

# If you're young and angry about the EU referendum, you're right to be

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett<sup>i</sup>, the Guardian, Friday 24 June 2016



“I’m so angry,” wrote one Twitter user. “A generation given everything: free education, golden pensions, social mobility, have voted to strip my generation’s future.” Another statement, from a commenter on the Financial Times website that has been widely shared, summed up the sense of furious betrayal among the young: “The younger generation has lost the right to live and work in 27 other countries. We will never know the full extent of lost opportunities, friendships, marriages and experiences we will be denied. Freedom of movement was taken away by our parents, uncles and grandparents in a parting blow to a generation that was already drowning in the debts of its predecessors.”

But worry not – Boris Johnson<sup>ii</sup> said this morning that young people can look forward to a “prosperous future” once “we take back control”. Except few of us are likely to believe his empty rhetoric.

Three-quarters of young people – a massive mandate – are predicted to have voted remain, according to a YouGov poll, while those older than us made the decision to vote in favour of an uncertain vision of a future Britain that the young emphatically did not and do not want. Thank you to those baby boomers and their parents who either voted to stay, or who, in the days before the referendum, agreed to put aside their own feelings and vote on behalf of their children and grandchildren. We appreciate you trying.

There’s no point going into my own feelings about this result; (...) But what I will say is that if you are young and you are experiencing feelings of fury and heartbreak about the result, you are justified in doing so. The political is personal; the way that the future weeks, months and years play out will have powerful, definable consequences on the way you live. This is one of those momentous turning points in our personal timelines; if you’re pissed off, you are right to be.

And to the 16-year-olds who were denied the right to participate in this referendum: there isn’t much that I can say to make you feel better, except that the majority of us tried to have your backs. (...)

It’s a lesson that I feel my own generation learned too late, the result of which has been apathy, a lack of political engagement, and the feeling that there is no point participating in a system that does not have our interests at heart. And so we do not vote as much as we should, or even bother to register, and then politicians continue to make policy without considering us. Because why should they tailor their policies to you, when they do not feel they need your vote? Depressingly, and despite having the power to swing the result, it is predicted that turnout among young people was low (...) – and for this we can only blame ourselves.

If you are young, and especially if you voted, I hope that the outcome of this referendum doesn’t put you off voting again.

Yes, as a demographic, we have lost, but at the same time we have made a powerful statement about the kind of country we want to live in. That we are to be deprived of it is a crying shame, but at least we know that we are part of a collective of people who want a better world.

Don’t let that feeling dissipate; mobilise, organise, strategise, and above all hope. Take heart in the fact that you’re more than likely part of this optimistic, open-minded gang, that there is a potential there simmering beneath the surface. By all means feel bitter, and miserable, and worried about what is going to happen next, but after that, please take heart: you are the 75%, and what you voted for was noble, and one day will be again.

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<sup>ii</sup> is a British politician, popular historian, author, and journalist. He has been Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs since July 2016. Was prominent in the LEAVE campaign.