



UNIT 2

YOUTH PARTICIPATION



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A. Understanding Youth Participation

In this lesson, learners explore what youth participation is, why it is important and consider the benefits. A discussion follows in which learners reflect on what they know about youth participation.

Learning Outcomes: 4.1, 4.2, 5.4

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials needed:

- Whiteboard and Internet to show class videos. PowerPoint: Understanding Youth Participation, available [here](#).

Additional Activity: UNCRC (LOs 1.4, 2.1, 4.1, 5.4, 5.5, 6.2)

1. Brainstorm: What is Youth Participation?

As a whole class, brainstorm the question. Encourage learners to answer with the first word/thoughts that come to mind. Allow all learners to respond. Ask the class to identify common themes or threads in their responses. Answers can be recorded on a whole-class mind map or [Mentimeter](#).

2. Video: Understanding Youth Participation

The video '[Understanding Youth Participation](#)' is from SALTO Resource Centre, funded by the European Commission. It is broken into 5 sections, an introduction followed by 4 questions; this activity focuses on the first 3 questions, answers are in green below.

The total video length is 6.56mins. The video length for this activity is 4.37 mins. After each video section/question, pause the video and carry out the accompanying activity. Learner questions and activities are on [slide 2](#) with some more detail here.

i. **What is Youth Participation?** (@0.35 mins)

Learners come up with 3 words to define youth participation; alternatively draw an image or come up with a slogan. These can be added to the whole-class mind map or Mentimeter.

(@0.47) When we start to look at the more conceptual definitions of it,

a lot of them will talk about young people taking part in decision-making.

Actively expressing views and their voice, and having a power to affect change in public policy or society around them.

(@1:11)

Young people need to be active in it. They need to be leading what's going on within this. It needs to enable young people to influence and affect some sort of change in the world around them. Needs to give them a genuine power so they can shape society and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

ii. **Where does Youth Participation happen?** (@1.26 mins)

For each of the 4 settings (home, school, community, national government) learners identify an issue or topic they feel young people should participate in more fully or have more of a voice in. This can be done in pairs; depending on class size, each pair can be given 1 or more settings.

(@2.17) As you can see participation happens both in private realms within our own small communities and in our households, but also in the public realm in the larger world around us. We also know that participation happens both individually and collectively.

iii. **Why do we need Youth Participation?** (@2.58 mins)

On a post-it, learners individually write 1 reason 'why young people should participate in decision-making'. They fold it and throw it into a 'hat'. In turn, learners come forward and read out one reason. In addition to the reasons mentioned in the video, encourage learners to come up with reasons based on their own experiences.

(@3.08) One of the most important ones is, it's a basic human right. Every citizen including young people, including children, has the right to express their views and influence things and to shape the world around them. It's the right of autonomy and we see it defined in things such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

(@3.34) Participation can bring power to groups of people who are often marginalised and excluded.

(@3.48) And participation is a way of shifting and redressing imbalances of power in our society.

(@3.53) Another way we can think about it and another argument that resonates with a lot of policymakers, is it's about efficiency.

(@4.21) It can be a transformative process for the young people who take part and so you can position it a little bit as an educational practice. And it's a really crucial part of participation that young people learn the skills they need to be active citizens within our societies.

3. What are the benefits of Youth Participation?

Ask learners to write down as many benefits of Youth Participation as they can think of in 3 minutes. Set a timer. Discuss answers as a whole class and add to the mind-map or Mentimeter.

Display **Slides 3 and 4** the 'Benefits of Participation' and compare to learner answers.

4. Discuss

Which Convention stipulates children and young people's right to participate?

Answer: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (UNCRC), Article 12. Remind learners that in the UNCRC and in national legislation, such as the Child Care Act 1991 and the Children Act 200, the word 'child/ren' refers to anyone under the age of 18 years old.

Display the following slides one at a time and allow 5 minutes for each associated activity.

- **Slide 5 Article 12 UNCRC**

Learners rewrite Article 12 in their own words.

- **Slide 6 UNCRC General Principles**

Learners add another General Principle which they think is needed.

- **Slide 7 UNCRC Articles.**

Learners access the UNCRC and categorise the 54 Articles under the 4 categories.

Emphasise the significance of participation as a general principle and as a category of rights under which the 54 Articles of the UNCRC are categorised.

5. Reflecting

Learners reflect on what they have learned about youth participation by using a Concentric Circles discussion method, detailed in the [WWGS Activities Resource](#).

Questions for the discussion:

- What does the term youth participation mean to you now?
- What aspects are involved in youth participation? (In addition to voting and voice?)
- What is needed to make youth participation possible?
- Why is youth participation important?
- How does participation link to citizenship? (Think of participation as an act of citizenship, of caring and contributing as an active global citizen).
- Can you think of an example of youth participation? Have you ever been directly involved? Can you think of any campaigns or global/social justice issues which have been driven by young people?
- What questions arise about youth participation? Is there anything you want to know more about in relation to youth participation?

At the end of the discussion invite learners to add to the mind-map/Mentimeter.

Additional Activities and Resources

UNCRC (LOs 1.4, 2.1, 4.1, 5.4, 5.5, 6.2)

Depending on your class and the content previously covered, there are opportunities here to carry out additional activities on the UNCRC and Art 12. See the UNCRC student resource pack (available in the supporting materials folder for Unit 2) for additional information on the UNCRC, including a critique, a policy timeline, videos and links as well as activities on human rights instruments.

B. Rights to Participation: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In this lesson, learners explore participation rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child using a placemat strategy. Laura Lundy's model of participation is presented and tokenistic participation is examined. There is also a research activity based on the Global Youth Participation Index (GYPI) Report (2025).

Learning Outcomes: 1.4, 4.1, 5.4

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials needed: PowerPoint: Rights to Participation, available in the [Unit 2 folder](#).

1. Recap United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 12

Ask learners to discuss with a partner what they remember or know about the UNCRC, specifically Article 12. If necessary display the following slides again or explore some of the additional activities suggested in part A.

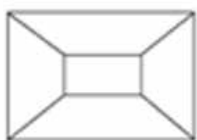
[Slide 2 Article 12 UNCRC](#)

[Slide 3 UNCRC General Principles](#)

[Slide 4 UNCRC Articles](#)

If the class has completed part A 'Understanding Youth Participation' section 4 above, they will have summarised Art 12 in their own words. Ask learners to share their summary and discuss with a partner.

2. Placemat Activity



Task-identify all the Articles of the UNCRC which relate to rights to participation.

For more on the place-mat strategy, see the [PDST handout](#).

- i. Distribute or display [slide 5](#) the [UNICEF summary of the UNCRC](#). If time allows, or as a homework task, learners can cut out the Articles and the descriptions, gluing descriptions to the back for easy reference for learning and for lessons relating to the UNCRC.
- ii. In groups of 3 or 4, learners individually identify rights to participation and note them on their respective place-mats.
- iii. After 4-5 minutes of individual work, ask groups to discuss and come to a consensus on which Articles relate to rights to participation; encourage learners to give a rationale for their choices.
- iv. The agreed Articles are written in the centre of the placemat.
- v. Learners move around to other groups noting any similarities and differences.
- vi. The identified Articles from each group can be added to the whole-class mind map or mentimeter from part A.

Further Information for Educators

Participation rights encompass Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

Remind students that the right to be listened to is one of the four general principles of the UNCRC and underpins how the Convention should be interpreted and put into practice. As a result, all UNCRC Articles connect to rights to participation.

Encourage students to explore how other rights connect to participation rights. Children and young people have a right to participate in decision-making in all matters affecting them, including for example in education (Art 28), in their access to play (Art 31) health care settings (Art 24), in family courts (Art 18) etc.

3. 'Voice is not Enough'

The aim here is to encourage learners to come to an awareness that participation rights encompass more than having a voice in decision-making. Article 12 stipulates that children and young people have a right to participate in decision-making on all matters affecting them, and that their voices are listened to and have influence.

- Provide learners with the following background information for [slide 6](#): Voice is not Enough:
Laura Lundy, Professor of international children's rights at the School of Education at the Queen's University of Belfast, developed a model of participation which conceptualises a child's right to participation, as laid down in Article 12 of the UNCRC. Her model, detailed in a 2007 publication in the British Educational Journal, was titled 'Voice is not Enough'.
- **Think-Pair-Share-Orally** (5mins)
In an oral version of think-pair-share and encouraging learners to move around the classroom, ask learners to discuss the statement and come up with ideas about what else is required for youth participation to happen?
If voice is not enough, what else is needed?
- Learners return to their seats. Offer the class an opportunity to share the ideas and responses discussed. This can be recorded as a class mind-map focused on the question, If voice is not enough, what else is needed?
- Introduce and discuss Laura Lundy's model in [slide 7](#). Add to the class mind-map.
See [Hub nan Óg](#) for a one page youth-friendly visual representation of Lundy's model; an Irish language version is also available.

Further Information for Educators

- In Lundy's model, the right to participation and Article 12 is understood to be more than voice. It is an active and collaborative practice, it involves agency, supportive adult-child relations and can be understood as an act of citizenship.
- Lundy (2007) Voice is not Enough, is available [here](#).

4. Tokenistic Participation

- Ask learners if they know what the term tokenistic means. They can use dictionaries or search online for definitions.
- Display [slide 8](#) Tokenistic Participation.
- Discuss: Have you ever experienced tokenistic forms of participation or consultation? If so, what was your experience, how did it make you feel? This could be in formal or informal contexts, including home, school and community. Can you think of any wider local, national or global examples of tokenistic youth participation?
- **Walking Debate** - see [WWGS Activities Resource](#) for instructions on a walking debate. In advance of the debate display [slides 9-12](#) to offer learners some theoretical viewpoints on tokenistic participation.

Prompts for the debate:

- Is tokenistic participation better than no participation at all?
 - Young people have no interest in participating in decision making.
 - There are few opportunities for youth participation in Ireland.
 - Young people are the future; youth is a time for preparing for adult participation and citizenship.
- **Lived Experiences of Youth Participation**
Learners can write a blog/journal entry of 'my lived experiences of youth participation'. Alternatively they could interview each other on the topic.

Remind learners that their experience can relate to participating in decision-making at home, in school, in their local or global community, online, or through official/government consultations. Ask them to consider:

Who was involved, what worked, what did not work? How did it feel? What was the outcome? Were any or all of Lundy's 4 elements of voice, space, audience and influence part of the experience? Were there any tokenistic aspects? (these questions are on [slide 13](#))

5. Research Task

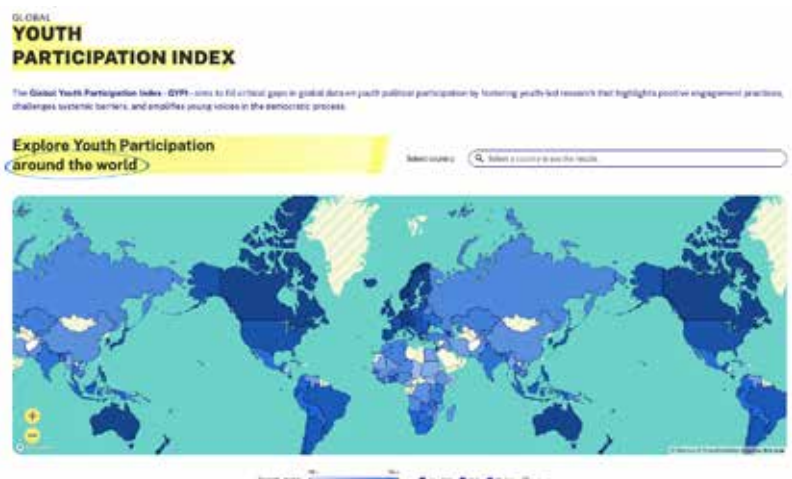
Display [slides 14 and 15](#), extracts from the Global Youth Participation Index (GYPI) Report (2025) which present some broad findings as well as some evidence from young people. Options for research activities based on the GYPI include:

- Research, summarise and present:
 - Read the [Executive Summary](#) (an accessible 2 page document).
 - Create a summary version of the main findings.
 - List the recommendations.
 - Present the findings on Ireland

- [Explore the data](#)

GYPI offers an online tool that tracks and compares youth participation in over 140 countries, measuring indicators like civic engagement, youth representation in parliaments, electoral inclusion, and more.

Use it to compile a profile on Ireland, and compare the data to another country.



6. Closure

Ask the class 'do you believe you have the power to change Irish society for the better?' Responses can be private, a show of hands, a round robin or a discussion.

Display [slide 16](#) which shows the findings of a Youth Work Ireland survey of young people aged 16–24: '68% said they believe young people have the power to change Irish society for the better.'

Additional Activities and Resources

- **Policy Context for Rights to Participation** (LOs: 2.1, 4.1, 5.5)

Explore the national policy context, see [National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028](#) and [National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making](#).

- Read the youth friendly version of the [Action Plan](#) for youth participation.
- Activities: create a time-line; compare children's rights in Ireland to a European country and/or a country in the Global South.

- **Models of Participation** (LO 1.4)

There is an opportunity to follow on from this, or combine a session on Models of Youth Participation. The final and 5th section of the video in lesson A above '[Understanding Participation](#)' details Hart's Ladder (@ 4.49mins).

There is additional information on Hart's Ladder and Lundy's model in our Models of Participation Student Resource Pack as well as more detail on Lundy's model. Learners can carry out research on one of the participation models or a Jigsaw strategy could be used.

- **Hub na nÓg** (LO 1.4)

Based on Lundy's model, the former Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (now Department of Children, Disability and Equality) along with [Hub nan Óg](#) developed a 'Children and Young People's Feedback Form' to enable young people to evaluate and reflect on meetings, consultations or activities with adults.

- Learners can conduct interviews with members of the Student Council to evaluate their participation in decision making at school. The Feedback Form can also be used as a reflection tool after any student-led event, or GCE event/activities in the school.
- [Hub nan Óg](#) have also developed an 'Everyday Spaces Checklist', designed to give guidance to adults on listening to young people and including them in decision making in everyday spaces. Learners may wish to share the Checklist with the Student Council. They may also identify actions for dissemination of the Checklist more widely within the school and the wider community.

C. Student Participation in Decision-making in Schools

In this lesson, learners consider their own experiences of participation in decision-making in school. They explore the benefits of and barriers to student participation. The lesson includes a research task based on three reports from the former Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). These are attached as a resource pack and can be explored using a World Café method. The lesson concludes with an activity which requires learners to connect the research evidence to their own lives and to the wider world.

Learning Outcomes: 1.4, 4.1

Time: 1-2 hours

Materials needed: PowerPoint: Student Participation in Decision-making in Schools and Research Reports on Student Participation in School are both available on the Politics and Society subject page on our [website](#).

1. Discussion: Student Experiences of Participation in Decision-making in School

Allow learners to have an open conversation about their lived experiences of participation in school. As an adult and as a teacher, eliminate yourself from this discussion so that learners have the opportunity to express their experiences in a student-centred environment.

The method will depend on the class's ability to facilitate a student-led discussion without any adult or teacher input. Suggested methods: paired or small group discussion, round robin, conscience alley, alternatively learners can journal their experiences.

2. Benefits of and Barriers to Student Participation in School

On an A4 page ask learners to create 2 columns, on one side they list the benefits of student participation in school, on the other side they list the barriers. This can be completed in pairs or small groups. After 5 minutes display [slides 2 and 3](#), an overview of research evidence on student participation in schools. Discuss the slides and allow learners to add to their own lists.

Further detail for educators is provided in the boxes below.

Further Information for Educators

Benefits of Student Participation: An Overview of the Research

There is a wealth of research to indicate that youth participation in decision making in school contexts:

- improves school culture
- leads to more effective teaching and learning;
- increases respect and trust in student-teacher interactions;
- increases a sense of belonging, self- confidence, feelings of empowerment, motivation, and responsible attitudes.

For more see, Allan and L'Anson, 2004; Bergmark & Kostenius, 2009; Devine 2003; Leitch & Mitchell, 2007; Nthontho, 2017; Robinson & Taylor, 2007.

Despite the well documented advantages to a democratic school ethos, as well as the current policy context emphasising children's participation rights in school at national (DCYA, 2014; 2015) and international (UNCRC, 1989) levels, research indicates that children's experience of school continues to be that of a "non-democratic institution suffused with rules and regulations" (Biesta et al. 2009 p.21).

**For the full Bibliography of sources and references, please see the Politics and Society page of our [website](#)*

Barriers to Student Participation

Youth participation in schools generally exists in the form of student councils (Forde et al., 2018). These formalised approaches mirror adult structures of participation; it has been found that these approaches do not effectively support partnerships with children (Lundy and Cook-Sather, 2016).

Relationships between adults and students in schools are often characterised by the compulsory nature of schooling, traditional adult-child relationships of control, and a lack of equality and rights between teachers and students.

Challenges exist in adult preconceptions of young people, these include:

- Adults fail to take children's rights seriously (Freeman, 2007).
- Adults regard young people as lacking the capacity and competency to participate (Tisdall, 2019).
- The notion prevails that children's rights, participation and citizenship exist only in children's future role as adult citizens. This excludes youth participation in the present.
- Narratives remain which suggest that supporting youth participation means a loss of power and control for adults.
- An emphasis on youth rights to protection often trump rights to participation.

**For the full Bibliography of sources and references, please see the Politics and Society page of our [website](#)*

3. Research Task

Aim: to explore national research on the topic of student participation in schools.

We have chosen 3 relevant reports from the former Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), aspects of these reports have been summarised and can be found with the supporting documents available in the [Politics and Society Unit 2](#) folder on our website..

Research Reports

1. So How Was School Today? Report of a Survey on how young people are taught and how they learn (DCYA, 2017).
2. Children and Young People's Experiences of Participation in decision-making at home, in schools and in their communities (DCYA, 2015).
3. Report of a Consultation with Young People on Reform of the Junior Cycle (DCYA, 2011).

World Café Activity: see the [WWGS Activities Resource](#) for more details.

- Prepare 3 Cafés (tables). Each table will need pens/markers, one of the 3 research reports, questions (on [slide 4](#)) and a response sheet to record answers and discussion.
- Display [slide 4](#) - the questions, alternatively print off a copy for each Café.
- Assign a group of learners to each Café. Depending on your class you may decide to assign roles within each group, eg facilitator, recorder, reporter.
- Explain the World Café procedure to your class:
 - Read the research case.
 - Discuss the questions and add your responses, questions or comments to the response sheet. Use words, questions, pictures, numbers, diagrams etc to represent your discussion and conclusions.
 - After 10-15 minutes, move to the next Café, regardless of how many questions have been answered. Repeat the process, read the research report and respond. Firstly respond to questions which have not been answered by the previous group (in other words, pick up where the previous group left off).
 - Build on what has already been recorded at the Café by other groups, noting what may be missing, what needs further explanation, or what questions need to be posed.
 - Repeat for the 3rd Café.
- Once groups have been to each Café, offer learners the opportunity to 'Freestyle' the Cafés, to add any remaining points to the pages.
- 'Harvest' the learning from the Cafés. This can be done by using the response pages to create posters or PowerPoint presentations on the research.
- Share the learning with other classes, through a peer-learning project or at a whole-school event/project.

4. Connecting the Learning

Aim: to connect the research evidence to learners' own lives and to the wider world.

This 'text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world' activity can be done individually, in pairs or small groups; it can be a written or oral activity. Learners provide responses under each heading below and discuss answers as a whole class.

Text-to-Text

Learners relate or connect findings from the research (text) to another text. The connecting texts could be stories, books, movies, songs, other types of media or other reports/research.

Text-to-Self

The text-to-self connection ties an aspect of the research (text) to a learners' own life, ideas, and lived experiences, for instance their past and current experiences in school.

Text-to-World

The text-to-world connection relates the research to events in the larger world: the past, present, or future.

5. Closure 3:2:1

Learners identify:

3 reasons why student participation in decision-making in school is important

2 ways to increase student participation in your school

1 way to increase student participation on a national level

Learners can respond orally or in written format, as an individual or in pairs or as a whole class.

D. Young People's Rights to Participation in Ireland

The first part of this lesson is a youth consultation on children's rights. It is based on a series of consultations with children and young people carried out by the former Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) between 2021-23. After responding to the research questions from the consultation, learners come up with recommendations for DCEDIY to promote children and young people's rights in Ireland.

In the second part of the lesson learners explore two of the official state reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Learners compare the findings of the state reports and their own lived experiences to the official CRC's recommendations to Ireland in 2023.

Learning Outcomes: 2.1, 4.1, 4.2. 6.1

Time: 1-2 hours

Materials needed: PowerPoint: Young People's Rights to Participation in Ireland, [available here](#).

Additional activities : Explore CRC recommendations relating to rights to education (LOs. 5.1 and 5.6).

Links to: section F below, Children's Rights and Climate Change, UNICEF (2023) report.

1. Youth Consultation: Gallery Walk

One aspect of the consultations on children's rights was an online survey with 46 young people aged 13 to 18 years recruited from the Comhairle na nÓg (youth councils). This resulted in the report 'What We Think', available [here](#).

Based on this DCEDIY consultation, carry out a consultation with your learners on children's rights in Ireland using a Gallery Walk method. For more on Gallery Walk see the WWGS Activities Resource available [here](#).

With this method learners actively walk around the classroom, engaging with and responding to the research questions.

- a. Print/write out these 4 research questions on large sheets of flipchart paper:

What are the best things about being a young person in Ireland?

What do you not like about being a young person in Ireland?

What is the one thing you would change about being a young person in Ireland?

How do you feel young people's rights are valued in Ireland?

- b. Display these questions around the classroom. These questions become 'exhibits' in the 'gallery' which learners visit, engage with and respond to.
- c. Learners walk around the 'gallery', engaging with the 'exhibits' (the 4 research questions). Encourage discussion among learners.
- d. Learners respond freely by adding post-its, drawings or writing directly onto the sheets of paper.
- e. Allow time for learners to observe and discuss their own and one another's responses.
- f. The responses from the official DCEDIY consultation are on [slides 2-5](#). Go through each slide in turn allowing learners time to read the findings and discuss the similarities and differences between their own responses and those from the DCEDIY consultation.

2. Youth Recommendations

Divide your class into 4 groups, provide each group with one 'exhibit' from the Gallery Walk (research question and student responses) and the corresponding question and responses from the DCEDIY youth consultation (these can be printed from [slides 2-5](#))

Based on these 2 data sources, ask groups to come up with at least 5 youth recommendations to put to DCEDIY to promote the rights of children and young people in Ireland. As a whole class, compile the group recommendations and decide on the 5 best to put to DCEDIY. A class vote may be needed, alternatively learners can debate reasons for including particular recommendations over others.

3. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 2023

The aim of this activity is for learners to explore the official State reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) with a specific focus on findings relating to Article 12 (rights to participation).

Secondly learners will compare the findings in the reports to the CRC's Concluding Observations to the Irish State. They will also consider how their own lived experiences and youth recommendations from the consultation (in part 2 above) are reflected in the CRC's Concluding Observations. By doing so learners will examine to what extent the voices of young people, in the form of the official reports and their own experiences, are reflected in the CRC's Concluding Observations.

- a. Display [slides 6 and 7](#) from the [Children's Rights Alliance](#) which present the UNCRC review process; there is additional information on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child available in the supporting materials folder for Unit 2.
- b. Explain the activity to the class:
 - explore the findings in the two State reports, the Children's Report: *Pieces of Us* and the Parallel Report: *Are We There Yet?* (see the text box below for more information and links). [Slides 8-11](#) present the findings on Article 12 copied from both reports.
 - in pairs create bullet points to summarise the findings
 - additional activity: explore rights to education Articles 28-32 (Article 29 for instance covers the aims of education, including human rights education -links to LO: 5.1, 5.6).
- c. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023) made a number of recommendations for children's rights in Ireland. The full report is available through the [UN Treaty Body Database](#) and also in the [OCO's Concluding Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\) May 2023](#) (page 20 onwards).

The recommendations relating to Article 12, Respect for the Views of the Child (para18) are presented in [slide 12](#).

The task for learners is to identify how the CRC's recommendations (concluding observations) relate to the reports studied, to their own recommendations from the youth consultation above and to their lived experiences.

Questions to consider, available in [slide 13](#)

- Do the CRC's recommendations reflect the findings from the reports explored? In what way? Or not? Provide evidence to support your argument.
- Do the CRC's recommendations relate to your lived experiences and/or the experiences of your peers? Think about the recommendations you came up with from the consultation above.
- If the CRC's recommendations are taken on board fully by the State, how might it affect youth rights to participation? How might it affect your actions as a global citizen?

State reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The Children's Report to the UN CRC: Pieces of Us

Pieces of Us is the official Children's Report compiled by the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) and is based on consultations with young people and with civil society. It is a youth-accessible report and contains findings from online surveys and from focus groups, including a section on education and a dedicated section on children's voices. Children themselves were at the core of the reporting process and members of the Youth Advisory Panel presented their recommendations to the CRC. *"Through their participation, this report provides an opportunity to hear directly from children about their experiences growing up in Ireland, as well as their own recommendations to the Committee"* (from Pieces of Us, 2023).

The report is [available here](#) from the OCO.

Parallel Report to the UN CRC: Are We There Yet?

This report is the result of an extensive consultation with our over 140 members and stakeholders working directly with children and young people in Ireland. It is a youth friendly report, divided into 9 sections which mirror the structure of the UN CRC's Final Recommendations.

The report is available through the [Children's Rights Alliance](#) website.

Additional Research and Reports

- Since 2009 the Children's Rights Alliance has produced an Annual Report Card tracking how the Government is delivering on its commitments to children in the Programme for Government. [See their website](#) for up to date reports.
- Research Evidence: [Voice, Rights, Action! Children's Knowledge about their Rights & Rights Education to Access Justice \(2002\)](#) Children's Rights Alliance.
- [Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024-2028](#) (Youth-friendly Version). The Action Plan is the second plan from the Irish Government to support children and young people's participation in decision-making.

E. Participation in Action

The first part of this lesson is based on a BBC newspaper article called '*The 3.5% rule: How a small minority can change the world*'. Learners read the article, answer questions and respond through a head-heart-hands activity. The second part of the lesson explores where and how young people can participate and take action. A Jigsaw Strategy is used to find out about four national youth organisations which promote and support youth participation and active citizenship.

Learning Outcomes: 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2

Time: 1-2 hours

Materials needed: PowerPoint: Participation in Action, [available here](#). Large pieces of paper/ flipchart paper, access to the internet.

1. "The 3.5% rule"

- **Slide 2** shows the headline from a [2019 BBC newspaper article](#). It refers to the percentage of the population required to create meaningful change by actively participating in peaceful protests. We have blackened out the percentage; discuss with the class what they expect it to be.
- **Slide 3** shows the full headline "The 3.5% rule..". Discuss this percentage with the class, were they surprised? Was anyone correct, or close? What does this mean for youth participation, global citizenship, meaningful change?
- Learners read the full BBC article which is based on research carried out by Erica Chenoweth, a political scientist at Harvard University. Learners can work individually, in pairs or as a whole class, on the following questions,
 - i. List forms of peaceful protests mentioned in the article; add others you can think of (Answers: striking, boycotting, civil disobedience, and other forms of nonviolent non-cooperation).
 - ii. Chenoweth points out some reasons why nonviolent protests 'garner such high levels of support', identify these reasons and suggest more if possible (some answers on [slide 4](#)).
 - iii. See [slide 5 and 6](#) for quotes from the article. Discuss the implications of these for current and ongoing wars, e.g. the war in Ukraine, the occupation of Gaza, the war in Sudan.
- Use a head-heart-hands whole class activity to explore learner responses to the 3.5% Rule (alternatively this can be done individually as a reflection exercise).
 - i. On 3 different posters write the statement, "*It only takes 3.5% of the population to create meaningful change*". On 1 poster draw the outline of a head, on another a heart and hands on the third poster.
 - ii. The head represents facts and knowledge, the heart represents emotional responses and hands are for actions. Learners add their responses or insights under each heading or poster.
 - iii. Discuss responses as a whole class.
 - iv. For more on this method see [Facing History & Ourselves](#).

Explore More

- Video '[Civil Resistance](#)' by Erica Chenoweth 2025 (11:28mins) from the Brainwaves Video Anthology.
- An article in [Harvard Gazette 2019](#) for a Q&A with Erica Chenoweth.
- Book - [Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict](#) by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan.

2. Research Tasks

- There are a number of influential thinkers mentioned in the newspaper article, for instance *Susan B. Anthony*, *Mahatma Gandhi*, *Martin Luther King*. Learners can conduct research on one or more of these thinkers to learn about their position/thinking on the power of peaceful protest. Learners could also connect to some Key Thinkers they have studied from the Politics and Society specification.
- There are a number of movements and protests mentioned in the article, for instance the *Extinction Rebellion*, *the Rose Revolution in Georgia*, or *the People Power Movement in the Philippines*. Learners could conduct research on one or more of these movements to identify what the objectives were, what steps were taken and what meaningful change came about.
- Explore the Dunnes Stores workers strike which boycotted the produce of the South African apartheid regime in 1984-7. The strike began when Mary Manning, a Dunnes Stores employee, refused to handle South African fruit in support of trade union policy which backed the international boycott campaign. For more information see the [Mandate Trade Union website](#) or [developmenteducation.ie](#) which has some photographs from the picket line in 1985 and this [RTE video \(5.32mins\)](#) is a 2013 interview with Mary Manning (interview begins @1.30mins) which also includes footage from the strike.

Ask learners to identify what motivated the peaceful protest by Dunnes workers, what the outcomes were, and what meaningful change occurred.

3. Youth Participation in Action - Where and How?

- Learners come up with ways they can participate or take action as young citizens; ask them to think about their own lived experiences, what they have learned or read, or what they aspire to be possible.
- See our [WWGS Teacher Handbook](#) pages 16-18 and 39 for a section dedicated to youth action in schools, in communities, engaging with government and with corporations. These pages are also available on [slides 7-10](#). Our teacher handbook contains an Action Planning Template which is a useful tool should learners wish to take action on a given issue.
- [Slides 11 and 12](#) detail 4 national organisations which promote and support youth participation and active citizenship; [Comhairle na Óg](#), [Hub na nÓg](#), [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) and [Foróige Youth Citizenship](#).

Jigsaw Activity

Divide the class into 4 groups and designate one of the 4 organisations to each group. Learners explore the websites of the youth organisations and respond to the following prompts in their Jigsaw groups:

- In what ways does the organisation support youth participation?
- Identify and describe how young people can get involved.
- What structures exist to support Youth Participation in decision-making?
- Identify and describe at least one action or initiative that the organisation has participated in at national level (eg the Youth Travel Card).
- Take note of 1 piece of information that is new or interesting and share it with a friend or family member.

If the internet is not available to the learners, this can be done as a homework activity.

Explore More on Taking Action

- GAP - [Action on Global Citizenship Teacher Toolkit](#)
- GAP / ISSN - [Why aren't we all activists video lesson](#). Lesson plans and differentiated worksheet available on page 67 [here](#).
- Comhlámh - [Engagement and Activism of Young People](#)

4. Closure

Put the question to the class: *In what ways can you participate as a young citizen?*

Remind learners that participation can be formal or informal, in-person or online, in homes, schools, communities, through political groups etc.

Options for responding:

- Jump into a circle with a response.
- Oral round robin.
- Write 1 thing on a post-it and stick it to a large sheet.
- Exit ticket.

Additional Activities

See '[Youth Rising: India's Vote, India's Future](https://developmenteducation.ie)' at developmenteducation.ie for a resource to support teachers and students to learn about the 2024 elections in India, the power of the youth vote, and democracy.

F: Young People's Rights and Climate Change

In the **first part** of this lesson learners explore the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's (CRC) 2021 'historic ruling' on children's rights and the harmful effects of climate change. Learners engage with the CRC's decision letter through a think-pair-share method.

The **second part** of the lesson is a research task. To assist the research, information on climate cases taken by young people on the protection of their rights under the UNCRC or the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is provided; research questions are also included.

The **third part** of this lesson explores General Comment 26, the CRC's 2023 explicit affirmation of children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

The **fourth part** is another research task based on a UNICEF report "Children's Rights and the Climate Crisis in Ireland", this report was submitted as one of the Children's Reports in Ireland's reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2023.

Learning Outcomes: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.4, 6.1

Time: 1-3 hours

Materials needed: PowerPoint: Young People's Rights and Climate Change, [available here](#).
Access to the internet.

1. 'Our voices can be heard and we can bring about change'

Display [slide 2](#) to your class which contains the quote above.

Discuss with the class who they think might have said these words and what type of change they might be referring to?

The words come from a young person commenting on the power of youth participation at the National Youth Assembly on Climate in 2023 (@1.21mins in video).

Watch the [full video \(3.41mins\)](#) - also available through slide 3

Video Questions:

- What is your reaction to the video?
- Does it inspire you in any way?
- In what ways do these young people contribute and participate as global citizens?
- What actions are they taking as global citizens?

2. Historic Ruling on Children's Rights and Climate Change

Provide the class with the background information on [slide 4 and 5](#) Children's Rights & Climate Change. This presents the 2021 'historic ruling' by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in relation to the harmful effects of climate change.

Present [slide 6](#), the opening section of the decision letter from the Committee on the Rights of the Child addressed to the 16 young people who filed the petition against the 5 countries (Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany and Turkey) for the infringement of their human rights. The Committee's full letter, which is written in youth-friendly and accessible language, is in the supporting materials folder for [Unit 2](#). Print off and distribute a copy of the decision to each learner. They read the letter individually and explore the questions below through a think-pair-share technique.

Think-Pair-Share

1. Come up with an emoji to describe your reaction to this letter from the CRC?
2. Summarise the CRC's letter in 5 bullet points including how the case was successful (final page).
3. Identify which rights under the UNCRC this case relates to? Consult the UNCRC if necessary.
4. How or in what way is the youth petition an act of global citizenship?

3. Research Task: Youth Climate Cases

The aim for learners is to research a recent youth climate case and to summarise the case and its outcomes. Suggested youth climate cases along with research questions are included below.

The research can be carried out as a group activity, as a case study, or as an individual project. Opportunities exist for peer-learning by presenting research findings to other classes through a Power-Point or a poster presentation.

Suggested Youth Climate Cases:

- Our [Children's Trust: Youth v Gov](#): This organisation supports young people to assert their climate rights in courts around the world. The website contains a host of youth-powered climate cases which can be used for this research activity, for example, [Lighthiser versus Trump](#), filed in May 2025 by 22 American youths asserting their rights to life, health and safety. *"This youth-led constitutional rights lawsuit challenges the Trump administration's "unleashing" fossil fuels, anti-clean energy and anti-climate science Executive Orders, which exacerbate the climate crisis and worsen the youth plaintiffs' climate and health injuries"* (from the website).
- [Youth4Climate Justice](#): 6 Portuguese Children and Young People took a case against 33 European countries in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) concerning the harmful effects of climate change. The case was heard in 2023. The website includes information on the case, the result, a CNN video discussing the 'landmark judgement', a section on 'meet the young people', the case documents, media links and more. For more see a [video from GLAN](#) (Global Legal Action Network) on the climate case, (44mins) broken into chapters; this includes background information, evidence and input from the 6 young people bringing the case, the phases of the case, Paris Agreement targets, and more. See here for a [press release](#) from the Finnish government on the result in 2024 and here for the ECHR's [official decision](#).
- Guardian Newspaper article ["The young people taking their countries to court over climate inaction" \(May 2021\)](#). This includes the Portuguese GLAN case in addition to:
 - o a complaint against the Peruvian state by Saúl Amaru Álvarez Cantoral for the alleged failure of the state to halt deforestation in the Amazon.
 - o the London based air pollution campaign [Choked Up](#).
 - o Jamie Margolin, the co-founder of the youth climate action movement [This is Zero Hour](#) and plaintiff in the controversial [Our Children's Trust lawsuit](#) against the US government on young people's right to a stable climate, clean water and clean air.
 - o Ou Hongyi organised the #FridaysforFuture protest in China, despite demonstrations being forbidden. For more see The Guardian article ["China's first climate striker warned: give it up or you can't go back to school"](#).
- [Climate Change Litigation Database](#): This site provides two databases of climate change case law. The Global database includes all cases except those in the United States. Cases in the databases are organised by type of claim and are searchable. For many cases, links are available to decisions, complaints, and other case documents.
- See our WWGS CSPE resource ["The Law and the Citizen"](#) p.55-59 for background information on how the law is being used to bring about climate action. Consult some of the associated activities to explore this topic further.

- [ECO-UNESCO's Youth Climate Justice](#) (video 4.17mins) - young people talk about climate justice.
- Generation Now: '[The Story of How Young Climate Activists Tired of Waiting for Change Took Action](#)', 3min read from Time (2021) there is also an inspiring 14min video "[Generation Now: The Fight For Climate Justice](#)", from TIME.
- See the Guardian Newspaper Article '[Lawsuits are key tool in delivering climate justice, says UN body](#)', from July 2023. Note: the cases in this article are not limited to youth action.

Research Questions

Use the prompts here to compile evidence on the cases researched:

- Where is the case based?
- Who is taking the case and against which body or country?
- Which human rights or conventions are used to support the case?
- What are the results, or the current status of the case?
- How is this an example of global citizenship in action? Of youth participation? Or how does this demonstrate global solidarity?
- Can you relate this research to any Key Thinkers you have studied?

4. General Comment 26: Children's Environmental Rights

- Display [slide 7](#) and explain that the statement was made by Philip Jaffé, member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in a [UN press release](#) in August 2023.
- Emphasise the influence of youth climate cases on the General Comment 26, in particular Sacchi et al v Argentina and 4 similar cases (introduced in [slide 4](#)).

Ask for reactions; does it surprise, what is it about? What does it tell us about the power of participation, action, citizenship?

- Display [slide 8](#) General Comment 26.

Ask the class what rights under the UNCRC relate to children's rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable world? Make a list and return to it later in the lesson.

(Answers include: Articles 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 of the UNCRC).

- Watch a youth-friendly [video animation](#) explaining General Comment 26 (4.33mins). Learners can answer questions in pairs or small groups, video and questions are available on [slide 9](#) (answers in green below).
 - o Briefly explain what General Comment 26 is?
@.41mins: it explains how children's rights are connected to the environment and climate change and what government must do to protect the rights of children today and children in the future.
 - o How were children and young people involved in creating General Comment 26?
@0.59mins: part of our role was to create ways for other children to have their say on what should be included in the document. 16, 331 children from 121 countries got involved.
 - o Identify 3 things that General Comment 26 tells us?
@1.13mins: Children have the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Children should be able to live and grow up in safe climates and non-polluted environments. Children should have access to healthy ecosystems, clean air and water, safe healthy food and decent housing. They should also be able to learn, play and be active in places safe from environmental harm.
 - o Why is the General Comment so important?
It supports young people to stand up for their rights and protect the environment
(@4.05): "by better understanding how our rights are connected to the environment and climate change we can speak up for our rights and hold the government accountable ..."
Together we can make a difference so let's stand up for our rights, protect our planet and make sure every child grows up in a happy health and safety world".

- Provide learners with a copy of the 8 page [youth-friendly version of Comment 26](#), alternatively this can be viewed digitally. This document emphasises how all rights are connected and equally important but that some rights are particularly threatened by environmental harm and climate change. It gives short descriptions of how specific UNCRC Articles are related to General Comment 26.
 - o Allow learners 5 minutes to scan this document.
 - o Ask learners to study pages 2-4 which detail how specific Articles in the UNCRC relate to the environment and climate change.
 - o Learners return to their list from the beginning of the activity and add to it or amend where necessary.
 - o Assign each learner 2-3 related Articles, they write a brief summary highlighting the relationships between that Article and General Comment 26.
 - o Learners move around the room sharing their summaries with one another.
- Discussion Activity: Concentric Circles. See WWGS Activities Resource [here](#) for more details.
 - a. Learners stand facing one another in 2 circles; an inner and outer circle.
 - b. Pose question 1: *What message does the publication of General Comment 26 give to children and young people as global citizens?*
Learners participate as an active listener and speaker by having a paired discussion. Allow 1-2 minutes.
 - c. Learners move to the right, making sure they are facing a new discussion partner. The same question is posed and allow time for new discussion.
 - d. Repeat this 2-3 times or until you notice that it has reached its natural end and no new responses are emerging.
 - e. Pose question 2 and repeat the process: *What message does General Comment 26 give to governments and policy makers?*
 - f. Question 3: *What message does General Comment 26 give to international corporations or business?*
 - g. Class reflection: how did your ideas or answers change or evolve through the discussion?

Additional Activities

1. Explore the [General Comment website](#) which calls on global citizens to ‘unite for children’s environmental rights’. It includes background information, details on youth consultations, and Our Planet, Our Rights, Our Voices: a Children’s Global Charter- “a window into some of the key messages, stories, and calls to action children shared as part of the global process of creating General Comment No.26”.
2. Create a poster or presentation on the evolution of General Comment 26, what it means, and how it can bring about meaningful change. These can be presented in class, as part of a peer learning project, at an assembly, or in a school display.
3. Work with a partner to create a presentation (oral, poster, PowerPoint) detailing the UNCRC rights which relate to General Comment 26.
4. Create a blog or article for your school newsletter on General Comment 26.
5. Explore which Sustainable Development Goals relate to General Comment 26

5. Children's Rights and the Climate Crisis in Ireland (UNICEF, 2023)

The UNICEF report [Children's Rights and the Climate Crisis in Ireland](#) was submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2023 by Climate Rights Ireland, a group of young people working with the support of UNICEF to investigate how the climate crisis interacts with children's rights in Ireland.

As a whole class, read [slide 10](#) background information on the report. Explain to the class that the report includes 5 chapters, which cover 5 Articles of the UNCRC.

Ask the class: Which Articles do they expect to be included? (Art 2, 6, 12, 22 and 24)

Display [slide 11](#) which is a summary of the main findings, copied from pg 5 of the Report.

Research Task

The aim of this activity is for learners to explore the youth-friendly report, to summarise the findings and key recommendations and to answer some research questions.

Use a Jigsaw Strategy where each group focuses on one of the Articles (one chapter) and then shares their learning with other groups. For more on Jigsaw see the Teacher Toolkit [available here](#).

Research Questions:

- Identify which qualitative and quantitative research methods were used.
- Identify 2 pieces of qualitative evidence and 2 pieces of quantitative evidence.
- Summarise the findings and recommendations for your assigned Article.
- Reflect on how these recommendations will become a reality; what opportunities and challenges do you predict?
- This report was published in 2023; have any of these recommendations been fulfilled by the government?
- How does this relate to General Comment 26?

Additional Activities: Children's Rights and the Climate Crisis in Ireland

The survey questions used to collect the quantitative data for the UNICEF report are included in the Annex (pgs 45-47). The survey questions pertain to Articles 2 and 12 and relate mostly to participation, impacts of the climate crisis and feelings of security.

Print off and distribute the survey to each learner. Tell them not to fill in their name under question 1, that the survey can remain anonymous. Explain the labelled marking system (1=not at all and 5= all the time).

- Give learners time to answer all the questions.
- Collect up the response sheets (3 pages per learner) and make 3 categories of page 1, page 2 and page 3.
- Divide the class into 3 groups and give each group the responses from one category (i.e page 1, 2 or 3).
- In group learners analyse the data. Their analysis can be led by the findings in the report, see slide 12 for headings.
- Groups record their findings as bullet points. Remind learners to add evidence to back up their point (for instance an extract of a learner response, or the % of respondents who have access to public transport).
- Groups come up with 2-3 recommendations for the government.
- Each of the 3 groups present their findings and recommendations to the class. These can be recorded to create a whole class account of the survey results along with recommendations.

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