

Activity 2: Two opposing views about inequality

Learning objectives

- Evaluate two opposing views about inequality.

Resources

- Video: [Even It Up](#) (3min)
- Activity Sheet: Two opposing views about inequality (one per young person)
- Sheet of A3 or flip-chart paper for each group of 4 or 5 young people
- Marker pens

Time required: 40–50 mins

The views on the activity sheet have been expressed in a simple and straightforward way. The debate is much more complicated. For example, few people would argue that any society should be entirely equal.

Introduction: what is inequality? (5 mins)

- Ask the class what inequality is. Can they give some examples of inequality? What types of inequality are there?

Inequality is harmful and we can reduce it (30-40 mins)

- Show the class the [Even It Up](#) video.
- Give each young person a copy of the activity sheet and read it through with the class. You could show the class the photos in Activity 1 if they haven't done that activity. You could also tell them to do a brief internet search if you feel they need further evidence. Alternatively, they could do a search as part of the next step in this activity.
- Divide the class into groups of four or five young people and give each group a piece of A3 or flip-chart paper and a marker pen. Each group should write at the top of the sheet the issue to be debated: "**Inequality is harmful and we can reduce it.**" They should then draw a vertical line down the middle of the sheet, leaving a space at the bottom for their conclusions.
- Tell each group to think of as many **arguments for the issue** and **arguments against the issue** as they can think of. Arguments for the issue should be listed on the left-hand side of the sheet of paper and arguments against the issue should be listed on the right. They should then discuss the issue, using the arguments listed.
- After discussing the issue, each group should try and agree on some conclusions and should summarise these at the bottom of the sheet of paper.

Plenary (5 mins)

- Bring the class back together and ask the groups to feed their conclusions and their reasons for these back to the class.

Terms of use

Copyright © Oxfam GB

You may use photographs and associated information in this resource for educational purposes at your educational institution. With each use, you must credit the photographer named for that image and Oxfam. You may not use images and associated information for commercial purposes or outside your educational institution. All information associated with these images relates to the date and time the project work took place.

Activity Sheet

Two opposing views about inequality

Inequality is natural and is good

Inequality is natural. Some people are brighter or more gifted than others. They deserve higher rewards because they have special talents or are prepared to take risks. This is natural. The best people are motivated by being rewarded more. Therefore, inequality makes society work better.

The promise of large rewards encourages people and businesses to invest, innovate and take risks. This speeds up economic growth and is eventually good for everyone as wealth “trickles down” to the poor. People should be allowed to earn as much as their talents permit and have choice about how to spend their incomes as they wish without paying too much tax.

The best thing to do is not to interfere too much in how much people are rewarded. If there are problems they usually sort themselves out over time. In economics, this is called the “invisible hand”.

Inequality is not natural and is harmful

There is nothing natural about poverty. People are rewarded because of the decisions made by powerful people in society. For example, there is no natural reason why a footballer should earn more than a school dinner lady.

Rising inequality has a harmful impact on a country’s overall wealth and well-being. When people are left behind in poverty they have worse health, are less educated, become less productive and have less money to spend. This slows down economic growth and is harmful for most people. Making sure all people and businesses pay their fair share in tax is one way of giving the government enough money to tackle the effects of poverty.

Inequality is shaped by the decisions of powerful people. If we decide we want to, we can take action to reduce inequality.