with most 'non-activists') or positively (as with most 'activists')).
- ? 'representation' (politicians do not *represent* young people, according to 'non-activists' – 'activists' hold similar, if less vociferous opinions on this issue).
- ? 'local community' (something stressed in their participatory acts by 'activists').

### Opportunity Structures

- ? 'I can't change anything', 'our voices don't count' (feeling of powerlessness of 'non-activists').
- ? 'I don't know a thing about it' (lack of information conceded by 'non-activists' and 'activists' like, who would like to see the situation improved).
- ? 'protesting doesn't work' (feeling of 'non-activists' in particular, illustrated by well-known examples e.g. Iraq).
- ? 'politics can change everybody's lives', 'I'm definitely listened to' (feelings of empowerment of 'activists').
- ? 'don't get involved... don't moan' (frustration of 'activists' with their peers)
- ? 'I've learnt a lot' ('activists' positive experience from participation – cases of snowballing from original 'mobilisation').

## Stimuli for Quantitative Work

The stimuli for the quantitative work relate, first, to the key terms and concepts explained in the previous section, but also to what we might call ‘interpretative’ terms and concepts. In short, the following concepts should carry ‘added value’ for the thematic composition and analytical outlook of the EUYOUPART questionnaire.

### Situation/ predicament

- ? ‘localism’: the *level* of young people’s feelings of belonging/ attachment, organised activities, views of politics (and political issues), participation and perceived opportunity structures was a running theme, which should be included in the quantitative work. These *levels* ran from the personal (individual, friends and family), to the local community, to the country or state (England or Britain) and – to a very small extent – beyond (the EU, the international environment).
- ? ‘disconnection’: young people in the UK feel a clear disconnection (or ‘alienation’) from the political process (not political issues). This *disconnection* is underlined by the fact that the median young person does not vote, does not participate in politics and does not feel represented by the main actors in the political process. Obviously, the feeling of *disconnection* is much less true for ‘activists’.
- ? ‘trust’: the basic ingredient for *disconnection* is a lack of trust or confidence in parties, politicians and government. They are viewed as a self-serving, dishonest class that have nothing or, at least, ‘little’ in common with the views and interests of young people, and have little interest in listening to their concerns. Whilst *trust* levels are visibly lower among ‘non-activists’, the generally negative viewpoint pervades the generation even as far as young ‘activists’.
- ? ‘politics’ as a dirty word: *politics* is seen by young people in general as a negative word for the reasons mentioned above. Even young ‘activists’ are

frustrated by the term, as it seems to demean or belittle their own efforts or 'participatory acts'.

### Key features of Youth (non-)Participation

- ? 'empowerment': perceptions of *empowerment* are not only a key feature of participation, they also provide a key distinction between 'activists' and 'non-activists'. It is unclear, however, as to whether the feeling of *empowerment* precedes participation or is a result of participation (probably it is a combination of both – in short, a feeling strengthened by participation). This concept must be tested in the questionnaire by asking young people the following questions: 'do you think you can change things?' and 'do you think you can change things through any of the following list of political actors?'
  
- ? 'mobilisation': *mobilisation* was a second central aspect in defining the participation of young people. 'Activists' had generally been encouraged to participate either by friends and family, people in the local community or in their school or workplace, or even by political actors themselves. EUYOUNGPART must ask the question 'were you encouraged to participate in the your activities [a filtered question for those who said yes to any of the battery of participatory acts] by any of the following groups of people?'

### 'Re-connecting' Young People

Note: EUYOUNGPART must be aware, and remain aware, of the fact that policy-makers are already (or intend to in the near future) make efforts to 'reconnect' young people through politics. It would therefore be fruitful to establish indicators that could help these efforts. To achieve this, the following themes should be investigated:

- ? 'engagement': this issue should be tackled from both sides of the debate – to increase the engagement of both politicians and young people. It would therefore be useful create a clear sets of indicators that evaluate young people's trust in/ problems with the political process (e.g. they are not being listened to).

- ? 'Issues': the aim should therefore be to ascertain what young people are interested in/ concerned with, to provide base from which this *reconnection* can take place.
  
- ? 'information': finally, how information on 'politics' is gathered by young people should be examined, because the young people in this study frequently cited lack of information as a major problem. The type and volume of information flows to young people should therefore be studied in the questionnaire.

## Conclusion

The conclusion will look at young people's own evaluations of their participation or non-participation in politics and democracy in general and their own solutions for the current predicament. These suggestions tended to come either 'implicitly' from 'non-activists' or 'explicitly' from 'activists', and are used here to summarise the results of the research and their meaning for the participation of young people in politics in the UK.

Despite the negative comments made over the course of this report about low trust in and/ or lack of engagement of conventional political actors, it is interesting to note how young 'activists' (who have a foot in both camps) view the situation. Interview One argued that: 'It seems generally to be middle class people... that come from families that were originally working class which have worked their way up. They feel a responsibility, an obligation' (i38). The idea of *responsibility* on the part of young people is worth noting here, because it illustrates the point that any lack of engagement is not only to do with the political system but also society as a whole. Therefore, if there is a problem with a lack of participation of young people in politics and democracy, it may be just as much to do with the changing values of society as with the political process itself. For instance, one view was: 'It comes down to this whole consumerist society... people have so little time and they don't like to span their attention' (i66). Another interviewee painted a negative picture of their peers: 'a lot of people my age just tend to plod along and they're interested in going out and getting drunk and things like that. Perhaps not all of them are interested in getting involved in their local community and that sort of thing' (i440). As the issue of value change is indicative of society more generally – increasing *individualisation* and waning *solidarity* – some of the remedies need to be addressed to society as a whole.

In short, we should be fighting not only for more engagement from the politicians, but must also consider how to respond to more fundamental societal or social trends towards individualisation and heterogeneity. The increasing lack of solidarity and social values suggests an increasing diversity, so that it is hardly surprising

that politicians and parties find it increasingly difficult to represent the electorate in all its many colours. The ‘non-activists’ were keen to argue that they lacked the power to put things right, because they could not see any tangible benefits from any action – ‘You don’t even know if you’ve made a difference or not’ (f767) – but these benefits were very much couched in terms of benefits to the individual in their daily life. ‘Non-activists’ in this respect appeared to follow an unreconstructed rational choice model in their view of politics, the political process and their role in it: ‘If I was going to vote, I would make sure I was voting for what was good for me... like universities, or car insurance or road tax... the cost of petrol’ (f962).

Not to be forgotten, in creating the linkages between young people and politics, is the central function of today’s *24-hour media*. For ‘non-activists’, this likely to be their only real contact with politics upon which they can form their opinions and evaluate their own role in the political process. It was therefore also interesting to hear ‘activists’ generally negative views of the role of the media: ‘the media is so sensationalist now, it picks out all the negative things... the media and sensationalism, it gives people a bad outlook on politics in general’ (i67, i72); ‘hearing the news all the time with bad things going on you know it can discourage them [other young people] from voting and getting involved’ (i321). These views were not only held by ‘activists’, but also by some ‘non-activists’: one focus group criticised the media for its negativity in its reporting of politics and its lack of information (f705-9). The role of the media should therefore be further examined as a key factor in constructing young people’s *perceptions of opportunity structures*.

This is not, however, to deflect attention away from young people’s view of the poor state of politics today – the poor performance of politicians and parties to fulfil their representative duties – described in detail throughout this report. Interviewee Five argued poignantly that: ‘politics can be very pathetic, and that puts people off. Like when they’re continually slamming other parties, and slagging them off... and that’s very negative, not constructive at all... Like John Prescott’s [the Deputy Prime Minister] speech at the Labour Party conference last October, where he just continually slagged off other parties, and I just thought “that’s really pathetic. You could get up there and do a really rousing speech... but instead you get up there

and start slagging off Charles Kennedy and Michael Howard” (i346, 348-9). Interviewee Five was also concerned that using ‘politics’ as a label put young people off: ‘I mean the whole Fair Trade example. Well we hadn’t told young people that “hey, did you know you’re making a politically informed choice” – we don’t want to scare them off!’ (i714).

Young people themselves have attributed much of the apathy in their generation to the way politics conducted. One interviewee related their experiences of campaigning for a political party: ‘there is bad apathy and, as I say, the responses I got from visiting people [was] that they liked to have someone knocking on their door but they don’t like having someone knocking on their door just one time of the year’ (i366). In other words, the engagement of politicians should not focus so heavily on the campaigning period when they want young people’s votes. They also made the point that politicians, particularly at the national level, do not seem to be listening, even when people do make their opinions clear. This, it was argued, contributes greatly to many young people’s belief in the pointlessness of participation: ‘Loads of people went on the march [against the Iraq war], but the views still wasn’t even listened to. I don’t know how many millions, but there were so many there and that’s not even having an impact, so people think “what’s the point in voting if they won’t listen or our vote doesn’t even do anything, or we can’t have a say afterwards...” I think that is something that has to be overcome’ (i665-6).

Yet perhaps the problem is just as much the perception of parties and politicians as the reality of the situation. One interviewee argued, for instance: ‘They say “all parties are the same”. Well actually, if you look into it, they’re not. They’re actually very different. But I can see where that view has come from, because they don’t get the immediate effect... We haven’t got the immediate effect of the money that’s been put into the NHS by the Labour Government’ (i667-8). There is therefore a serious difficulty with the perception that politics and politicians do not achieve anything and that nothing ever changes, because young people cannot see concrete improvements or changes. On young people’s view of politics, one interviewee stated: ‘I think that politics produces those things that can’t be

measured, and so people will say “what have you done in your year?”, and its not tangible, you can’t say “I’ve achieved this” because they cant see that, they don’t understand’ (i673). Here again, some argued that it was the media’s negative style of reporting about politics that contributed to the downplaying of any achievements. A key point here is the lack of high quality information about politics filtering through to young people. In their experience with trying to encourage other young people to participate, one ‘activist’ said that young people ‘think they have opinions... but I don’t think they’re very well considered’ (i56). In other words, they have opinions, sometimes strong opinions, on political issues, but lack the knowledge to process this information, which raises further questions about standards of political information and education.<sup>1</sup>

Young people also suggested a number of solutions – proposals to improve the current situation of widespread non-participation among young people. First, a raft of ideas were set out for changing politics for the better, to create more engagement from political actors and young people. Greater integrity could be shown by politicians, not pretending they were right all the time: ‘It would be better if there was more honesty involved and if some actually said “well, the other side have some good ideas but not all of them”’ (f691); ‘If politicians were honest it might make a difference’ (f812). This relates to the fact that politicians are widely perceived among young people as trying to win their debating point at all costs irrespective of the correctness of their argument, and towing the party line in a ‘close-minded’ way: ‘Politics is about listening to people, and what policies they want to implement... I think politicians need to engage more with the public and get a bit more focused on that aspect’ (i412-3). Young people, in addition, feel that this could be better reflected by the manner in which politicians communicate: they ‘have to be open to let people talk to them and answer people’s questions when people ask questions... they’ve got to allow people a chance to understand the answers that they give to them’ (i214, i216). In response to their experiences with politicians, some ‘non-activists’ offered hope. They liked the idea in one focus group of an MP sending round questionnaires to young people, though feeling that

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<sup>1</sup> Here, the UK state has at its disposal the most successful public services broadcaster in the world with the country’s highest viewing ratings – the BBC – which could be used more specifically to

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the way it was done was stupid and patronising (treating them like little children): 'It's a fairly good idea, but the way they've gone about it is completely wrong' (f696).

Engagement was advocated overwhelmingly at the local level, to address local issues that mattered in the everyday lives of young people: 'You have to put it at a local level. Like, take Boscombe... we know this is a bad area, we know it and there is a problem, but what do you think can be done about it?' (f715). One interviewee offered a detailed suggestion about how this might take place: 'What I think needs to happen, needs to happen on a more local level. MPs have to become more accountable to the people in their constituencies... we need to have more... local debates, local press needs to take more of an active role... Local communities to take more of an active role in what MPs are up to' (i108-110). A young 'activist' in local politics emphasised this point: 'They [people in general] want to see them [politicians knocking on doors] all the time, asking them what are your viewpoints on the town, what would you like to see change. They don't like to see people just at election time which is something that I want to change' (i367). This interviewee had specific ideas about how local politicians could improve trust and, thus, create a better atmosphere for the participation of young people: 'we should go back to the basics, the grass roots of politics. We should listen to what people want from their town. What facilities they do want. What they want their taxpayers money being spent on... people are not seeing where their money is spent because it's being wasted on stupid projects' (i380-1).

The key to improving the participation of young people was also, according to the young people themselves, better political information and education. Here, there were a number of viable proposals which included the following: 'If you give people information... just give them a leaflet from every political party... give information to schools and schools could just dish it out' (f1007). Interviewee One argued that the key to young people participating more was 'education' and 'citizenship': 'Let's make people participate in these things. Let's raise people's awareness... I'd like to have checklist of 20 things ['little cut out and keep cards'] which students have to

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help achieve these ends.

do... [e.g.] get a reply from an MP on an issue you feel strongly about... going to a surgery' (i150, i153-6, i173). Interviewee Five strongly supported the idea of political education and the recent introduction of 'citizenship classes' in the UK: 'I think that's really important, because if people don't understand that then they're never going to grow up and vote, and I think primary education is quite important' (i659). They furthermore highlighted the virtuous circle created by such an educational approach: 'Education is really important... If we inform and educate one person, they'll go and inform and educate another person and you start a cycle of change' (i716-7). Even for 'non-activists', making them think about politics and discuss issues important to them might increase the chances of engagement. One participant commented about the focus group in which they were taking part: 'coming here today has made me think about a few things... maybe it is time that you know, I sat up and thought about what I'm going to do' (f748). This leads to the question of mobilisation, and why mobilising young people to think about, discuss and – ultimately – participate in politics is so important. Here, *mobilisation* is tied to the issue of engagement from politicians: 'I'd probably be more receptive if someone came door to door... if you get that contact you think "oh, actually there is someone out there"' (f702-3). Yet engagement should not just be encouraged between political actors and young people, but – more importantly and more realistically – between young people and the various strands of civil society.

The hypothesis of this report must therefore read that young people are interested in politics, but not in the political process, though their interest is not matched by a deep understanding of how things works. This hampers both debate and discussion of the issues, but also direct participation in politics and democracy, and adds to a feeling of powerlessness and disconnection from the political process and the organised elements of civil society more generally (fuelled by popular perceptions of parties, politicians and the government). The answer lies in a combination of better information and education, greater integrity and more engagement from key political and societal actors, and more effort to engage young people at a local level (and listen to issues that really concern them), which should add up to a more general effort to mobilise both the concept of politics and political participation itself.

## Annex – Personal Information

Focus Group One: 18-25 year old, males, low level of education				
Age	Education	Personal Status	Household Composition	Leisure Activities
18	GCSE or Equivalent	Single: Part Time Worker / AS Levels	3 adults, accountants	Football, watching films / TV, playing on computer, going to the pub.
22	2 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Student – Foundation Course	3 adults, 2 children	Mainly concentrating on work at present, going to the pub and the gym.
18	2 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Part time worker	3 adults, accountant, royal marine major	Martial arts – Aikido, Ju-Jitsu, Shorinji Kempo, Shaolin Gung Fu, Swimming, Surfing' Kendo.
20	GCSE or Equivalent	Single: Full time worker – retail	4 adults, self employed window cleaner, sports centre manager, solicitor	Football – playing, coaching, watching. Socialising.

Focus Group Two: 18-25 year old, females, low level of education				
Age	Education	Personal Status	Household Composition	Leisure Activities
21	2 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Part time worker / A Level student	4 adults, surveyors, baker, student	Swimming, watersports, spending time with friends, films, student union activities at college.
18	2 A Levels or Equivalent	Married: Part time worker / AS Level student	3 adults, 1 child, HR Manager, Auxiliary Nurse	Reading, cycling, drawing, drinking, dancing.
24	2 A Levels or Equivalent	Married (separated): Full time mother	1 adult, 2 children	Volunteering at Millennium Activities, writing poems, watching television.
18	GCSE or Equivalent	Single: Studying NVQ's	4 adults, design engineers	Badminton, brownie guide leader
19	GCSE or Equivalent	Single: P/T - entertainment	3 adults, nurse, receptionist	Gym, dancing

Focus Group Three: 18-25 year old, males, high level of education				
Age	Education	Personal Status	Household Composition	Leisure Activities
19	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Media Student	3 adults, students or part time employed	Mountain biking, snowboarding, cars
19	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Part time worker	2 adults, landscape gardener	Swimming, sewing, socialising with mates
21	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Archaeology Student	4 adults, all students	Very few! Drinking with friends when I find the time, I like to play snooker and pool, but my only form of exercise is walking to and from Uni.
23	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Married: Product Designer	4 adults, all students	Socialising, darts, pool, Thai boxing, VW maintenance / restoration
22	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Retail Management Student	4 adults, all students	Cycling, darts, computer console, socialising.
22	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Part time worker / Environmental Protection Student	4 adults, students or part time workers	Playing basketball in the university team, tennis at weekends, clubbing – preferably with live music, playing drums and juggling.

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Focus Group Four: 18-25 year old, females, high level of education				
Age	Education	Personal Status	Household Composition	Leisure Activities
22	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Tourism Management	3 adults, teacher, businessman	Swimming classes, music, samba classes
20	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Married: Beauty Therapist	2 adults, shop assistant	Cinemas, reading, poetry.
20	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Interior Design Student	2 adults, students	Gym, friends, going out, travelling, photography
19	3 A Levels or Equivalent	Single: Interactive Media Production Student	4 adults, all students	Socialising with mates, dancing, watching football, exercising, gym, playing sports
21	Undergraduate Degree	Single: LLB Qualifying	3 adults, all students	Cinema, yoga, reading

Focus Group Five: 15-25 – ‘mixed participants’ (men, women, high level education, low level education)				
Age	Education	Personal Status	Household Composition	Leisure Activities
22 - Female	Undergraduate Degree	Working Full Time	2 adults	Community work, reading, travelling.
15 - Male	Studying for GCSEs	At school, working part-time	1 adults, 1 child.	Watching TV, going out with friends, playing football.
17 - Male	GCSE level	Working in part-time job	3 adults	Sports, going out to pubs and clubs, playing computer games
19 - Female	2 A-levels	Works as secretary in company	4 adults	Meeting up with friends, socialising.

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Depth Interviewees				
Age	Education	Personal Status	Household Composition	Leisure Activities
22	University Degree	Single: Working Full Time	Living alone	Playing guitar regularly in public, playing football, walking, reading, listening to music and going out and socialising with friends!
15	Studying for GCSEs	Single: At school	2 adults, 1 child.	Youth club, seeing my friends, watching TV
22	3 A-levels	Single: Full Time Worker	2 adults – part time cleaner, office administrator for a travel / coach company	Music, drama, wildlife and travelling. Doorstep canvassing – hoping to stand at next local council elections.
17	GCSE or Equivalent	Single: Health / Beauty Student	2 adults, 1 child. Self employed hoteliers	Generally socialising, clubs. Health and beauty.
18	GCSE or Equivalent	Single: Sixth Form Student	2 adults, 1 child	Outdoor activities, such as caving, hiking. Help organising and running my local youth club.
17	GCSE or Equivalent	Single: Sixth Form Student	2 adults, 2 children.	On lots of committees, and lots of political activities such as the Youth Forum. Playing flute and piano

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