

12th Grade Voting Inquiry

Am I Going to Vote?



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Supporting Questions

1. How has the youth voter changed over time?
2. What are the reasons some youth choose to vote?
3. What are the reasons some youth choose not to vote?



12th Grade Voting Inquiry

Am I Going to Vote?	
New York State Social Studies Framework Key Idea & Practices	<p>12.G3 RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP: Active, engaged, and informed citizens are critical to the success of the United States' representative democracy. United States citizens have certain rights, responsibilities, and duties, the fulfillment of which help to maintain the healthy functioning of national, state, and local communities.</p> <p>✔ Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence ✔ Civic Participation</p>
Staging the Compelling Questions	<p>UNDERSTAND Investigate the registration process for voting.</p> <p>ASSESS Discuss whether or not students in class would or could register to vote.</p>

Supporting Question 1
How has the youth voter changed over time?
Formative Performance Task
List short-term and long-term trends in the youth voting record.
Featured Sources
<p>Source A: Census demographic data 1964–2012</p> <p>Source B: “Youth Voters Supported Obama Less, But May Have Mattered More”</p>

Supporting Question 2
What are the reasons some youth choose to vote?
Formative Performance Task
Develop a claim supported by evidence that answers the supporting question.
Featured Sources
<p>Source A: “The Fight for the Right to Vote in the United States”</p> <p>Source B: “I Make Government Work”</p> <p>Source C: “Youth Voting Quick Facts”</p>

Supporting Question 3
What are the reasons some youth choose not to vote?
Formative Performance Task
Develop a claim supported by evidence that answers the supporting question.
Featured Sources
<p>Source A: “Why Don't Youth Vote: Young People Respond”</p> <p>Source B: “Why Young People Don't Vote”</p> <p>Source C: “Youth Vote”</p>

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question “Am I going to vote?” using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources while acknowledging competing perspectives.
	EXTENSION Participate in a class discussion on their decisions to register or not register to vote by examining whether or not they are likely to vote in the next presidential election.
	ACT Register to vote or decide not to register to vote.

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of youth voting practices. By investigating the compelling question of whether or not they will vote, students consider the ways in which the voting habits of youth (citizens who are 18–29 years old) provide a unique opportunity to reflect on their own voting preferences. In investigating the issues behind youth voting, students evaluate their interests to determine whether or not they will vote in the next election.

In addition to the Key Idea listed earlier, this inquiry highlights the following Conceptual Understanding:

- (12.G3b) The right to vote, a cornerstone of democracy, is the most direct way for citizens to participate in the government. A citizen must register to vote, and may register as a party member or select the status of independent.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take three to six 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries in order to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Am I going to vote?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument with evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives.

Staging the Compelling Question

The inquiry opens with students completing two Taking Informed Action tasks as an anchor for considering whether they will vote in an upcoming election. As a starting point, students *understand* that in order to vote they must first register. In the state of New York, citizens can register to vote as long as they turn 18 before the end of the calendar year. Students then *assess* whether or not they would or could register to vote. Teachers could initiate a class discussion on registering to vote and keep track of why students think it is important or not important to register. Teachers might also take a moment to talk about those students who would like to register but who are unable to do so (e.g., those who are not United States citizens).



Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“How has the youth voter changed over time?”—helps students establish a foundational understanding of how youth voting habits have changed throughout United States history. The formative performance task calls on students to identify trends in youth voting using census data accompanied by data from the Pew Research Center. Featured Source A is comprised of four graphs from the United States Census Bureau that portray the voting habits of different age groups in elections from 1964 to 2012. Featured Source B is a collection of graphs from the Pew Research Center that portray the physical and political makeup of the youth vote.

Supporting Question 2

For the second supporting question—“What are the reasons some youth choose to vote?”—students build on their knowledge of the youth vote by analyzing documents that show why young people vote in elections. The formative performance task calls on students to develop an evidence-backed claim that answers the supporting question. There are three featured sources that help students make a claim. The first, a video from TED Ed that presents a brief history of suffrage in the United States, helps students to see that voting is a right—and one that has not always been granted. The second featured source is a recording from the This I Believe organization in which Savannah Lengsfelder discusses why she believes in government. This document helps students see that some people take part in the political process because they believe it can make a difference. The third featured source is a fact sheet on youth voting from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). This document is meant to help students understand trends in youth voting, explain why youth voting matters, and discuss what factors influence youth voting.

Supporting Question 3

To answer the third supporting question—“What are the reasons some youth choose not to vote?”—students build on their knowledge of the youth vote by analyzing documents that show why young people do not vote in elections. The formative performance task calls on students to develop an evidence-backed claim that answers the supporting question. Again, three sources help students make a claim. The first is an article from *Southern Changes* featuring students discussing their reasons for not voting. The interviews from the article talk about barriers to youth voting such as apathy and lack of knowledge. The second source is an *Economist* article that exposes students to the ideas that youth do not vote because they do not feel like stakeholders in the political process and are cynical about the politicians running for office. The last source is a collection of two short videos from C-SPAN’s Classroom Deliberation series that examine low youth-voting turnout. The two videos highlight the idea that youth voter turnout is low based on qualitative and quantitative data from Harvard’s Institute of Politics survey.



Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the demographics of the youth voter (18–29 years old) as well as reasons why young people do and do not vote. Students should be able to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question “Am I going to vote?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments likely will vary, but could include any of the following:

- Although the youth vote has fluctuated over the last 50 years, I will vote because voting is a right for which people have fought and, even though not all issues affect me as a young voter, they will have an impact on my family.
- I will not vote because, even though my vote may count in helping win an election for one person, I believe that the partisan politics of this country will not allow for any great change.
- I will vote because I believe my vote will count and that, even though there is a partisan atmosphere in Washington, things can still get done.
- I will not vote right now because the political issues do not really affect me as a young person, even though I acknowledge that it is a right for which people have fought to obtain.
- I am unable to vote because I am not a citizen, but I want to vote because I believe I have a right to express how I feel about issues that I care about, such as equal rights.

Students could extend their arguments by participating in a class discussion on their decisions to register or not register from the Staging the Inquiry activity. Teachers could initiate a discussion by prompting students with questions such as, “If you did not register to vote at the beginning of this unit, would you after going through the inquiry?” and, “If you have decided to register, will you vote in any upcoming elections?” Teachers could also choose to discuss the barriers to youth voting (e.g., citizenship, registration) and encourage students to discuss how these factors might affect their decision to register or vote. The extension reflection activity allows for students to assess their original actions after going through the inquiry in order to become better informed about voting. Of course, students should be able to keep their voting decisions private, and teachers should honor students’ personal decision about what and how much information to share.

Students have the opportunity to *act* by deciding whether or not to register to vote. If they would like to vote and meet voting requirements, teachers could have them fill out and mail in the New York registration form. Those choosing not to register or who are unable to do so could write an opinion paragraph about their decision or express their opinions on the obstacles in their way to voter registration. The Taking Informed Action sequence begins at the staging of the inquiry, continues throughout the inquiry as students assess their options in the supporting questions, and culminates in taking action near the end of the inquiry.



Staging the Compelling Question

Featured Source

Source A: New York State Board of Elections, "New York Voter Registration Form," 2015



New York State Voter Registration Form

Register to vote

With this form, you register to vote in elections in New York State. You can also use this form to:

- change the name or address on your voter registration
- become a member of a political party
- change your party membership

To register you must:

- be a US citizen;
- be 18 years old by the end of this year;
- not be in prison or on parole for a felony conviction;
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere.

Send or deliver this form

Fill out the form below and send it to your county's address on the back of this form, or take this form to the office of your County Board of Elections.

Mail or deliver this form at least 25 days before the election you want to vote in. Your county will notify you that you are registered to vote.

Questions?

Call your County Board of Elections listed on the back of this form or 1-800-FOR-VOTE (TDD/TTY Dial 711). Find answers or tools on our website www.elections.ny.gov

Verifying your identity

We'll try to check your identity before Election Day, through the DMV number (driver's license number or non-driver ID number), or the last four digits of your social security number, which you'll fill in below.

If you do not have a DMV or social security number, you may use a valid photo ID, a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or some other government document that shows your name and address. You may include a copy of one of those types of ID with this form—be sure to tape the sides of the form closed.

If we are unable to verify your identity before Election Day, you will be asked for ID when you vote for the first time.

Información en español: si le interesa obtener este formulario en español, llame al 1-800-367-8683

中文資料: 若有興趣索取中文資料表格, 請電: 1-800-367-8683

한국어: 한국인 양식을 원하시면 1-800-367-8683 으로 전화 하십시오.

बहि: आभिन ईई फार्मि: बांग्लादेश: গেজ ডেস ভাষায় 1-800-367-8683 সম্বন্ধে ফোন করুন

It is a crime to procure a false registration or to furnish false information to the Board of Elections. Please print in blue or black ink.

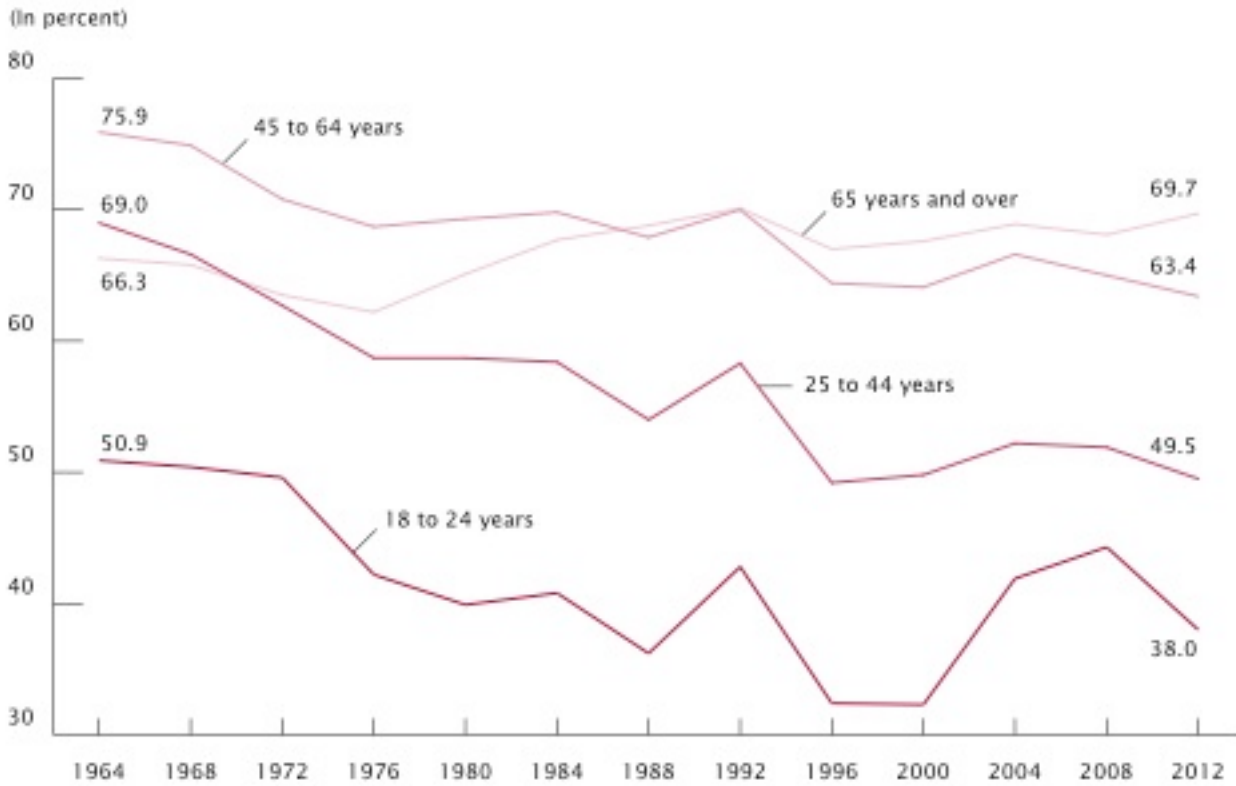
Qualifications 1 Are you a citizen of the U.S.? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If you answer No, you cannot register to vote.	For board use only	
	2 Will you be 18 years of age or older on or before election day? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If you answer No, you cannot register to vote unless you will be 18 by the end of the year.	
Your name 3 Last name _____ Suffix _____ First name _____ Middle Initial _____		
	4 Birth date <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	5 Sex <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F
6 Phone <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	7 Email <input type="text"/>	
The address where you live 8 Address (not P.O. box) _____ Apt. Number _____ Zip code _____ City/Town/Village _____ New York State County _____		
	9 Address or P.O. box _____ P.O. Box _____ Zip code _____ City/Town/Village _____	
	10 Have you voted before? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
The address where you receive mail Skip if same as above	11 What year? _____	
	12 Your name was _____ Your address was _____ Your previous state or New York State County was _____	
Identification You must make 1 selection For questions, please refer to Verifying your identity above.	13 <input type="checkbox"/> New York State DMV number _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Last four digits of your Social Security number x x x - x x - _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have a New York State driver's license or a Social Security number.	
	14 I wish to enroll in a political party <input type="checkbox"/> Democratic party <input type="checkbox"/> Republican party <input type="checkbox"/> Conservative party <input type="checkbox"/> Green party <input type="checkbox"/> Working Families party <input type="checkbox"/> Independence party <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Equality party <input type="checkbox"/> Reform party <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ I do not wish to enroll in a political party <input type="checkbox"/> No party	16 Affidavit: I swear or affirm that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am a citizen of the United States. I will have lived in the county, city or village for at least 30 days before the election. I meet all requirements to register to vote in New York State. This is my signature or mark in the box below. The above information is true, I understand that if it is not true, I can be convicted and fined up to \$5,000 and/or jailed for up to four years. Sign _____ Date _____
15 Optional questions <input type="checkbox"/> I need to apply for an Absentee ballot. <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to be an Election Day worker.		

Public domain. New York State Board of Elections. <http://www.elections.ny.gov/VotingRegister.html>.

Supporting Question 1

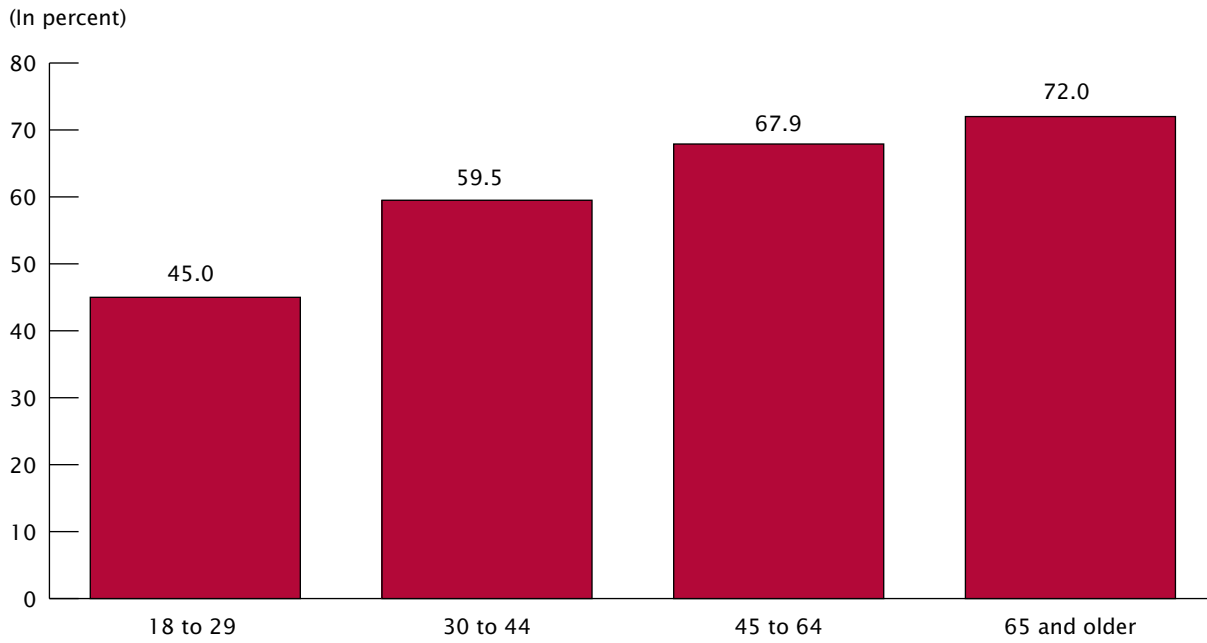
Featured Source

Source A: United States Census Bureau, collection of graphs highlighting voting trends amongst different age demographics, "Young-Adult Voting: An Analysis of Presidential Elections, 1964-2012," 2014



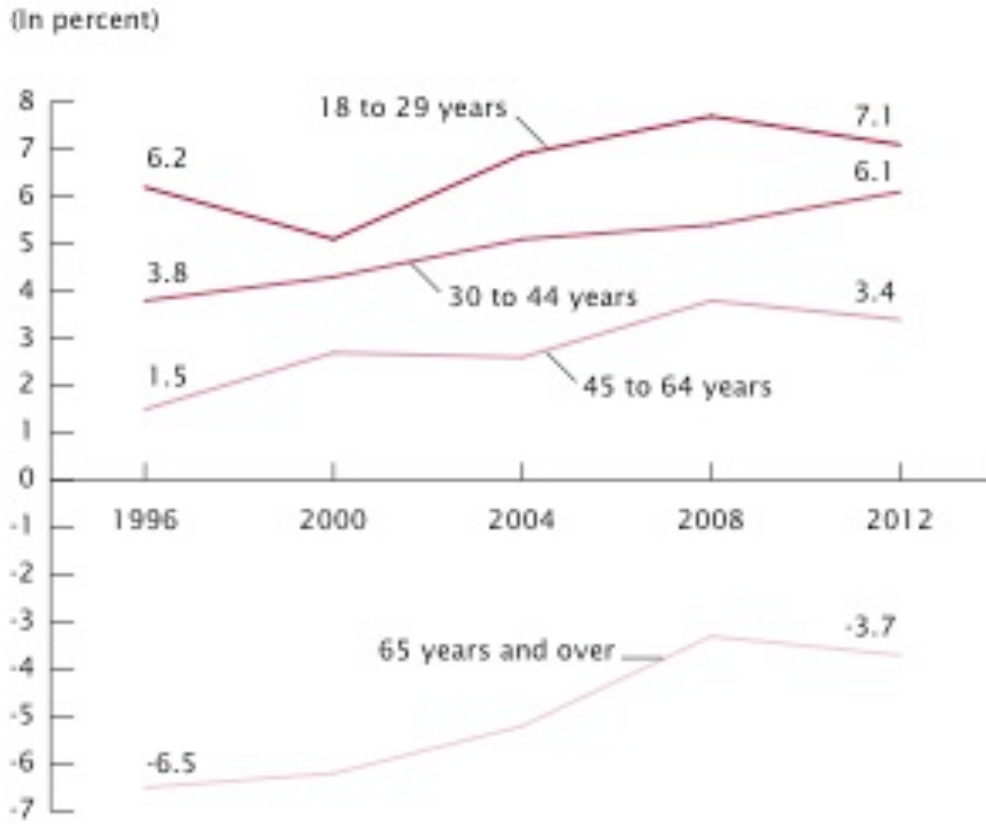
Graph A: Voting Rates Over Time for the Voting-Age Population: 1964–2012

Public domain. US Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p20-573.pdf>.



Graph B: Voting Rates, by Age, for the Voting-Age Population: 2012

Public domain. US Census Bureau.



Graph C: Female Voting Rates Relative to Male Voting Rates, by Age, for the Voting-Age Citizen Population: 1996–2012

Public domain. US Census Bureau.



(Numbers in thousands)

State	Citizens			
	Young adults 18–29		Adults 30 years and older	
	Voting rate	Margin of error (±)	Voting rate	Margin of error (±)
District of Columbia	*69.9	4.8	*78.3	2.7
Mississippi	*68.1	5.1	*76.4	2.5
Wisconsin	*58.0	5.0	*77.5	2.1
Minnesota	*57.7	5.1	*77.2	2.2
Iowa	*57.1	5.8	*72.3	2.7
North Carolina	*56.5	3.9	*71.9	1.8
South Carolina	*55.9	5.6	66.9	2.7
Colorado	*55.7	5.2	*74.6	2.5
New Hampshire	*55.6	6.0	*72.8	2.7
Massachusetts	*53.5	4.5	*75.4	2.1
Louisiana	*52.8	5.6	*69.9	2.7
Virginia	*52.1	4.1	*70.7	2.0
North Dakota	*51.9	5.3	67.4	2.8
Oregon	51.0	5.7	*71.7	2.7
Ohio	*50.2	3.5	66.6	1.7
Maryland	50.1	4.8	*69.4	2.5
Michigan	48.5	3.9	*71.4	1.8
Missouri	48.5	4.9	67.9	2.4
Rhode Island	47.5	6.0	66.0	3.0
Georgia	46.8	3.8	65.8	1.9
Maine	46.6	6.7	*73.5	2.8
Washington	46.5	4.6	*70.4	2.2
New Jersey	46.1	4.0	65.7	2.1
Pennsylvania	46.1	3.3	65.5	1.6
Delaware	46.0	5.9	*71.9	2.6
Florida	45.8	2.7	#64.3	1.4
New Mexico	45.6	5.4	65.8	2.8
Nebraska	45.1	5.7	65.7	2.9
United States	45.0	0.6	66.3	0.3
Montana	44.6	5.6	*71.2	2.6
Illinois	43.8	3.2	66.2	1.7
Kentucky	43.8	5.5	#63.4	2.8
California	43.7	1.8	#61.9	1.1
Connecticut	43.0	5.7	67.4	2.8
Idaho	42.7	5.4	*69.0	2.6
Nevada	42.5	5.0	#62.9	3.0
New York	42.4	2.5	#63.4	1.5
Tennessee	42.1	4.6	#59.2	2.4
Indiana	41.1	4.6	#63.8	2.3
Vermont	40.6	6.2	68.6	2.9
Utah	40.5	4.5	#62.8	2.7
Alabama	40.3	5.4	67.2	2.6
Kansas	#38.3	5.2	*70.3	2.8
Arizona	#38.1	4.4	#61.0	2.5
Alaska	#37.9	5.3	64.4	2.9
Wyoming	#37.5	5.5	64.6	2.9
South Dakota	#36.4	4.8	68.6	2.6
Hawaii	#30.5	4.9	#56.4	2.8
Arkansas	#30.4	4.8	#59.8	2.9
Texas	#29.6	2.0	#61.4	1.3
Oklahoma	#27.1	4.8	#59.9	2.9
West Virginia	#23.6	4.7	#53.1	2.6

* Indicates that the estimate is statistically higher from the national average for that age group.

Indicates that the estimate is statistically lower from the national average for that age group.

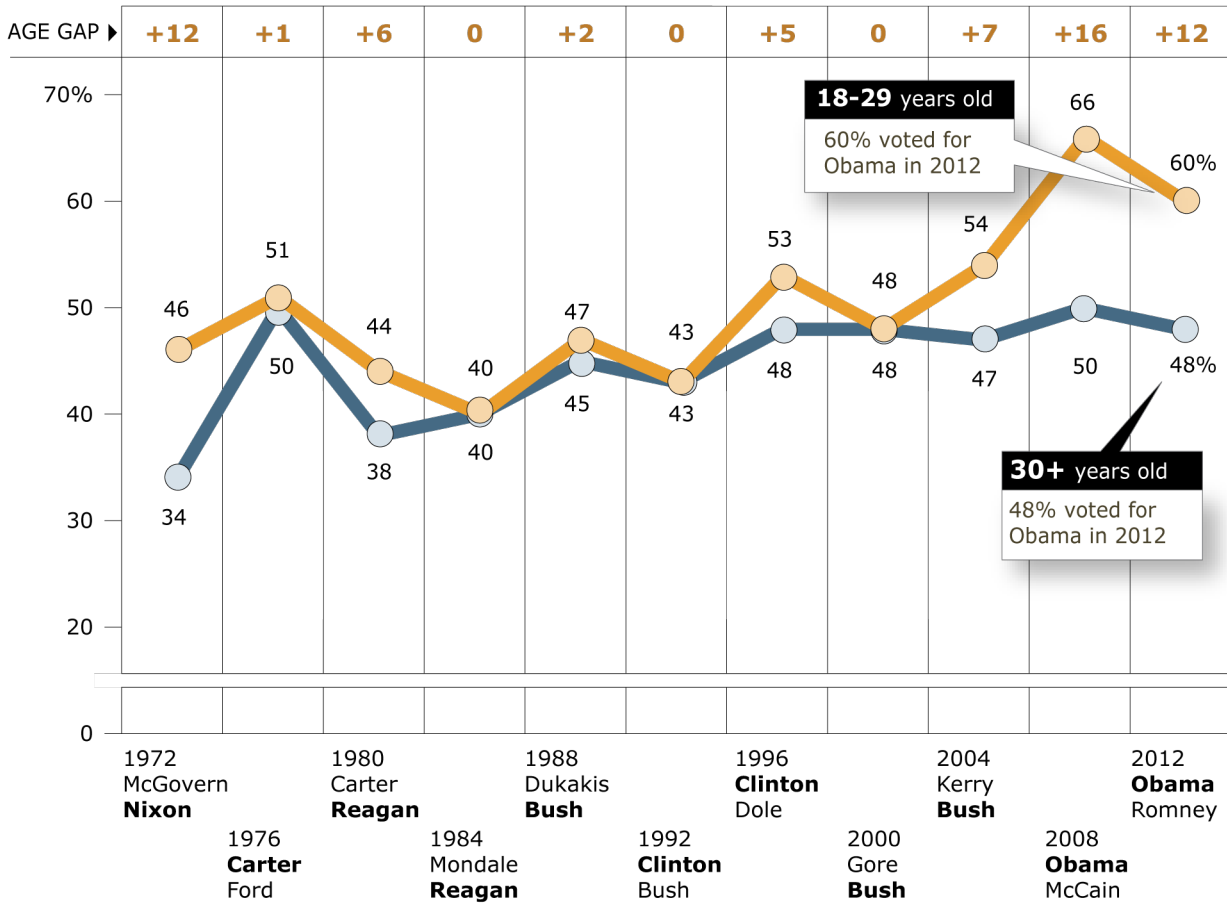
Graph D: Voting Rates by Age and State: 2012

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source B: Pew Research Center, study of changing voting trends among young voters, “Young Voters Supported Obama Less, But May Have Mattered More,” 2012

Percent voting for Democratic candidate



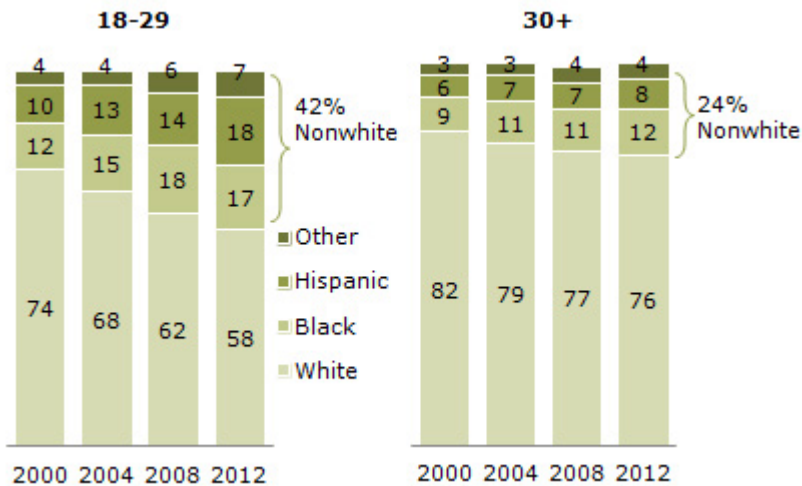
Graph A: Age Gap in Voting Preferences

Reproduced with permission from the Pew Research Center. Based on exit poll data from the National Election Pool. Used with permission. <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/26/young-voters-supported-obama-less-but-may-have-mattered-more/>

	2008		2012		Change in Obama
	Obama %	McCain %	Obama %	Romney %	
National	53	45	50	47	-3
18-29	66	32	60	36	-6
30+	50	49	48	50	-2
Florida	51	47	50	49	-1
18-29	61	37	66	32	+5
30+	50	49	47	52	-3
Ohio	52	46	50	48	-2
18-29	61	36	62	35	+1
30+	50	48	48	50	-2
Pennsylvania	55	44	52	47	-3
18-29	65	35	62	35	-3
30+	53	46	49	50	-4
Virginia	52	47	51	48	-1
18-29	60	39	61	36	+1
30+	50	49	49	50	-1

Graph B: Youth Vote Crucial for Obama in Swing States

Reproduced with permission from the Pew Research Center. Based on exit poll data from the National Election Pool. Used with permission. <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/26/young-voters-supported-obama-less-but-may-have-mattered-more/>



Graph C: Changing Racial Composition of Voters

Reproduced with permission from the Pew Research Center. Based on exit poll data from the National Election Pool. Used with permission. <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/26/young-voters-supported-obama-less-but-may-have-mattered-more/>

	Total	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+
<i>Party affiliation</i>	%	%	%	%	%
Republican	32	26	32	34	37
Democrat	38	44	37	37	36
Independent/other	29	29	31	29	27
<i>Ideology</i>					
Conservative	35	26	34	37	42
Moderate	41	41	40	42	39
Liberal	25	33	26	22	19

Graph D: Young Voters More Democratic, Liberal

Reproduced with permission from the Pew Research Center. Based on exit poll data from the National Election Pool. Used with permission. <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/26/young-voters-supported-obama-less-but-may-have-mattered-more/>

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source A: Nicki Beaman Griffin, video segment describing how different groups fought for suffrage, “The Fight for the Right to Vote in the United States,” *TED Ed*, 2013



The Fight for the Right to Vote in the United States

Nicki Beaman Griffin

When the next general election rolls around, who will be eligible to show up at the polls and vote for the president of the United States? It’s really pretty simple. If you are at least eighteen years old, a citizen of the US, and a resident of a state, you can vote. Assuming, that is, you’re not a felon.

Seems about right. After all, the United States prides itself on being a democracy, or a government in which the ultimate authority lies with the citizens of the nation. But it was not always this way. In 1789, George Washington won the Electoral College with 100% of the vote, but whose vote was it? Probably not yours—only six percent of the entire United States population was allowed to vote *at all*. Voting was a right that only white, male, property owners were allowed to exercise. By the 1820s and 1830s, the American population was booming from the east coast into the western frontier. Frontier farmers were resilient, self-reliant, and mostly ineligible to vote because they did not own land.

As these new areas of the nation became states, they typically left out the property requirement for voting. Leaders such as Andrew Jackson, United States’ first common man president, promoted what he called universal suffrage.

Of course, by *universal suffrage*, Jackson really meant *universal white male suffrage*. All he emphasized was getting rid of the property requirement for voting, not expanding the vote beyond white men.

By the 1850s, about 55% of the adult population was eligible to vote in the US. Much better than 6%, but far from everybody. Then, in 1861, the American Civil War began largely over the issue of slavery and states' rights in the United States. When it was all over, the US ratified the 15th amendment, which promised that a person's right to vote could not be denied based on race, color, or previous condition as a slave. This meant that black men, newly affirmed as citizens of the US, would now be allowed to vote. Of course, laws are far from reality. Despite the promise of the 15th amendment, intimidation kept African Americans from exercising their voting rights.

States passed laws that limited the right of African Americans to vote, including things like literacy tests, which were rigged so that not even literate African Americans were allowed to pass, and poll taxes. So despite the 15th amendment, by 1892, only about 6% of black men in Mississippi were registered to vote. By 1960, it was only 1%. And, of course, women were still totally out of the national voting picture. It wasn't until 1920 that the women's suffrage movement won their 30-year battle, and the 19th amendment finally gave women the vote—well, white women. The restrictions on African Americans, including African American women, remained.

After World War II, many Americans began to question the state of US democracy. How could a nation that fought for freedom and human rights abroad come home and deny suffrage based on race? The modern Civil Rights movement began in the 1940s with those questions in mind. After years of sacrifice, bloodshed, and pain, the United States passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, finally eliminating restrictions such as literacy tests and protecting the voting rights promised under the 15th amendment to the Constitution. Now, any citizen over the age of twenty-one could vote. All seemed well, until the United States went to war. When the Vietnam War called up all men age eighteen and over for the draft, many wondered whether it was fair to send men who couldn't vote for war.

In 1971, the 26th amendment to the Constitution made all citizens eighteen and older eligible to vote, the last major expansion of voting rights in the United States. Today, the pool of eligible voters in the US is far broader and more inclusive than ever before in US history. But, of course, it's not perfect. There are still active efforts to suppress some groups from voting, and only about 60% of those who *can* vote do.

Now that you know all the hard work that went into securing the right to vote, what do you think? Do enough citizens have the right to vote now? And among those who can vote, why don't more of them do it?

Link to website with permission from Ted Conferences LLC. From the TED-Ed Lesson "The fight for the right to vote in the United States." <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-fight-for-the-right-to-vote-in-the-united-states-nicki-beaman-griffin#review>.



Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source B: Sarah Lengsfelder, transcript and audio describing how the United States government works to solve problems, “I Help Make Government Work,” *The Bob Edwards Show*, February 18, 2011

I Help Make Government Work

Sarah Lengsfelder

I believe government is a verb: the collective effort of well-intentioned individuals.

In grade school, I was taught that government is a noun. My teachers drew neat charts with arrows depicting three co-equal branches that together enforce the rights and responsibilities of every American citizen.

Later, as a disillusioned teen, I saw the old men on C-SPAN as power-hungry aristocrats—the overbearing parents of a disobedient nation. Studying political science in college, game theory confirmed that policy is the calculated result of competing interests.

Despite my skepticism, however, I longed to be a tiny cog in the mysterious machine that churns out laws and scandals. I fought hard for the right to toil long hours for low pay in a cramped cubicle within ego-ridden marble buildings; but I didn’t plan to stay long. A quick insider’s view of the so-called “sausage factory” would be enough to dispel my childish idealism—or so I thought. More than two years later, each day I spend as a Congressional assistant gives me fresh appreciation for the people, process—and yes, even the politics—of the American government.

Elections bring out the best and worst of life in government. Political science theories spring to life as the partisan “aisle” widened and the motives of friends “on the other side” came under intense scrutiny. The outrage and enthusiasm of voters reflect American democracy at its finest, and the resulting shifts in political dynamics dissolve outdated protocols and make room for new voices and visions. Government is not simple or easy, but nor is it a complex, conspiratorial charade. The branches are not equal, but a single individual—even one of 535 members of Congress—can make a difference.

Now that C-SPAN is a permanent fixture in my office—and I’ll admit, even at home—I am consistently impressed by the passion and eloquence of the diverse men and women elected to represent equally distinct communities. And behind every politician, there is a team of eager, well-educated, dedicated staffers who listen to constituents, research important issues, and work together to craft responsive, effective policy.

My job doesn’t come with many perks or much glory. I can barely pay my Capitol Hill rent, and the finished product of my efforts doesn’t have my name on it. But nothing feels better than when legislation I drafted becomes law, or my boss delivers a speech I wrote to a cheering crowd.

Few know who I am or understand what I do, but like thousands of other public servants around the country, I play a role in shaping the processes and products of the American political system.

I don’t work for the government; I help make government work.

After almost three years, Sarah Lengsfelder left her job as a Congressional assistant to return to her native state and attend the University of California, Berkeley School of Law (class of 2011). She hopes to return to Washington some day, perhaps as an elected representative.

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Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source C: Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, graphs and fact sheet covering the trends of young voters, “Youth Voting Quick Facts,” 2014

The 2014 Youth Vote

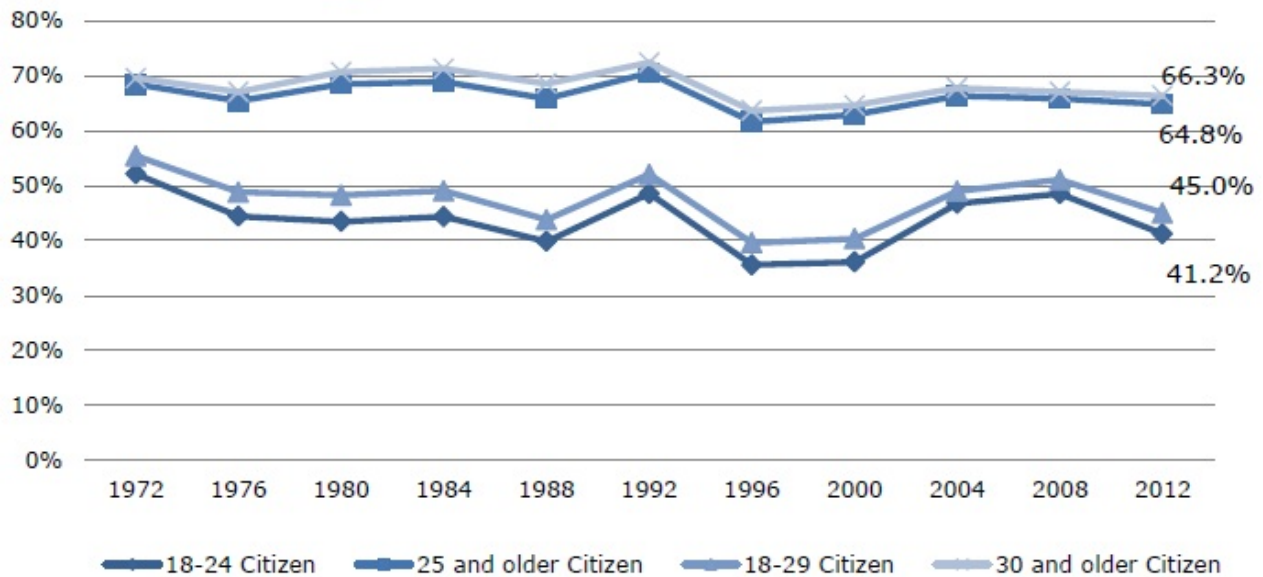
- **21.5%** of young people, ages 18–29, voted in the 2014 midterm elections, according to our exclusive preliminary estimate. If that number holds, it will be a slight increase from the 20.9% youth voter turnout in 2010. Read the detailed analysis of the youth vote [here](#).
- According to early exit polls, **13%** of votes cast in the 2014 midterm elections were cast by young people, ages 18–29. That percentage is subject to revision in the coming weeks. Read our analysis of the early youth share [here](#).
- Overall, young voters in 2014 **avored Democratic Congressional candidates** over Republicans. For example, according to the national exit poll data on House races, youth aged 18–29 preferred Democratic candidates by 55% to 42%. Young voters also backed Democratic candidates in most Senate races. Read our analysis of youth vote choice [here](#).

The 2012 Youth Vote

- **45%** of young people, ages 18–29, voted in 2012, down from 51% in 2008. Read the detailed analysis of the youth vote [here](#).
- In states with sufficient samples, youth turnout in 2012 was highest in Mississippi (68.1%), Wisconsin (58.0%), Minnesota (57.7%) and Iowa (57.1%). Voter turnout in 2012 was lowest in West Virginia (23.6%), Oklahoma (27.1%), Texas (29.6%), and Arkansas (30.4%). [Learn about the youth vote in your state here](#).
- There were differences in the youth vote by gender and marital status. In 2012, 41.1% of single young men turned out, compared to 48.3% of young single females. In 2012, nearly 52.5% of young married females voted, compared to 48.5% of married men. Find more detailed analysis of the youth vote by [gender and marital status here](#).
- The youth vote varied greatly by gender and race. Young Black and Hispanic women were the strongest supporters of President Obama. Read more on the [youth vote by race and gender here](#).
- Although 60% of U.S. Citizens between the ages of 18-29 have enrolled in college, 71% of young voters have attended college, meaning that college-educated young people were overrepresented among young people who voted. [Learn about the youth vote by educational attainment here](#).
- In 2012, young voters 18-29 chose Barack Obama over Mitt Romney, 60% to 37% – a 23 point margin, according to National Exit Polls. [See more information about youth party identification and issue interests here](#).



Voter Turnout by Age, 1972-2012



Source: CIRCLE's tabulations from the CPS Nov. Voting and Registration Supplements, 1972-2012

Why Youth Voting Matters

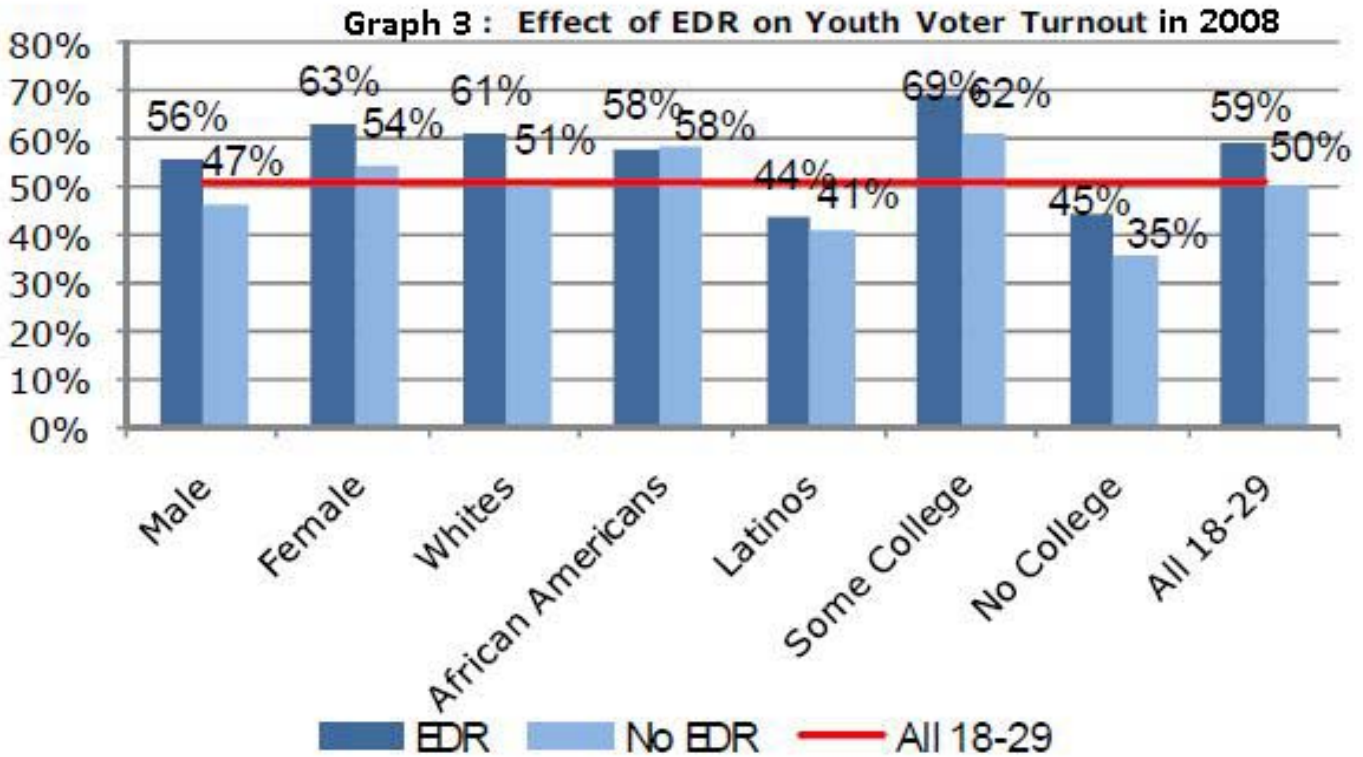
- **Voting is habit-forming:** when young people learn the voting process and vote they are more likely to do so when they are older. If individuals have been motivated to get to the polls once, they are more likely to return. So, getting young people to vote early could be key to raising a new generation of voters.
- **Young people are a major subset of the electorate and their voices matter:**
 - 46 million young people ages 18–29 years old are eligible to vote, while 39 million seniors are eligible to vote
 - Young people (18–29) make up 21% of the voting eligible population in the U.S.
- **Young people's participation can influence election results.**
- Involving young people in election-related learning, activities and discussion can have an **impact on the young person's household**, increasing the likelihood that others in the household will vote. In immigrant communities, young voters may be easier to reach, are more likely to speak English (cutting down translation costs), and may be the most effective messengers within their communities.

And there are **major differences in voter turnout amongst youth subgroups, which may persist as these youth get older if the gaps are not reduced.**

What Affects Youth Voting

- **Contact!** Young people who are contacted by an organization or a campaign are more likely to vote. Additionally, those who discuss an election are more likely to vote in it.
- **Young people who are registered to vote turn out in high numbers**, very close to the rate of older voters. In the 2008 election, 84% of those youth 18–29 who were registered to vote actually cast a ballot. Youth voter registration rates are much lower than older age groups' rates, and as a result, guiding youth through the registration process is one potential step to closing the age-related voting gap.
- **Having information about how, when and where** to vote can help young people be and feel prepared to vote as well as reduce any level of intimidation they may feel.

- A state’s laws related to voter registration and voting can have an impact on youth voter turnout. Seven out of the top 10 youth turnout states had some of the more ambitious measures, including Election Day registration, voting by mail (Oregon), or not requiring registration to vote (North Dakota).



In 2008, on average, 59% of young Americans whose home state offered Election Day Registration voted; nine percentage points higher than those who did not live in EDR states. For more on state voting laws see: [“Easier Voting Methods Boost Youth Turnout”](#); [How Postregistration Laws Affect the Turnout of Registrants](#); [State Voting Laws](#) and [State Election Law Reform and Youth Voter Turnout](#)

- **Civic education opportunities** in school have been shown to increase the likelihood that a young person will vote. These opportunities range from social studies classes to simulations of democratic processes and discussion of current issues. Unfortunately, many youth do not have these civic education opportunities, as research has shown that those in more white and/or more affluent schools are more likely to have these opportunities.
- **A young person’s home environment** can have a large impact on their engagement. Youth who live in a place where members of their household are engaged and vote are more likely to do so themselves.

What Works in Getting Youth to Vote

- **Registration** is sometimes a larger hurdle than the act of voting itself. Thus showing young people where to get reliable information on registration is helpful.
- **Personalized and interactive contact counts.** The most effective way of getting a new voter is the in-person door-knock by a peer; the least effective is an automated phone call.

- The medium is more important than the message. Partisan and nonpartisan, negative and positive messages seem to work about the same. The important factor is the degree to which the contact is personalized.
 - Canvassing costs \$11 to \$14 per new vote, followed closely by phone banks at \$10 to \$25 per new vote. Robocalls mobilize so few voters that they cost \$275 per new vote. (These costs are figured per vote that would not be cast without the mobilizing effort).
-
- **Begin with the basics: information.** Telling a new voter where to vote, when to vote and how to use the voting machines increases turnout.
 - **Talk to them!** Leaving young voters off contact lists is a costly mistake. Some campaigns still bypass young voters, but research shows they respond cost-effectively when contacted.
 - For more information: [Young Voter Mobilization Tactics](#); [The Effects of an Election Day Voter Mobilization Campaign Targeting Young Voters](#) by Donald P. Green.

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Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source A: Staff writers, student testimonials about why they do or do not vote, “Why Don’t Youth Vote? Young People Respond,” *Southern Changes*, 2000

Why Don't Youth Vote? Young People Respond

Staff

The following comments were excerpted from the Center for Voting and Democracy's Spring 2000 youth essay contest, which asked college and high school students to respond to the question, Why Don't Youth Vote? The writers quoted, mostly college students, suggested changes to the electoral system that might increase political participation among young people and explained their reasons for participating in or abstaining from our political and electoral systems.

Jim C. Fung, born 1979, college student, Berkeley, California

Youth are disillusioned with politics for many of the same reasons that our parents are. If lobbyists and campaign contributors did not have more access to public officials than do regular citizens, if economic democracy in the workplace existed alongside what some would call the "illusion" of political democracy, if elected officials acted more on "bread and butter" economic issues, such as the increasing concentration of wealth and the lack of health insurance for many Americans, than on expanding the prison population and on the military—then most people of all ages would consider their votes much more meaningful.

Given the reality that youth tend to get most excited about issues rather than politicians, alternative electoral systems such as proportional representation, IRV, cumulative voting, and easier third-party ballot access, would only succeed in stimulating us if the third parties involved were ideologically oriented or issues-based parties rather than crass vote-maximizers. The issues of these parties would also need to be relevant to daily life—rather than visions of pie-in-the-sky utopianism. Many of the third parties in America today already fit this bill, addressing issues like the environment, workers' rights, and healthcare. In addition, judging from the example of European democracies using PR, the presence of such a system tends to encourage ideological or issues-based parties. Thus, an alternative electoral system should be seriously considered.

Amanda Ponzar, born 1978, college student, Lansdowne, Pennsylvania

When it comes down to it, I care. I watch all the presidential and vice-presidential debates, listen to the State of the Union, read the paper, and frequently publish letters to the editor about my concerns. Just like me, many young people around this country care desperately about their lives, goals, and future. We need someone to listen, support our issues, and prove to us that America wants to hear from young people.

Stephanie Simmons, born 1980, college student, Wellesley, Massachusetts

I'm a politically active twenty-year-old college student, and I've never voted in an election—state, local, or national. It seems strange now that I think about it. I've been interested in politics for as long as I can remember, trying to talk my parents into voting for Dukakis in 1988 and holding a sign for Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996. I eagerly looked forward to the time when I would be able to participate in the selection of my representatives in the government. Why have I never voted in an election? Because the voting system is so antiquated and inefficient. Voting is for me, as it is for most young people, something between a hassle and an impossibility. If you clear the barriers, more people, and especially young people, will vote.

**Jennifer Lang, born 1981, college student, The Colony, Texas**

You challenge us to become more politically involved, to propose changes in the electoral process that will persuade us to flex our political clout. I challenge you to give us intelligent reasons why we would want to. Why would anyone, young or old, want to become more politically involved? Government by and for the people depends on the size of the people's bank accounts. Issues are skipped like rocks across a pond. How many more Columbine High School tragedies have to happen before stricter gun laws are enforced on the streets, not in the local sports stores? How many more teenage pregnancies and abortions have to occur before sexual education becomes more than a few chapters in a ninth-grade health book?

Melissa M. Flicek, born 1979, college student, St. Paul, Minnesota

Generally, young people do not participate in the electoral process. Being a young person myself, I understand both the importance of being an active citizen of the United States, and the overwhelming, "it doesn't affect me" syndrome. Many young people don't make it a point to vote because political issues usually involve taxes, social security, and welfare reform. These issues, however important, do not relate directly to young people today. It is true these issues will have an effect on us in the future, but right now that seems very far away. Candidates for political office also seem to be rich, smooth-talkers whose loyalties lie more with their political parties than the people whom they represent. It would be nice if everyday citizens had a better chance to run for office, not just the extremely wealthy businessmen, lawyers, and military leaders.

Rozalina Grubina, born 1982, high school student, Brooklyn, New York

My grandparents lived in Latvia most of their lives, and so did my parents. Here, I can become a citizen, despite my nationality and religion. I can vote and be a respected member of society. I consider political involvement not only a privilege of all those fortunate enough to take part in it, but also the duty of my generation. It is only through voting and caring about who our leaders are that we can prevent another holocaust or race riot. Only through voting can we preclude what is now happening in Latvia and Austria from taking place in my new homeland. It is our obligation to build a country of tolerance, not hate, and of peace, not violence.

I believe that my generation must be educated on the importance of politics and the changes that they, themselves, can induce simply by participation. It is not up to the select few to run our country; it is up to us. We can make our voices heard, and we can make a difference. Thus, if young adults realize that they could influence the course of history, voting participation would skyrocket.

Getting Youth Back to the Polls

According to the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) survey, fewer than 20 percent of young people, ages eighteen to twenty-five, participated in the 1998 midterm election. Youth are far and away leading the national trend towards non-voting—and the South is leading the country in numbers of youth who do not vote. In response to that trend, the Fair Representation Program at the Southern Regional Council with Clark Atlanta University's Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy is currently engaged in a comprehensive evaluation of youth political participation and nonparticipation in the South. Called the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), the study will first document the non-voting trend among youth in the South and then develop pilot youth leadership development programs to nurture and grow youth political engagement. For more information about YEP, email the Fair Representation Program at: fairrep@southerncouncil.org. Call 404-522-8764, or visit www.southerncouncil.org.

Courtesy of *Southern Changes*, a publication of the Southern Regional Council. Used with Permission.
http://beck.library.emory.edu/southernchanges/article.php?id=sc22-4_009.

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source B: Staff writers, article describing reasons why young people are disinterested in voting, “Why Young People Don’t Vote,” *The Economist*, October 29, 2014

The Economist Explains: Why Young People Don’t Vote

UNLIKE presidential contests, America’s mid-term elections do not seem to inspire many people. In 2012 fully 59% of registered voters turned up at the polls for the presidential election. But two years earlier just 42% bothered to cast their votes in the 2010 mid-term elections, and this year’s turnout may be even lower. Few are as uninterested as the young. In 2010 the turnout of people aged 18 to 24 was just 21%. Such low turnout means that in mid-term years, Republicans (whose voters tend to be older) dominate the ballot, even though they cannot win so easily in presidential years. In plenty of Senate races, Democrats are banking, perhaps too hopefully, on an unusually high youth turnout to win. Why is it so difficult to get young people to vote?

It is not only in America that the young do not exercise their democratic rights. In 2010 just 44% of people aged 18 to 24 voted in Britain’s general election, compared with 65% of people of all ages. In not a single European country do the young turn out more than older people. Historically, youth turnout has never been particularly high anywhere, but over the past few decades things have got worse. One explanation favoured by older people is that the young are simply lazy. But this does not make much sense. Today’s young people volunteer more than old people; they are much better educated; and they are less likely to drink excessively or use drugs than previous generations of youth. That does not seem like a recipe for political apathy.

A better explanation may be that young people today do not feel they have much of a stake in society. Having children and owning property gives you a direct interest in how schools and hospitals are run, and whether parks and libraries are maintained. But if they settle down at all, young people are waiting ever longer to do it. In 1970 the average American woman was not yet 21 years old when she first married, with children and home ownership quickly following. Today women marry at 26 on average, if they marry at all, and are likely to want a career as well as children. People who have not settled down are not much affected by political decisions, and their transient lifestyles can also make it difficult to vote. In Britain, almost a quarter of 19-year-olds move from one local authority to another in a typical year; more still will move within the same district. If you rent a room and move often, registering to vote is a chore which is easily forgotten until it is too late. Many states in America require people to present government-issued ID in order to vote. Many young Americans do not have driving licenses, hunting licenses or passports, and it is a chore to get a special voter’s ID, so many end up unable to vote. (Electoral fraud by impersonation in America is a negligible problem: such laws tend to be cynically enacted by right-wingers to suppress turnout among those that are most likely to vote against them.)

Yet perhaps the most depressing explanation is simply that in many places, young people do not feel that there is anyone worth voting for. A long-running European survey found that in 2008, 22% of French 15- to 24-year-olds said they believed society’s problems could be fixed only by revolutionary action. In 1990 the equivalent figure was just 7%. When charismatic politicians do appear, they can win over the young: Barack Obama would not have been elected in 2008 and 2012 had it not been for remarkably high youth turnout in his favour. But for the most part, such politicians are few and far between. That might be because in most elections, a simpler strategy is to win over older people, who will vote however bad the candidates are. Young people—who tend to be more cosmopolitan, liberal and hopeful than their elders—tend to be switched off by the negativity and cynicism of election campaigns targeting the unhappy old. Sadly, cynicism then breeds cynicism.

“The Economist explains: Why young people don’t vote,” *The Economist*, 29 Oct 2014. © The Economist newspaper Limited, London (29 Oct 2014). <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/10/economist-explains-24>.

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source C: C-SPAN, videos detailing why youth participate or not in elections, “Youth Vote,” C-SPAN Classroom Deliberations, 2014

NOTE: Teachers and their students can view the two videos below (and read the transcripts) by clicking on the link <http://www.c-spanclassroomdeliberations.org/issues/youth-vote> and then clicking on the image entitled, “What Is the Best Way to Encourage Young Voters to Vote in Elections?”

John Della Volpe

Talks about things that would motivate young people to get involved in politics.



John Della Volpe Talks about Things that would Motivate Young People to Get Involved in Politics (transcript)

Reporter reading tweet: [Beginning of video cut off] ...said that “...it’s going to take more than his election to change things. Young people need to stop being lazy.”

John Della Volpe: I think young people can certainly do more. And I don’t want to be an apologist for young people, but I think the message that I hear when I travel across the country, when I analyze surveys like this, when I conduct focus groups and qualitative research, etc., is that more young people want to participate in government than actually are participating in government. They don’t know how, necessarily. Sometimes they need to be asked.

And it's hard to go into many high schools or churches or other kinds of communities across the country and find young people who aren't participating in some way. So I don't think they're lazy; I think they want to do more and its incumbent, frankly, upon Republicans and Democrats and other members of government—local, state, and federal—to tap into this incredible opportunity they have to have young people not just vote for them, but be part of the administration, be part of solving problems to make our communities and our country better.

Reporter: Do you think that counteracts these tendencies, these negative, or at least these cynical, tendencies that you're seeing, though, if young people are directly asked to participate in the process?

John Della Volpe: I think it absolutely will. Young people didn't know how to even get involved in campaigns until somebody knocked on their door and said "Hey, why don't you spend fifteen minutes with us and participate in this kind of activity?" And then they did and then their friends started to do it, and this is the movement that we saw in 2008 with the Obama campaign, so, we've found for many, many, many years that, young people tell us they want more information so they can be involved. Again, they're cynical about politics and, frankly, who could blame them? But they're not cynical about the country. They still think this is the only land that they're familiar with that has opportunity for everyone, and they want to be participating. That's why they're so upset right now and disappointed, because they want to do more. But frankly, it needs to be a two-way street.

Reporter: How much does your experience tell you about how much young people get a political vibe from what their parents do as far as politics are concerned?

John Della Volpe: I think that's incredibly important. In other research we've conducted over the last decade, it indicates that the idea of meeting or interacting with somebody at a young age also is a significant predictor of how likely they will be involved in the future. And obviously it doesn't need to be a candidate for the presidency or for the Senate, but even that school committee member, that member of the city council, or a local mayor—having a positive experience with an elected official or somebody in government when they're in junior high school or high school, is a significant predictor of whether or not they'll be involved in the future.

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Ashley Spillane

Rock the Vote spokesperson discusses involvement of young people in politics.



Ashley Spillane Talks about Building a Sense of Political Power among the Young (transcript)

Steven Scully: [beginning cut off] ...comes to voting, when asked by millennials whether or not politicians were motivated for selfish reasons, 62% said yes. Fifty-eight percent said politicians do not share their priorities. Almost half said politicians and politics too partisan, and 41% believe that they have no say in the government.

Ashley Spillane: [chuckles] I mean, I think it's not surprising that young people think that. You have politicians who aren't really speaking about issues that matter to young people and talking to the people that they think *are* going to come out and vote. You know part of the mission at Rock the Vote is to really build political power for young people by inspiring them to participate and then helping empower them too. So some of the things you were talking about earlier here in terms of our website relaunch, we moved to 100% mobile-friendly website because young people are online. You have over 90% of millennials connected to the internet on a daily basis, over 60% connected when they're away from home, and we are really trying to make the process easier for participation. And the more that we can engage people, and get them involved and make it easier, the more likely we can force the politicians to talk about the issues that actually matter to young people.

Scully: You may have seen this chart from the US Census Bureau, looking at voting patterns around the country. And in the northeast, most notably in New Hampshire as well as in Massachusetts, here in Washington D.C. and in the Midwest, the darker the color, the higher the percent of the vote, and the lighter the color the lower the percentage. And it's particularly light in West Virginia, Texas. This is from the 2012 presidential election. Why? Why such low turnout?

Spillane: I think in—

Scully: [interrupting] When compared to the overall population.

Spillane: I think that part of the issue, which is what you'll see in the midterm election, is it depends on how many resources are expended in a state in order to get young people involved. And you know, Texas and West Virginia are not presidential battleground states and so there's just less information being put out there by candidates about why people should participate and also about the process—

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