



WORLD'S  
LARGEST  
LESSON

## The World Is Not Equal. Is That Fair?

### Subject

Citizenship, Social Sciences

### Learning Outcome:

- To know there are different types of inequality
- To present a concise but persuasive argument based on research
- To explore the impact inequality can have on the wider society and economy

### Preparation:

- Read appendix 1.
- Gather together enough biscuits/sweets/stickers/buttons/stones or anything small in large numbers for the introductory activity.
- Read appendix 2 and decide if you want to use these ideas to add to the first activity.
- Display speech bubbles in appendix 3.
- Print out information for students in Appendix 4.

Total Time:

60  
mins

Age Range:

11-14  
year olds



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World's Largest Lesson is a collaborative education project to support the announcement of the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development. The project is living proof of the importance of Global Goal 17 "Partnerships for the Goals" and would not have been possible without the help of all of our partners working with us and with each other.

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Lesson plans created in collaboration with Think Global [www.think-global.org.uk](http://www.think-global.org.uk). Promoting learning for a just and sustainable world.



## Learning Activity

10  
mins

As students enter the room distribute a number of sweets/biscuits/stickers unevenly. Some students should have a lot, some students have none. Keep a majority of the sweets/biscuits/stickers for yourself.

When all the students are seated ask the question: "Is this fair?" Encourage students to discuss this as a class. Ask the students to discuss how they feel about the amount of sweets/biscuits/stickers they have.

Explain to the students that you have the most because you are the oldest.

Ask students if they think this is fair and should you redistribute the sweets/biscuits stickers on this basis?

Introduce the idea of social inequality as the subject of this lesson. This definition might be useful "a situation in which people are not equal because some groups have more opportunities, power, money, etc than others" (source: MacMillan dictionary)

## Differentiation and Alternatives

In order to encourage further discussion about inequality, consider extending the activity. Appendix 2 details one person's experience of running an extended lesson of this type using sweets to introduce the idea of inequality to students. It is written up in detail here:

<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/jan/28/teach-students-equality-smarties>

## Learning Activity

10  
mins

Present students with the true or false statements about the various forms of inequality from appendix 3. Ask students to work individually to decide whether each statement is true or false.

Now present students with the actual answers. Follow this with a discussion about the statements.

- Were there any statements that surprised students?
- Were there any statements about which they thought the situation should be changed?
- What do all of the statements have in common?

Use the last question to lead to an introduction of how inequality can have many different forms.

## Learning Activity

5  
mins

Display the speech bubbles (appendix 3) from the six activists stuck around the room. Ask students to read the statements and stand next to the one they most identify or agree with.

Ask some students to explain their choices.

## Learning Activity

15  
mins

Split students into small groups to prepare a presentation about an area of inequality (you could assign people depending on the activist they stood next to in the previous activity, but this requires an even spread of students). Students can use the information in appendix 4, and other sources of information they have access to – newspapers, the internet, etc.

Each presentation should last one minute and should explain why the inequality is a serious issue.

## Differentiation and Alternatives

Students could turn the factsheets in appendix 4 into a short day-in-the-life of a person who experiences the inequality. They should describe what it might be like for that person, the difficulties the person might face, daily struggles, problems they foresee in their future, etc.

This activity should be handled sensitively, to avoid stereotyping groups of people.

## Learning Activity

20  
mins

After listening to the presentations ask students to vote for the inequality they feel requires the most action and would like to think about more about as a class.

Students cannot vote for the inequality they presented on.

In their small groups, ask students to create an 'impact chain' for the inequality the class voted for. Students should write down all of the impacts they can think of that will come about as a result of the inequality.

Guide students by asking them to think about impacts on individuals, family, local community, the whole country and globally. They could also think about impacts economically, socially, politically and environmentally.

An example for unequal access to green spaces might be –

- People are less healthy as they are surrounded by buildings and vehicles.
- People are less healthy as they have less space to exercise.
- Children do not learn about plants, wildlife and the seasons.
- Children do not have free and safe places to play.
- Pavements are dirty as people do not have a place to walk their dogs.
- More money spent on healthcare as people are less healthy and get sick more.
- Families who live in smaller homes become more stressed and unhappy as they do not have a space to relax.
- More flooding as rain enters the drainage system and flows to rivers more quickly, without grass and trees to slow it down.

## Learning Activity

5  
mins

Ask students to complete the sentence “To me, inequality means.....”

You could structure this by limiting the number of words they use or by insisting they include a real world example.

## Extension or Homework Activity

Ask students to identify something that represents inequality in their local area, even something they see on their journey home from school. They could either take a photo or write a short description of it and describe the impact of that inequality.

For example:

- Bushes and hedges growing over the pavement which would hamper the progress of the visually impaired
- Steps up to a public building or space which would hamper the progress of those in wheelchairs, with pushchairs, or people who have difficulty walking
- Shops or green spaces that are only accessible by car, meaning those who rely on public transport cannot access them (a majority of these are often elderly or unemployed)

### Take Action for the Global Goals

As an educator you have the power to channel students' positive energies and help them believe that they are not helpless, that change is possible, and that they can drive it.

The Design for Change “I Can” School Challenge invites children to take action, make change for themselves and share it with children across the world.

Visit [www.dfcworld.com](http://www.dfcworld.com) to get started.

To download a Design for Change lesson pack or a simple advice pack for young people to take action themselves visit [www.globalgoals.org/worldslargestlesson](http://www.globalgoals.org/worldslargestlesson)



## Important!

Before teaching this lesson you should check whether any of your students are affected by any of these inequalities. These are sensitive topics and in order to discuss them openly and happily you need to make sure the classroom is a 'safe' environment for all of your students.

This lesson is an introduction to some of the many types of inequality that exist in the world. It can be easy to fall back on stereotypes when describing these situations. Try to actively deconstruct any stereotypes as this will "steer" students away from falling back on them. Remind them that there is a lot of complexity to why inequality exists and what it is like for people to live with.

As you teach this lesson, and especially as you cover the true and false learning activity, make sure you explain that these inequalities exist because systems are discriminatory against the poor, minority groups, people with disabilities, women, the elderly and other groups in societies.

Ensure that students do not attribute inequality to inferiority or stereotypes.

Make sure that when you describe or discuss these discriminatory systems you make it clear that there are many positive facts and achievements amongst people who are part of historically marginalised groups.

We aim that all students internalize their strengths and reject all inequalities as unjust and unfair.

# How I teach students about equality: only Smarties have the answer

*Agnes Arnold-Forster shares her best lesson, engaging young pupils in debates about injustice and equality with the help of chocolate treats.*

Anyone with experience of working or living with children will know their ability to detect injustice is highly developed – “but it’s not fair” is a regular refrain. However, we rarely ask them to channel this natural flair for fairness into productive and critical discussion about the nature of equality, what constitutes fair treatment, and who gets to define such standards.

I recently taught four small groups of year 5 and 6 pupils from two schools in Romford as part of the [Brilliant Club](#), a non-profit organisation that trains and places PhD students in non-selective state schools and sixth-form colleges to deliver university-style tutorials to small groups of outstanding pupils. The aim is to widen access to top universities, increase aspiration and address educational disadvantages. As a PhD student, I had some experience of teaching 20-year-olds – who pose their own set of unique challenges – but none at all of attempting to engage nine- and 10-year-olds.

This lesson is based on a key stage 2 programme that explores multiple ways of thinking about fairness, equality and social justice. It is designed to be taught in the form of university-style seminars so we began by establishing some guidelines for how we would interact: respectful silence when someone else is speaking, disagreeing in a civil manner, and in this particular context I suggested that we did not need to put hands up to share our thoughts. That final privilege could easily be revoked, however, as students did not abide by the other rules.

I started the lesson by sharing out some sweets – best to be dictatorial about the type you use otherwise you open yourself up to a whole world of criticism. I chose Smarties. Some kids were given 15, others only one. I kept the majority for myself. Was this fair? They yelled in horror. I asked them to note down their feelings about their allotted quantity. Some were “upset”, “sad,” and “angry”. Others were “pleased” and “happy.” A pious few were “disappointed” that the distribution was unfair despite having done well themselves.

I asked how we might redistribute for it to be fair. They all agreed we should each get an equal number. So far, so predictable: fairness means equality. This simple format can also be used to test other ways of interpreting fair treatment. In what situations might inequality be a better approximation for fairness?

I divided the group down the middle – one side were “children” and the other side “adults”. Who ought to get a greater share of the Smartie supply? Suggestions were varied, but most agreed that the children should get more because they wanted them more. Adults were interested in other things, like work and computers and their child’s progress in school. Fairness might actually mean equal happiness, not equal distribution.

So I gave the “adults” money and set the high price of one Smartie for a penny. Cue outrage. If the children had no money, how could they be expected to pay?

We moved on to some more challenging scenarios. I made them all adults, but still only half had the money needed to purchase sweets. Was this fair? For the first time I was met with dissenting opinions. Some suggested that those with money might have worked for it, and were therefore more deserving. Others claimed that I had given out the money arbitrarily, and that we did not know whether they had worked hard, or just been handed an unfair advantage.

Some suggested that the Smarties should still be shared out equally, irrespective of spending power. Or perhaps there should be a minimum that everyone receives, with the lucky few being able to supplement his or her supply by buying extra?

These various Smartie-scenarios have some unobvious parallels to real-life issues, and it took little provocation for students to make the links. We talked about childhood – their roles and responsibilities in society compared to that of their parents’. We discussed sacrificing your own happiness for the sake of group harmony and debated the value of work – whether it deserves reward. We talked about people’s differing needs and wants, and about poverty. We also debated whether fairness was the most important aspect of society. Did making things fair sometimes compromise individual freedoms? Could we apply our small-group discussions to the wider world?

The point of this lesson is not to provide answers, but to provoke debate. This worked well with my students – they were voluble and enthusiastic. While sometimes discussion descended into slight chaos (no doubt energised by proximity to sugar) as volume increased and the not-talking-over-each-other rule was forgotten, this passion was productive and they were able to make extraordinarily sophisticated interpretations. Nonetheless, this lesson might be better suited to small groups rather than whole classrooms.

What is particularly interesting about this lesson is that it would probably follow a dramatically different course dependent on the school and the pupils in your class. Young students aren’t unsocialised beings: they are informed by their particular social and cultural contexts – most obviously that of their parents. All of this came through in our conversations. Irrespective of circumstance, however, this lesson allowed students to talk about and question ideas and beliefs that they probably had not previously considered. They extrapolated from their own feelings of individual injustice an understanding about society as a whole. The lesson is just one way for them to have a go at constructing their own value systems and think about how that might conflict with what society imposes.

## True or False?

1. The 85 richest people in the world have as much wealth as the poorest half of all humanity, 3.5 billion people.
2. In the USA, the average worth of white households in 2009 was \$113,149 compared to African American households at \$5,677 and Hispanic households at \$6,325.
3. 80% of people with disabilities live in less developed countries.
4. In most developed countries the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is at least twice that for those who have no disability.
5. In Latin America 80-90% of persons with disabilities are unemployed or outside the work force. Most of those who have jobs receive little or no pay.
6. By 2040, it is estimated that over 25% of Europeans are expected to be at least 65 years old.
7. In the UK the unemployment rate for people aged 16-24 is 14.4%. The overall unemployment rate is 5.7%.
8. Globally, women occupy less than a 25% of all seats in parliament.
9. In the UK twice as many women as men rely on state benefits.
10. In the UK two thirds of pensioners living in poverty are women.
11. In Europe, easy access to green spaces levels improves the health of poorer people by as much as 40%.
12. In the USA, people living close to public transport can access up to three times as many jobs.



## True or False?

*The 85 richest people in the world have as much wealth as the poorest half of all humanity, 3.5 billion people.*

**True.** From a report by Oxfam UK in 2014. You can read more from their report here:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/jan/20/oxfam-85-richest-people-half-of-the-world>

*In the USA, the average worth of white households in 2009 was \$113,149 compared to African American households at \$5,677 and Hispanic households at \$6,325.*

**True.** <http://inequality.org/99to1/facts-figures/>

*Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in less developed countries.*

**True.** UN Development Program. <http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/>

*In most developed countries the official unemployment rate for persons with disabilities of working age is at least twice that for those who have no disability.*

**True.** Business Disability Forum. <http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk>

*In Latin America about 80-90% of persons with disabilities are unemployed or outside the work force. Most of those who have jobs receive little or no monetary remuneration.*

**True.** World Bank, 'Disability and inclusive development: Latin America and the Caribbean', 2004.

*By 2040, it is estimated that over 25% of Europeans are expected to be at least 65.*

**True.** US Census Bureau, 2008. <http://www.efa.org.uk/pages/older-people-global-perspective-.html>

*In the UK the unemployment rate for people aged 16-24 is 14.4%. The overall unemployment rate now stands at 5.7% of the total working population.*

**True.** Office for National Statistics, 2015.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/feb/22/youth-unemployment-jobless-figure>

*Globally, women still occupy less than 25% of all seats in parliament.*

**True.** Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/datablog/2015/mar/08/international-womens-day-number-of-female-lawmakers-doubles-in-20-years>

*In the UK twice as many women as men rely on state benefits.*

**True.** Mordaunt et al, 'One in Four', 2003.

*In the UK two thirds of pensioners living in poverty are women.*

**True.** Mordaunt et al, 'One in Four', 2003.

*In Europe, easy access to green spaces levels off inequalities in health between the rich and poor by as much as 40%, when compared with those with poorer access to green spaces.*

**True.** Centre for Research on Environment, Society and Health, 2015.

<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/article/TMG11551673/How-green-spaces-stop-the-wealth-gap-becoming-the-health-gap.html>

*In the USA, people living close to public transport can access up to three times as many jobs per square mile.*

**True.** American Public Transport Association, 2013.

<http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/NewRealEstateMantra.pdf>

I believe that equality for men and women is important because women make up half of all people but they are often paid less than men, less represented in governments and receive less education than men. Barriers to women's success need to be removed.

Lorenzo, Equality Campaigner

I believe that equality for people of all backgrounds and ethnicities is important because all people should have the same opportunities in life and know that they will be treated fairly and with respect regardless of where they come from, the colour of their skin or what they believe.

Hetty, Equality Campaigner

I believe that equality for people regardless of whether they have a disability or not is important because everyone should be able to go to school and to work and to move freely around their local environment. All people can contribute to our society.

Chuck, Equality Campaigner

I believe that equality for people of all ages is important because people of all ages can contribute to our society and economy. Young and old have skills that we need. We need to provide opportunities for all people and make sure no one is excluded.

Sanjay, Equality Campaigner

I believe that equal access to education for all people regardless of who they are or where they live is important because everyone deserves the opportunity to learn and improve their lives, and it will benefit us all if everyone has basic skills and can contribute to our society and economy.

Isabella, Equality Campaigner

I believe that equal access to parks and green spaces is important because we all need places to relax, to exercise and to enjoy ourselves. These spaces shouldn't be restricted to the wealthy. Everyone benefits from a healthier and happier society. Bonus, green spaces help the environment too!

Mai, Equality Campaigner

I believe that all human beings are all born free and equal in dignity and rights. Everyone is entitled to all rights, without discrimination of any kind. This is what it says in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights laws. If we all respect each other's human rights then the world will be a much fairer place."

Marie, Equality Campaigner

# Gender Equality Fact Sheet

## Education

All children have the right to quality education, without any form of discrimination. However, in reality girls do not have equal access to education gender gaps in access to education have narrowed, but disparities remain among regions in all levels of education, particularly for the most excluded and marginalized. There has been major progress across all developing regions in primary school attendance. However, girls continue to face barriers to schooling, particularly in Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia. Although more girls are now in school in sub-Saharan Africa, only 93 girls are enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys.

Access to secondary and university-level education remains highly unequal. Substantial gains have been made in Western and Southern Asia, though girls continue to be at a disadvantage in those regions. Disparities are greatest at the university level. In Southern Asia, only 77 girls per 100 boys are enrolled in tertiary education. The situation is most extreme in sub-Saharan Africa, where the gender gap in enrolment has actually widened from 66 girls per 100 boys in 2000 to 61 girls per 100 boys enrolled in 2011.

## Jobs

Women's share of paid employment outside the agricultural sector has increased slowly from 35 to 40% between 1990 and 2010, though it remains under 20% in Western Asia, Northern Africa and Southern Asia.

Women still enter the labour market on an unequal basis to men, even after accounting for educational background and skills. They are often relegated to vulnerable forms of employment, with little or no financial security or social benefits, particularly in Western Asia and Northern Africa, where paid opportunities for women are limited.

Globally, women occupy only 25% of senior management positions.

Source: United Nations

[http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Goal\\_3\\_fs.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Goal_3_fs.pdf)

# Age Equality Fact Sheet

Ageism is discrimination or unfair treatment based on a person's age. It can impact on someone's confidence, job prospects, financial situation and quality of life.

It can also include the way that older people are represented in the media, which can have a wider impact on the public's attitudes.

Older people may experience...

- Losing a job because of their age.
- Being refused interest-free credit, a new credit card, car insurance or travel insurance because of their age.
- Receiving a lower quality of service in a shop or restaurant because of the organisation's attitude to older people.
- Not being eligible for financial help due to age limits.
- Being refused a referral from a doctor to a consultant because you are 'too old.'
- Being refused membership to a club or trade association because of your age.

All of these situations are examples of ageism. You are protected against some of these situations by law, but not all of them.

Source: Age UK

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/work-and-learning/discrimination-and-rights/what-is-ageism/>



# Ability Equality Fact Sheet

There are an estimated one billion disabled people worldwide, 80% of whom live in developing countries. International human rights laws make it clear that all people have the same human rights, regardless of ability or disability. However disabled people are commonly the poorest of the poor in society, experiencing social exclusion and discrimination at all levels.

People with disabilities represent 15% of the world's population.

## In education

Disabled children and young people are some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in society worldwide. They are often excluded from participation in social life and highly vulnerable to neglect and abuse. Disabled girl children are further marginalised within their families and communities and can face a double discrimination due to traditional gendered roles and responsibilities.

## In work

Like all of us, people with disabilities need employment to earn a living, contribute to supporting their families and improve their self-esteem. Yet less than 20% of disabled people are currently employed.

## In society

Inclusive education and inclusion through work are not enough by themselves to fully integrate people with disabilities into their communities. Access to information, leisure, buildings, and infrastructures are also important.

People with disabilities should be able to enter and move through their home, and also in public spaces and public buildings (libraries, polling stations, schools, sports ground, health centres, etc). An accessible environment is also beneficial to people with reduced mobility such as children and elderly people.

Source: Handicap International  
[http://www.handicap-international.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do](http://www.handicap-international.org.uk/what_we_do)

# Race and Ethnicity Equality Fact Sheet

International human rights laws make it clear that all people have the same human rights, regardless of their ethnic or racial identity. However, ethnic inequality – the disadvantages felt by racial minority groups – persists across the globe.

## Less developed countries

Across the world there is a link between ethnicity and occupation, with certain jobs not only viewed as low status, but also lower paid and with fewer rewards. The Indian caste system is an example. While the caste system has clearly changed over the past few decades – with the practice of extreme segregation associated with untouchability banned in 1950 – Dalits are still much more likely to clean toilets than other groups and very unlikely to cook for an upper caste Hindu.

In India, while poverty in general is declining, poverty rates are generally higher for certain groups, namely Adivasis (or 'tribal' people, 45% of whom live in poverty in rural areas and 27% in urban areas), Dalits (former untouchables, 34% of whom live in rural poverty and 22% in urban poverty) and Muslims (27% rural, 23% urban). The poverty rates among upper caste Hindus for 2011/12 were just 16% in rural areas and 8% in urban areas.

## More developed countries

The economic and political problems caused by ethnic inequality are also apparent in other countries. In most European countries, new migrants often work in insecure or even exploitative conditions, and in low-paid jobs that the native-born population may deem too lowly to perform.

We do know that in the UK there is a 12% employment gap between white British and ethnic minority people. This amounts to around 500,000 "missing" workers in the UK labour market. Figures from the Department for Work and Pensions show a jobless rate of 45% in 2013 for young black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers, with a figure of 19% for white people. Other European countries are experiencing similar challenges, whether in terms of low wages and discrimination towards new migrants, or the continuing effects of this discrimination on second and now even third-generation European-born ethnic minorities.

Source: Guardian website

<http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/jan/20/ethnic-inequality-widespread-global-economy>

# Equal Access to Green Spaces Fact Sheet

People exposed to poor quality environments are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes than people who enjoy good quality environments.

There are lower rates of mortality across all groups with greater exposure to green space.

More generally, open space provides a platform for community activities, social interaction, physical activity and recreation, as well as reducing social isolation, improving community cohesion and positively affecting the wider determinants of health. For example, there is evidence of an association between social capital – such as volunteering, community trust and local safety – and health, including protective factors against dementia and cognitive decline in over-65s linked to social participation and community empowerment.

Evidence on the health benefits associated with use of green spaces is wide-ranging including positive associations with general health, health benefits associated with higher levels of physical activity, improved mental health and wellbeing as well as positive physiological effects of better quality environments.

Green space helps contribute to a healthier living environment overall, which is likely to have a positive impact on health. Research indicates that green space can improve the environmental quality of an area with consequential health benefits: improved air and water quality, and noise absorption are some of the environmental benefits that green spaces can provide. Additionally, green spaces can improve absorption of excessive rainwater, as vegetation intercepts rainfall leading to more evapotranspiration, reducing surface run-off and thereby the likelihood of flooding and sewage overflow, while protecting biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems.

Source: UCL Institute of Health Equity

<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/improving-access-to-green-spaces>