



Citizenship Foundation

Press release

24 January 2012

Youngsters despair of politicians suggests research and 'the curriculum review threatens to make this worse' says Citizenship Foundation

Youngsters display a lack of confidence in politicians' abilities to address key issues such as the economy, unemployment and the environment, according to a report published today by leading educational research charity the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the University of Essex, supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Understanding civic duty is a vital part of young people's preparation for adulthood according to the authors of the Citizens in Transition report, which is unveiled today at an event at the House of Commons. The event is jointly hosted with the Citizenship Foundation, the UK's largest charity working to bring civil and civic understanding into educational settings.

Over the course of 10 years, NFER has tracked a representative sample of the first students to receive compulsory citizenship education from age 11, through its Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study. A supplementary study, Citizens in Transition, focuses on the first cohort of this group of students, who have now reached ages 19 and 20, over a period including the 2010 general election.

Additional work was undertaken on a comparison of education for civic engagement across England, Wales and Scotland.

Key findings of the research include:

- Levels of political and economic awareness were found to be higher among those in the group that had engaged with citizenship education while at school
- General levels of civic engagement were found to be low across a number of key measures such as interest in politics and support for a political party
- This age group has five broad categories when analysed for levels of civic engagement. These range from those who are prepared and ready to be active to those who are uninterested. However, a low trust in politicians is universal across the categories.

Andy Thornton, chief executive of the Citizenship Foundation, said: "This goes to the heart of the education system itself. Education needs to boost young people's knowledge, making sense of the world and giving them tools to transform it. We believe the government's proposals to remove citizenship education from the National Curriculum threatens to make it worse. Once they comprehend their rights and responsibilities young people move into adulthood more readily and more capably. Keeping this route open is vital to social participation: enabling individuals to flourish in a unified nation."

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Note to editors:

About NFER

National Foundation for Educational Research is the UK's largest independent provider of research, assessment and information services for education, training and children's services. A registered charity, NFER has undertaken three related programmes to produce its findings:

CELS—the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study into Citizenship Education 2002 to 2010
(www.nfer.ac.uk/cels)

CiT—Citizens in Transition 2010 to 2012 – a study that extends the CELS study by following the CELS cohort for one further wave at age 19–20. There is also a complementary three nation study on 18–25 year olds which compares the civic knowledge, understanding, civic attitudes and behaviours of samples of young adults in England, Scotland and Wales.

ICCS—the International Civic and Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study, a 38-country international comparative study on education for civic engagement, including participation from England

For more information about CELS/CiT see: www.nfer.ac.uk/CiVT1

For more information about NFER see: www.nfer.ac.uk

About The Citizenship Foundation

The Citizenship Foundation is the UK's largest charity to specialise in supporting citizens to participate in society. With programmes and materials in around 80 per cent of secondary and 30 per cent of primary schools the Foundation has been instrumental in strengthening the policy and delivery capability of education for citizenship. Financially supported by foundations, national legal bodies such as the Law Society, government agencies and programmes, over 30 corporates and 1,800 volunteers. Founded by a group of legal and educational professionals (including Lord Phillips) the 21 year old charity has brought civic and civil society groups to education settings to great effect.

The Foundation is a founding partner of Democratic Life: a coalition of over 30 organisations and 600 individuals who support the retention of effective education for citizenship within the curriculum framework.

**For more information about The Citizenship Foundation see:
www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk**

About ESRC

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the UK's largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues. It supports independent, high quality research which has an impact on business, the public sector and the third sector. The ESRC's total budget for 2011/12 is £203 million. At any one time the ESRC supports over 4,000 researchers and postgraduate students in academic institutions and independent research institutes.

For more information about ESRC see: www.esrc.ac.uk