SHOULD FIREWORKS BE QUIETER?

For many, fireworks are a familiar sound at this time of year. Both Bonfire Night and Diwali help mark the transition from autumn to winter, with loud and colourful bangs lighting up our towns and cities. But for pets, wildlife and those sensitive to noise, it can be a time of fear and anxiety. Fireworks on sale to the general public currently have a sound limit of 120dB. However, earlier this year, the Government ran a 12-week consultation on changes to firework rules, notably including proposals to reduce this limit to anywhere from 110dB to 90dB (about the volume of a lawnmower). Though no decision has been announced thus far, would young people welcome this change?

Alex
Data Coordinator



60,005 TOTAL VOTES

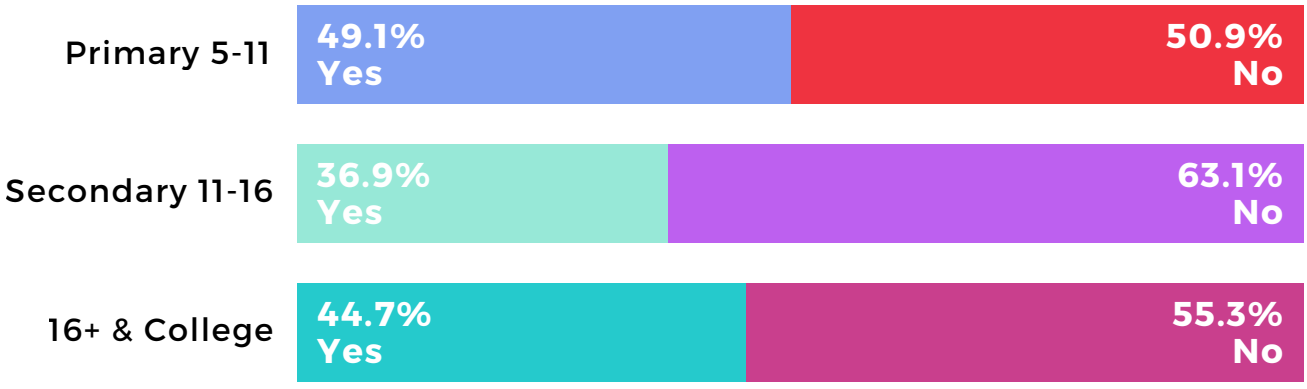
13,061 VOTES AGE 5-11

44,731 VOTES AGE 11-16

2,213 VOTES AGE 16+

The VoteTopic question discussed was:

Primary 5-11, Secondary 11-16, 16+ College: "Should fireworks be quieter?"



SHOULD FIREWORKS BE QUIETER?

Primary 5-11

Primary 'No' voters argued that the noise of fireworks was a key part of the experience and that the fun would be spoilt by quieter bangs. Fireworks are fun and pupils wanted them to be loud; some called for them to be even louder! Others were concerned that people might miss firework displays if there was no noise. For some, fireworks were important to specific holidays and helped to spread the celebration. As fireworks only really happen for a few days every year, the noise levels were justified.

Some voters focused on potential solutions that could avoid the need to make fireworks quieter. Several suggested that individuals could use ear defenders to help with the noise. Time limits on when fireworks could be let off was another potential fix. Others thought that public, organised displays should be loud but there should be stricter volume restrictions on private fireworks.

Most 'Yes' voters focused their arguments on the negative effects on animals and humans. Voters emphasised how distressing fireworks can be to both pets and wildlife. Many argued that the sound of fireworks also disturbs people who are trying to sleep. There was additional concern about the potential for loud noises to cause ear injuries. Some pupils thought that loud fireworks were bad for young children and babies, with others just finding the loudness startling or scary. There was a call to be mindful of others' needs; voters argued that some people are sensitive to noise or have specific conditions that make loud noises hard to handle.

'Yes' voters had some suggestions for alternatives, the most popular being the potential for drone and laser shows.

> *There is an exception for nights like this. People can't stop the joy of others, merely because it is too loud for them. This rule could annoy the majority.*
>
> Primary Voter

> *Yes because it would make a huge impact to people and animals who are scared of the loud noises.*
>
> Primary Voter

> *The noise is part of the experience of Bonfire night. I wouldn't want that to disappear, although I understand why many people would want them to be a little bit quieter.*
>
> Primary Voter

> *I don't want fireworks to be louder because when I am sleeping it will hurt my ears and wake you up.*
>
> Primary Voter

SHOULD FIREWORKS BE QUIETER?

Secondary, 16+ & College

'Yes' voters were concerned about the effects on animals with many arguing that firework noise scares them. It was important for these voters that care for animals be taken seriously, as they do not understand the reasons for the bangs like humans do. Others argued that quieter fireworks are better for neurodivergent people and that those with sensory needs can find loud fireworks challenging. The potential disruption to sleep was also commonly shared as a reason for making fireworks quieter.

When, where and who should be allowed to use fireworks was a recurring theme. Some complained that people use fireworks late at night, or that they were used for weeks after a particular holiday had already passed. These voters wanted to see stricter controls around the times they were used, but didn't have particular issues with the noise.

Many made a distinction between public firework displays and home use. They wanted limits to private use, either in terms of volume or quantities of fireworks allowed, but thought that public displays should stay as they are with no sound limit.

'No' voters generally argued that the noise was a key part of the experience and that making fireworks quieter would be less celebratory. As with Primary, some even called for fireworks to be made even louder. Many argued that people who don't like the noise can wear ear protection and that it wouldn't be fair to stop it just because some people don't like it. A common argument was that the noise is limited to a few times every year for specific celebrations.

> *Fireworks whilst visually impressive, terrify many domestic pets and local wildlife, causing unnecessary panic and distress.*
>
> Secondary Voter

> *No, it is meant to be loud, people go far and to bigger displays for the noise. It would ruin the experience for people who like fireworks.*
>
> Secondary Voter

> *It depends. Public shouldn't have access unless quiet. They can be loud at events if approved.*
>
> 16+ & College Voter

> *It only happens once a year and if fireworks were smaller it would not be as big celebration*
>
> Secondary Voter

At all ages, boys were more likely to vote 'No' than girls. The divide was most pronounced amongst Secondary voters, with 74.3% of boys voting 'No' compared to 51.1% of their female peers.