

Equality Matters

7th Edition June 2016

British Values

The nation is soon to undertake an important vote to decide on whether to stay in or leave the European Union. This vote effects people of all ages and backgrounds across the country.

Our right to vote is one of the key British Values of living in a democratic society. Women and men have not always had the right to vote as we do now.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain was not a democracy and many politicians of that time did not support a democratic government.

In the early 1800's you had to be wealthy, male and over the age of 21 to vote. In 1860 only around 1.4 million people were eligible to vote out of a population of near 30 million. In comparison, (nearly) every person over the age of 18 now has the right to vote.

During the late 1800's and the early 1900's many acts were passed to extend voting rights but these changes still only benefitted men and were dependant on where they lived and their wealth or social status.

In 1918, at the end of the 1st World War, the Representation of the People Act gave the vote to all men over the age of 21 and all women over the age of 30. Not until 1928 were women given the same voting rights as men.

The Right to Vote

What is a Referendum?

A referendum is a vote, normally 'Yes' or 'No' to a question and the side with over half will win the vote.

The question we are being asked is

“Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”

Interested in reading more about the referendum? The BBC have written an article as an easy-to-understand guide. Follow the link below to read the article.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887>

If you are not already registered to vote then you will need to register before the 7th June 2016 otherwise you will not have a voice in the referendum.

www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

To watch debates on the Referendum follow this link to iplayer for a recent live debate on how the referendum decision could affect young people across Britain.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b07czwhx/how-should-i-vote-the-eu-debate>

Can I vote?

British, Irish and Commonwealth citizens over 18 who are resident in the UK, along with UK nationals living abroad who have been on the electoral register in the UK in the past 15 years can vote. Members of the House of Lords and Commonwealth citizens in Gibraltar will also be eligible, unlike in a general election. Citizens from EU countries - apart from Ireland, Malta and Cyprus - will not get a vote.

Joining the European Union

Britain joined the European Economic Community (now the European Union) on 1st January 1973. Over the years to date, the face of Europe and the European community has changed beyond recognition. Some of the rules set by the EU now effect our everyday lives. Britain faced a similar referendum in 1975 and this year's vote has been supported by the current Prime Minister's own Conservative MPs and the UK Independent Party (UKIP).

To learn more about the changes to the EU over the years visit the link to the EU timeline below.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3583801.stm>