Preparing Every Young Voter

The Future of California Elections
Los Angeles, California
March 8, 2018
By Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg
A national, nonpartisan research center founded in 2001 and focused on young people in the United States, especially those who are marginalized or disadvantaged in political life.

CIRCLE’s scholarly research informs policy and practice for healthier youth development and a better democracy.
Key Points

• Elections is a key entry-point into community life for many youth
• We need to welcome young voters by meeting where they are
• Different tactics and messaging to different groups
• Paradigm shift from Mobilizing to Growing voters
Overview of Youth Voting
• **Youth vote** generally refers to voting among 18-29 year olds who are eligible.

• By **voter turnout**, we mean % who voted among eligible by age and citizenship.

• **“Millennials”** are those who were born between 1981 to late 90’s (roughly)
  • Older Millennials are in their late 30s!

• **“Gen-Z”** are the newest eligible voters 2018.
CIRCLE’s Approach to Youth Voting

- Voting is an entry point into civic life for many
- HOW, and WHICH young people participate matter
- Voting can help reduce systemic inequalities
Voting Must be...

VISIBLE

ACCESSIBLE

MEANINGFUL

...TO ALL YOUTH
Gaps among youth must be addressed to increase participation overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014 Youth Turnout*</th>
<th>2016 Youth Turnout *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth w/ college degree</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth without a high school diploma</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Calculated using the Census
## California’s Diversity by Congressional Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Lowest</th>
<th>Highest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth population share</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth voter turnout in 2014</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth vote share</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students in area colleges</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>91,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults who completed high school</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults who completed four-year college</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% who speak languages other than English at home</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens %</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income population</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$40,207</td>
<td>$125,790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: American Community Survey (2010-2015) and Catalist
Why Do These Differences Matter?

• Levels of outreach that target youth will vary because of:
  • Competitiveness of the races
  • Demographics-based propensity to vote factors
  • Partisan- and demographics-based propensity to vote for specific issues, or political parties
  • Existence of large college campuses

• As a result, outreach efforts often leave young, most disconnected voters out.
Why Conventional Outreach Strategies don’t work

- They feel transactional – not welcoming
- They are partisan – youth are party skeptics
- They assume past voting experience
- They are not voter-centered
Why Turnout Varies by Subgroups

- Outdated Civics
- Negative perception of political leaders
- Little/No Exposure to civic practices
- Not being asked to participate

Disengagement & Alienation
Youth and Readiness to Vote
Activist Egalitarians (39% of Millennials)

- See racial & economic justice the problem and believe citizens can address problems
- Civically engaged, high turnout
- Majority have college education
- Economically diverse
- Live in communities with access to civic institutions
- Active on social media and engage with diverse perspectives
Participatory Libertarians (29%)

• Believe society is fair and individual citizens should contribute to society
• Majority w/ college education and good income
• Do vote but not politically engaged
• Live in communities with access to civic institutions
• Surrounded by similar perspectives
• Informed but not through social media
Disempowered Egalitarians (8%)

• Believe inequality affects society
• Often feel “under-qualified” to vote or choose candidates
• Low voting rate and civic knowledge
• Tend to rely on TV for news
• Relatively low educational attainment and income
Alienated Libertarians (5%)

• Believe society is fair
• Do not believe in civic participation and are disengaged
• Prioritize economic prosperity
• Little exposure to civic opportunities
• Might respond negatively to organizational outreach
Lost and Disengaged (18%)

- Don’t know what to think of most social issues
- Low civic knowledge and turnout - disengaged
- Mixed view of inequality
- Little access to civic opportunities
- Relatively low educational attainment and income
- Most racially diverse group
Millennials Who Believe in the Value of Civic Engagement are More Likely to Vote

**SELF-REPORTED VOTER TURNOUT IN 2016 GENERAL ELECTION**

- **DISEMPOWERED EGALITARIANS**: 51%
- **ALIENATED LIBERTARIANS**: 48%
- **LOST AND DISENGAGED**: 56%
- **ACTIVIST EGALITARIANS**: 77%
- **PARTICIPATORY LIBERTARIANS**: 73%
Educating All Voters through Personalization
Step 1: Ask These Questions about Your Young Voters

- How/where do they get information?
- Whom/What do they trust?
- What do they care about?
- How can they feel welcomed into community?
- Who/what can be a bridge to their community?
Step 2: Increase Capability, Motivation and Opportunity for Voter Participation

**Capability**
- Knowledge of process
- Information about voting

**Motivation**
- Making voting meaningful
- Engaging peers

**Opportunity**
- To help community
- Serve as election judge
- To turn voice into action

Behavior Change → Voter Participation
Case example: “Disempowered Egalitarians”

“What our voice can do”
- Knowledge about power of their collective votes
- Clear knowledge of eligibility
- Connection between vote and policies

“We matter to this community”
- Accountability from elected officials
- Direct and relational outreach
- Sense of Community

“I can support my community”
- Peer-based mobilization
- Opportunity to serve
- Changing community norms

ALL young people can be cultivated to translate their **voice to voting**, but we need shift our paradigm from “mobilizing” voters, to “growing” voters. For that, we need cross-sector, multi-disciplinary collaboration.
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Higher Value on Civic Engagement

"Activist Egalitarians"
Believe systematic inequalities affect society
Value collective impact of civic participation
Actively engaged in conversations

"Participatory Libertarians"
Believe that society is basically fair and hard work will bring success
Value institutions and citizen participation

Lower Value on Civic Engagement

"Disempowered Egalitarians"
Believe equality will improve society
Often feel “underqualified” to participate in civic life

"Alienated Libertarians"
Believe civic participation and institutions add little value
Support for economic prosperity

"Lost and Disengaged"
Unsure about most political issues
Little exposure to civic learning opportunities

Distribution of Youth Typology on Two Core Beliefs