GOTV Youth Report

Research on Civic Engagement, Civic Knowledge,
and effective Get-Out-The-Vote Messaging for Americans 18-29

Research By

Public Wise
Research & Education Fund

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Introduction

Despite what was considered record turnout in the 2020 presidential election, a third of the voting age population did not participate. Youth turnout was higher in 2020 than in 2016, but that does not mean we should assume that youth turnout in the 2022 midterms will be higher than in the 2018 midterms, which had the highest midterm turnout in over 100 years.

Many things have changed since 2018 and 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic continues across the country. There is continual political turmoil related to issues such as abortion, civil rights, police violence, immigration, and student debt relief. The midterms will take place against the backdrop of recent mass shootings, recent Supreme Court decisions including the overturning of Roe v. Wade, rising gas prices and inflation, and behind it all the cloud of the events of the last election with the false claims of voter fraud, election subversion, and the storming of the Capitol building on January 6, 2021.

Given the complicated social landscape we find ourselves in with the 2022 midterm elections fast approaching, Public Wise and HeadCount wanted to better understand where young potential voters stand and what kind of messaging speaks to them in this political climate. We also wanted to know what key issues are top of mind for young potential voters today, what kind of civic participation they engage in, and what they know about the midterm elections. We partnered with Change Research, to field a survey and message test to try to answer those questions.

We present our main findings in the report below. We begin with a summary of the key takeaways from our research, followed by a description of our methodology. Next, we discuss specific findings on key issues weighing on the minds of today's young potential voters.

Then we describe the political positions of young potential voters, their news consuming habits and trust in the media, their ideas about civic responsibility, and the civic activities they say they are or have been engaged in.

After that we present our findings on the state of young people's civic knowledge related to our government and elections.

Finally, we present the results of our test of message frames and offer some conclusions. Additional detailed information is offered in the appendix.

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Summary of Key Takeaways

- The top issues worrying young Americans today are **abortion/women's rights, the economy/cost of living, and climate/the environment**
- Young Americans are engaged in a number of civic activities separate from voting - top among them is **expressing political opinions online**
- Young Americans, particularly online and engaged young Americans, know more about the midterm elections than we might suspect. Although based on open-ended responses to the question "what are the midterms?" some of them are not completely sure exactly what the midterms are, **91% know that the next midterm election is in 2022.**
- Overall, fewer young Americans are highly motivated to vote compared to samples with older Americans. Only **43% of young people said they are 10 out of 10 motivated to vote** in the upcoming elections in November. In a general population survey we conducted with Change Research in February 2022, 54% of Americans aged 18-34 said they were 10 out of 10 motivated to vote, while that number was 76% for all American adults
- **75% say they think abortion should be legal in all or most cases.**
- The most common platform young potential voters report going to for news is YouTube.
- **75% of young potential voters say they express their political opinions online** and just over **50% say they have contacted an elected official** sometime in the last 5 years.
- Despite three-quarters reporting that they already express political opinions online, **very few are willing to say they are likely to share** the tested message frames on social media.

- Despite being very concerned with a lot of social issues, the *Issues that Matter Most* message did not resonate as well as we expected given that it was the top message for all age groups, including young adults, based on the Ad Council's 2019 message testing prior to the 2020 elections – open-ended responses indicate that the kind of neutral language necessary for nonpartisan messaging is not specific enough to capture their approval.
- While messages playing on the *Power of the Youth Vote* may empower some young voters, about a third who saw this frame reacted negatively, indicating that they found it to be disingenuous, patronizing, or pandering.
- While none of the messages played particularly well, the *Voting as Accountability* message had a slight edge over the others when considering a combination of evidence from the open- and closed-ended responses.
- Based on the open ended responses, young potential voters generally agree with the positive sentiments of the messages, albeit to varying degrees. However, they express skepticism that they can come to fruition in the existing system, which they perceive to be broken.
- Lack of trust in the system may be a barrier that is difficult for positive GOTV messaging to overcome.

Methodology

Public Wise and HeadCount partnered with Change Research to poll young Americans about their civic engagement, their civic knowledge, the issues that are top of mind for them right now, and their reaction to six message frames aimed at getting people out to the polls.

Public Wise Research crafted the questionnaire and message frames with input and expertise from HeadCount. The form of the civic engagement questions followed other recent public surveys meant to gauge participation in civic activities.

The section was intended to understand the extent to which young people are or have participated in a range of civic and political activities such as expressing their political opinions online, donating to a political campaign, participating in a protest, and interacting with elected officials.

We additionally asked questions to gauge opinion on the importance of certain activities to the functioning of democracy. These included questions about the importance of things like paying taxes and serving jury duty.

In addition, we included a section on civic knowledge, consisting of a series of questions about government and elections in the form of multiple choice questions. This section was intended to assess the level of knowledge among young Americans today.

There is often the lament that young people have not gotten sufficient civic education and this section of the survey was meant to ascertain to what extent young Americans know basic facts about our government and election system.

We also asked our respondents to list the three issues that are top of mind as they think about the upcoming midterm elections. Open-ended responses were coded in categories by Change Research so that we could quantify the issues that came up the most across all respondents, as well as the issues that were most likely to be mentioned first.

Respondents were asked if they are registered to vote, about their political affiliations, where they believe they fall on an ideological scale, their educational attainment, their demographic characteristics, the extent to which they follow the news, the news sources they rely on, and how much they trust the news media. Finally, the questionnaire included six message frames that we wanted to test with a youth audience.

The six message frames were crafted by Public Wise Research and refined in partnership with HeadCount. Each respondent was randomly assigned one message out of the six, so that each respondent only saw one message.

Respondents were asked to read the message they were shown and then respond to the message with several questions. First, they were asked to respond to an open ended question about how the message made them feel. Then, they were asked how likely they were to share the message on social media. Those who had indicated earlier in the survey that they were not registered to vote were asked if the message made them more or less likely to register. And those who were already registered to vote were asked if the message made them more or less likely to vote in the midterms. The full questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

The survey was fielded online by Change Research from May 1-16, 2022. There were 3,241 respondents from the population of young Americans aged 18-29. Data collection was paused briefly after the leak of the draft Supreme Court decision in the abortion case. Most data was collected following the leak once collection resumed.

The approximately 700 respondents who answered the survey prior to the leak have been coded as pre-leak so we can account for any impact the leak had on responses.

Sample weighting was done by Change Research. The sample was weighted by the demographics for 18-29 year olds from the Census demographics in the 2020 voting supplement based on age/sex, education/sex, census 4-way region, and race-ethnicity/sex, and by voter turnout and vote choice based on the AP Votecast exit polls. See Appendix B for a more detailed discussion of the challenges of weighting samples of youth populations in the US.

The sample skews towards Democrats and Biden voters, but this is credible based on the estimates for the younger population that are available. Despite the fact that many polls are now done using web based sampling methods, it is worth noting that there are limitations to samples collected through online polling and it is not clear how these limitations affect sampling and results. Our sample is likely to be skewed towards young people who are both online and willing to take the time to engage in a political or public opinion survey. Given this, we expect our findings are representative of the views of moderately to very engaged young people. However as with all polling, we continue to grapple with the problem of nonresponse bias among the segment of the population that is less engaged and therefore less reachable.

Data coding and analysis was conducted by Public Wise Research. Open-ended responses to the question about how the messages made respondents feel were coded both for value, such as positive, negative, or neutral, and also into categories based on the type of response.

The results and conclusions presented below are based on cross tabulations and multinomial logistic regressions run in Stata 17.

Sample Descriptives

Education
High school or less	25.37%
Some College	35.35%
Associate's or 2 year degree	8.23%
Bachelors or 4 year degree	23.17%
Graduate degree	7.64%
Education unknown	0.23%

Age
18-24	52.69%
25-31	47.31%*
%Female	51.36%

Race/ethnicity**
Black	13.53%
White	77.90%
Hispanic (race)	16.92%
Asian	3.81%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.48%
Hispanic (ethnicity)	3.06%

Registered to vote
No	19.09%
Yes	75.63%
Not Sure	5.27%

Vote Choice
Did not vote	20.90%
Biden	31.70%
Trump	16.10%
Jorgensen	4.20%
Could not vote	27.10%

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll Conducted May 2022. All data are weighted using weights provided by Change Research.

*Respondents were asked 'year of birth' and age was calculated by subtracting year of birth from 2022. Respondents who answered 'year of birth' was 1992 could either be 29 or 30 depending the month of their birth. There were fiver respondents who made it through the screener to be included in the sample, but stated they were born in 1991, making them either 30 or 31.

**Will not sum to 100% because respondents can select more than one racial category.

Key Issues

There are many issues that young Americans are thinking about these days. When asked that three issues are top of mind when thinking about the 2022 midterms, our respondents mentioned dozens of distinct issues.

Change Research categorized these responses into 40 categories and Public Wise Research further condensed them into 16 different substantive categories.

Details on how we coded the categories and a breakdown of how the issues ranked are available in Appendix C. Many issues were only mentioned by a handful of people, but there were a few that came up again and again.

Top 3 Top of Mind Issues for 2022 Midterms
(excluding the "other" category)

First Issue
1. Abortion/Bodily Autonomy/Women's Rights/Birth Control (31.12%)
2. Economy/Cost of Living/Poverty (17.74%)
3. Climate Change/Environment (8.38%)

Second Issue
1. Economy/Cost of Living/Poverty (16.25%)
2. Abortion/Bodily Autonomy/Women's Rights/Birth Control (10.59%)
3. LGBTQ Rights (7.22%)

Third Issue
1. Economy/Cost of Living/Poverty (14.25%)
2. Social Issues/Social Justice/Labor (7.66%)
3. Climate Change/Environment (7.60%)

The issue that was mentioned by the most respondents, regardless of the mention order, was related to women's rights, abortion, bodily autonomy, and birth control. This was true for the full sample of respondents, who completed surveys both before and after the Politico story leaked the draft Supreme Court decision in the Dobbs case that would overturn the ruling in Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood v. Casey. 31% of Americans aged 18-29 put some version of this category of issues first when asked to name their three top of mind issues. A full 40% mentioned abortion/bodily autonomy/women's rights/birth control as one of the top issues regardless of order. We suspect that if the survey had been fielded after the decision in Dobbs v. Jackson, we would have seen an even higher percentage of respondents mentioning these issues in their top three than we did following the leaked draft opinion.

The next most mentioned group of issues related to the economy, cost of living, and poverty. This category also included mentions of gas prices and inflation. Young Americans are particularly concerned with cost of living and economic issues. In polling that Change Research recently conducted with Teen Vogue, they found that many young Americans believe that they will be financially worse off than their parents and feel that they will not be able to afford to start families based on their assessment of their economic outlook.

The third most mentioned issue was related to climate change and the environment. Other top issues were LGBTQ rights and other social justice issues. Young Americans today are concerned about rights, their financial situation, and the health of the planet.

Finally, our survey was conducted prior to the mass shootings in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas, and prior to the Supreme Court ruling that struck down New York's restricted concealed carry gun law. We suspect that gun control, gun safety, domestic terrorism, hate crimes, and police reform would have been mentioned more often by more people had the survey been conducted immediately after these tragic events.

Issue Positions

Compared to the general population, younger voters' views are generally more likely to identify with ideologies on the left side of the political spectrum, and our sample is no exception.

About 43% of young people in our sample identify as progressive, 17% identify as liberal, 23% say they are moderate, and only 17% identify as conservative.
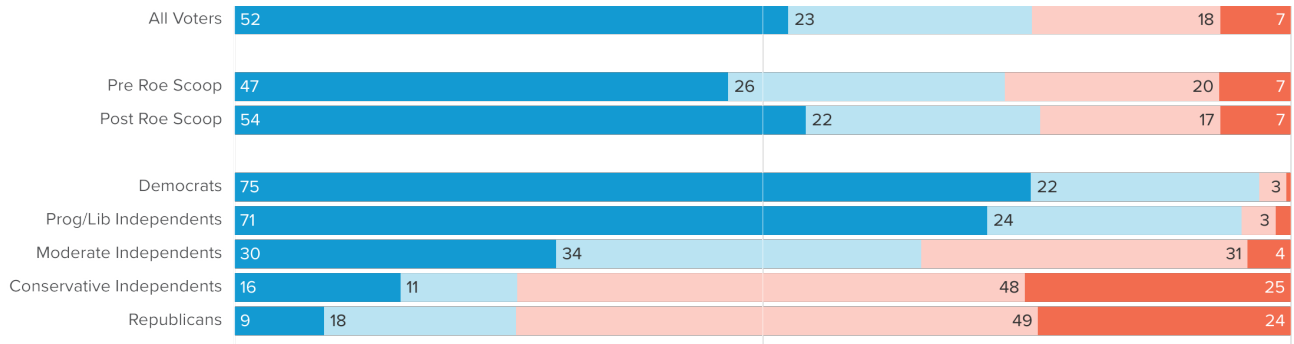
This distribution is broadly consistent with other surveys of younger people, although our sample may skew slightly more to the left.

For example, the table below shows the partisan lean of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans in our sample.

Partisan and Ideological Lean

Strong Democrat	22
Not Strong Democrat	12
Independent Lean Democratic	20
Independent Lean Neither	20
Independent Lean Republican	9
Not Strong Republican	7
Strong Republican	11

In the Change Research/Teen Vogue Vibe Check, their sample of 18-34 year olds consisted of 23% strong Democrats, 12% not strong Democrats, 16% Independents that lean Democratic, 17% of Independents leaning toward neither the Democrats nor the Republicans, 10% Independents leaning Republican, 7% not strong Republicans, and 14% strong Republicans.

Position on Abortion

All Voters	52	23	18	7
Pre Roe Scoop	47	26	20	7
Post Roe Scoop	54	22	17	7
Democrats	75	22		3
Prog/Lib Independents	71	24		3
Moderate Independents	30	34	31	4
Conservative Independents	16	11	48	25
Republicans	9	18	49	24

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

Consistent with their more left-leaning ideological positions, younger people's views on social issues also skew to the left. For example, both before and after the Supreme Court draft decision was leaked, roughly three-quarters of 18-29 year olds in our sample expressed that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. More than half (52%) of all respondents said it should be legal in all cases. Support for abortion rights among 18-29 year olds is higher than that of the general population. In a survey of US adults of all ages, which we conducted with Change Research in February 2022, 63% said abortion should be legal in all (35%) or most (28%) cases.

How much, if at all, would it bother you to regularly hear people speak a language other than English in public places in your community?

● Not at all ● Not much ● Some ● A lot

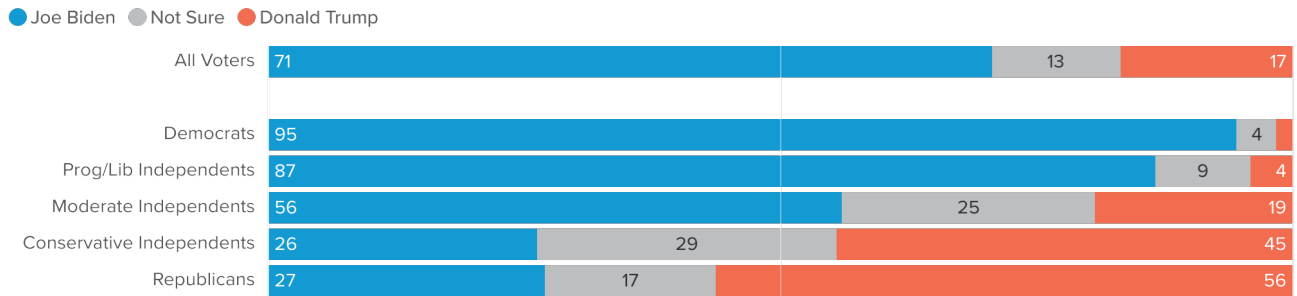|	Not at all	Not much	Some	A lot
All Voters	75	16	6	3
Democrats	87	9		
Prog/Lib Independents	89	7	3	
Moderate Independents	65	27	6	
Conservative Independents	53	25	15	7
Republicans	45	31	15	10
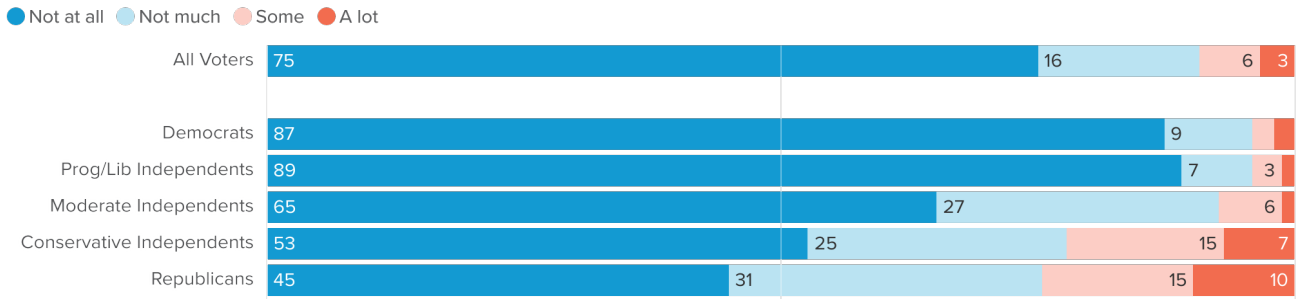
Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

We also asked 18-29 year olds how much, if at all, it would bother them to regularly hear people speak languages other than English in their community. Three-quarters say it would not bother them at all, with an additional 16% saying not much. Only 9% said it would bother them some or a lot. There are partisan differences, but even among Republicans, only a quarter said it would bother them some or a lot, with just under half (45%) saying not at all. This too sets 18-29 year olds apart from the general population, 29% of which said it would bother them a lot or some in our February survey of US adults of all ages. This share jumps up to 54% among Republicans.

Who do you believe got more votes in the 2020 election?

● Joe Biden ● Not Sure ● Donald Trump

	Joe Biden	Not Sure	Donald Trump
All Voters	71	13	17
Democrats	95		4
Prog/Lib Independents	87	9	4
Moderate Independents	56	25	19
Conservative Independents	26	29	45
Republicans	27	17	56

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

Despite the reality that Biden won the 2020 election, the perpetuation of the Big Lie and false claims of election fraud spread by Trump and others on the right before and after the election have created ideological differences in beliefs about who won the election. Surveys of the general population, including ours from February 2022, show that about a third of Americans, or three-quarters of Republicans and a third of Independents, believe that Donald Trump won the 2020 election. An additional 14% of Independents and Republicans are not sure. Among younger people, the share of those that believe Trump won the election is lower. In our sample, about 17% of the full sample, or 56% of Republicans, and 14% of all Independents believe that Trump got more votes than Biden in 2020. Another 17% of Republicans and Independents are not sure who received more votes.

Motivation to Vote

Legend: ● 10 ● 9-6 ● 5 ● 4-1 ● 0

	10	9-6	5	4-1	0
All Voters	43	24	8	12	14
Before Roe Scoop	38	28	8	11	15
After Roe Scoop	45	22	7	12	13
Democrats	55	27	6	7	4
Prog/Lib Independents	28	22	10	17	23
Moderate Independents	25	25	10	20	19
Conservative Independents	31	23	8	11	27
Republicans	63	18	4	7	8
Black	30	22	12	21	15
Hispanic	45	21	9	9	16
White	45	25	6	11	13
White 18-24 Men	41	26	7	13	13
White 18-24 Women	46	28	7	11	8
White 25-29 Men	47	22	7	8	16
White 25-29 Women	47	21	6	12	14
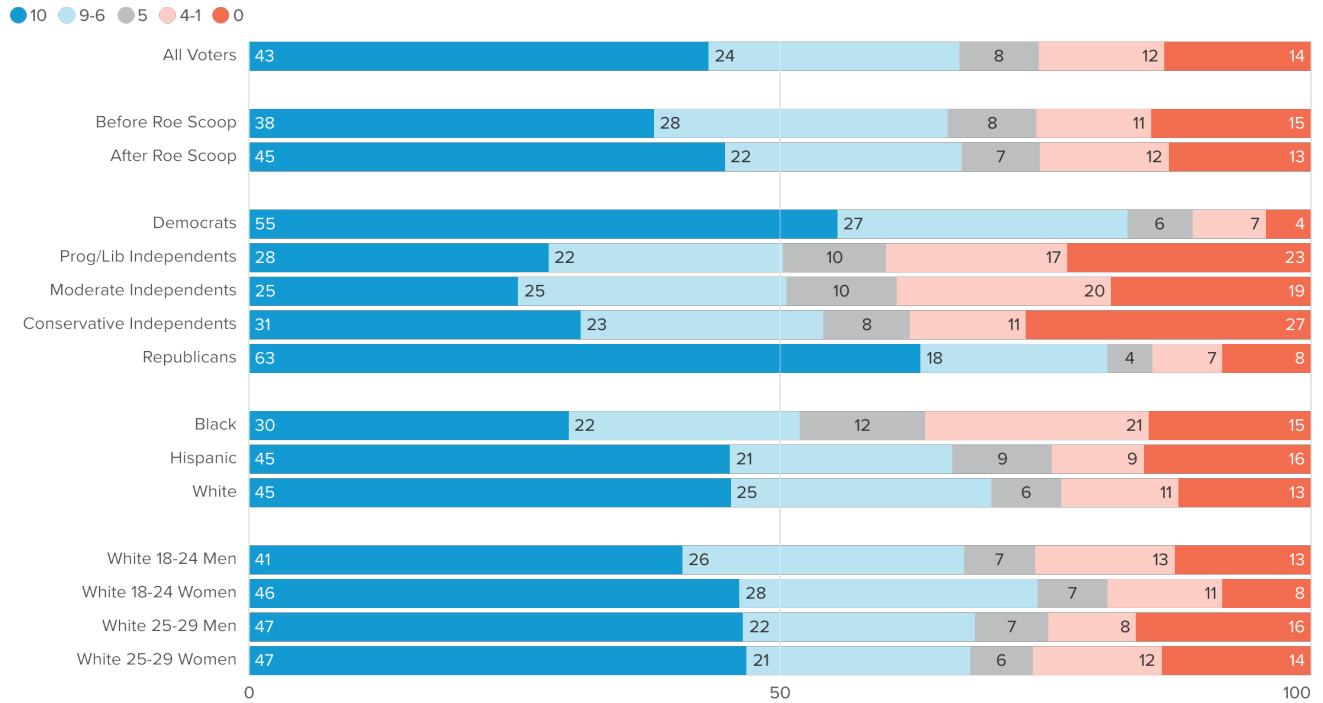
Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

Among 18-29 year olds, motivation to vote in the 2022 midterms is not especially high. Only 43% of the full sample is highly motivated, indicating that they are at a 10/10 motivated to vote in the upcoming midterms. This share increased slightly following the leak of the Supreme Court decision on abortion, but even in the immediate aftermath of the leak, less than half (45%) said they are highly motivated to vote. Motivation to vote is highest among Republicans, 63% of which are highly motivated. Just over half of Democrats (55%) said the same. Only about 28% of all Independents are highly motivated to vote.

Trust in News

The majority of young people pay at least some attention to the news, with about a third paying "a lot" of attention to the news and more than half (53%) paying "some attention to the news, but not a lot." Only 16% rarely or never pay attention. Looking at Democrats and Republicans, there is little difference in attention to the news. Roughly a third pay a lot of attention and about half pay some attention to the news. Half of all Independents also pay some attention to the news, but they are less likely to pay a lot of attention to it, with 29% of all Independents indicating that they pay a lot of attention. However, left-leaning Independents are more likely to pay a lot of attention than those that lean neither toward Republicans nor Democrats and those that lean right.

How much attention do you pay to the news?

● I pay a lot of attention to the news   ● I pay some attention to the news, but not a lot   ● I rarely pay attention to the news   ● I never pay attention to the news

	I pay a lot of attention	I pay some attention, but not a lot	I rarely pay attention	I never pay attention
All Voters	32	52	13	3
Democrats	34	57	7	
Prog/Lib Independents	35	49	14	
Moderate Independents	21	53	24	3
Conservative Independents	25	49	17	9
Republicans	37	48	12	4
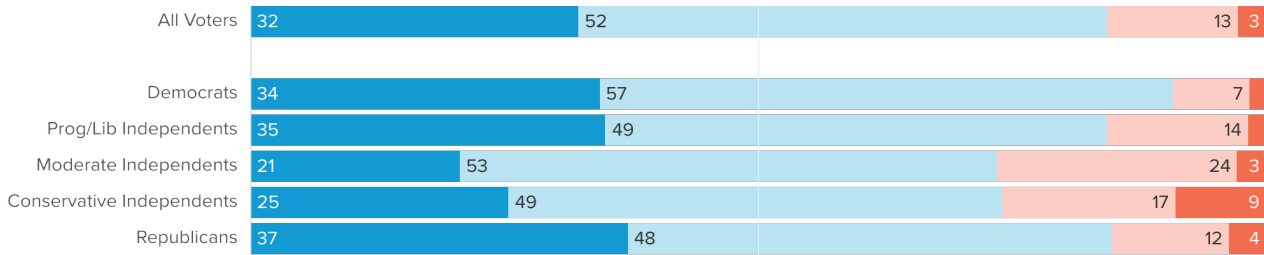
Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

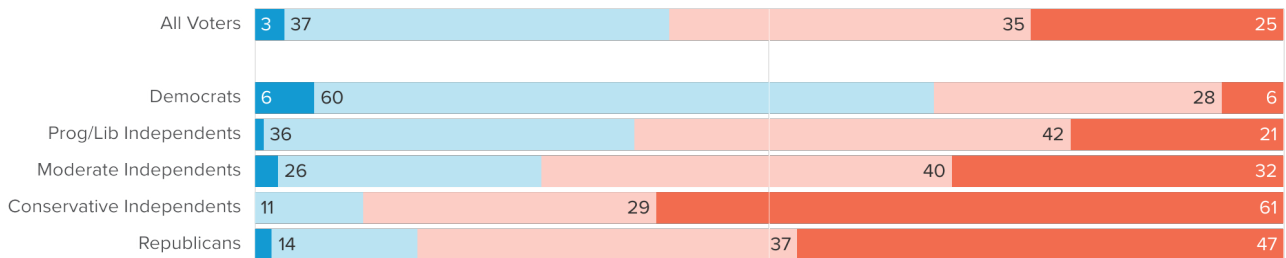Although a majority of the 18-29 year olds we talked to pay at least some attention to the news, for the most part, they do not have much trust in it. When we asked "How much do you trust the news media in general?," only 3% said "a lot." 37% trust it "some," but 35% only trust it "a little" and a quarter do not trust it at all. Virtually no one has a lot of trust, but 60% of Democrats have some trust, which is much higher than Independents and Republicans. Conservatives trust the news the least, with 47% of Republicans and 61% of Republican leaning Independents indicating that they do not trust the news media at all. Only 6% of Democrats and 21% of Democratic leaning Independents said the same.

How much do you trust the news media in general?

● Trust a lot   ● Trust some   ● Trust a little   ● Do not trust at all

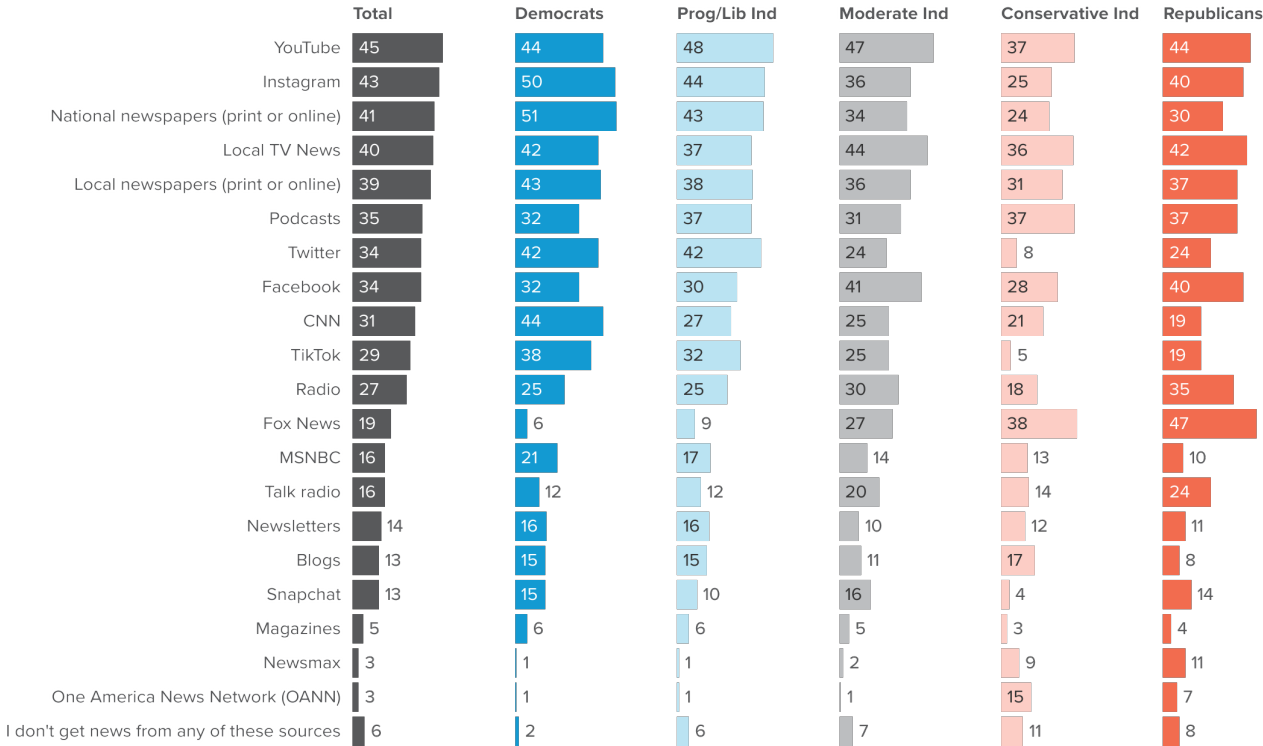|	Trust a lot	Trust some	Trust a little	Do not trust at all
All Voters	3	37	35	25
Democrats	6	60	28	6
Prog/Lib Independents		36	42	21
Moderate Independents		26	40	32
Conservative Independents		11	29	61
Republicans		14	37	47

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

Likely in part due to their lack of trust in the news media, many 18-29 year olds report getting their news largely from non-traditional news sources. For the full sample, the most cited source was YouTube, with 45% of respondents saying they get their news there. A close second was Instagram, with 43% selecting it as a source of news, and in third was national newspapers, with 41% selecting it as a source. Less than a third selected some of the more popular mainstream cable news, with 31% reporting CNN as a news source, 19% citing Fox, and 16% saying MSNBC. While partisan differences do exist, for example, the share of Republicans citing Fox is 47%, non-traditional sources remain popular regardless of partisan identity or ideological lean.

It is important to note that when it comes to news sources, non-traditional does not necessarily mean unreliable. Indeed, some people may be even consuming news from more traditional outlets through non-traditional sources. For example, outlets like PBS, CBS, CNN, and many more have YouTube channels where they stream major events and upload other broadcasted news coverage. Moreover, whether an account on any of these platforms is a reliable source of accurate information or a source of misinformation depends less on the platform and more on the specific account. While these platforms are clearly a source of misinformation for some, not everyone who uses them is exposed to inaccurate or unreliable information. As news sources become more fragmented due to information becoming available from a growing list of platforms and fewer people purchasing cable television, it is important to consider the specific source of news, rather than the platform from which it was consumed. We will take up this question in upcoming research.

Where do you get your news?

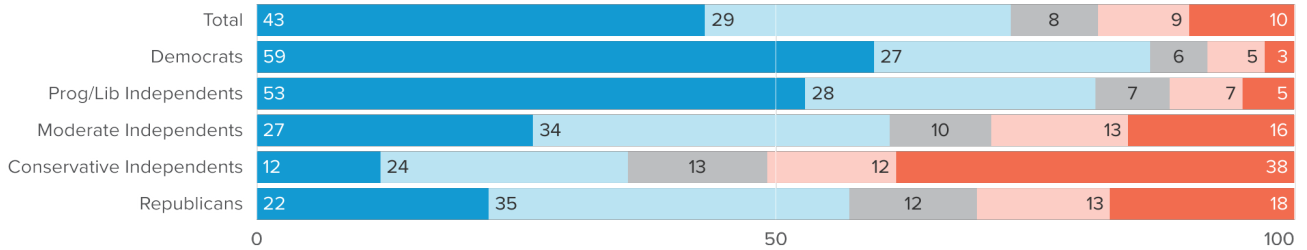|	Total	Democrats	Prog/Lib Ind	Moderate Ind	Conservative Ind	Republicans
YouTube	45	44	48	47	37	44
Instagram	43	50	44	36	25	40
National newspapers (print or online)	41	51	43	34	24	30
Local TV News	40	42	37	44	36	42
Local newspapers (print or online)	39	43	38	36	31	37
Podcasts	35	32	37	31	37	37
Twitter	34	42	42	24	8	24
Facebook	34	32	30	41	28	40
CNN	31	44	27	25	21	19
TikTok	29	38	32	25	5	19
Radio	27	25	25	30	18	35
Fox News	19	6	9	27	38	47
MSNBC	16	21	17	14	13	10
Talk radio	16	12	12	20	14	24
Newsletters	14	16	16	10	12	11
Blogs	13	15	15	11	17	8
Snapchat	13	15	10	16	4	14
Magazines	5	6	6	5	3	4
Newsmax	3	1	1	2	9	11
One America News Network (OANN)	3	1	1	1	15	7
I don't get news from any of these sources	6	2	6	7	11	8

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph
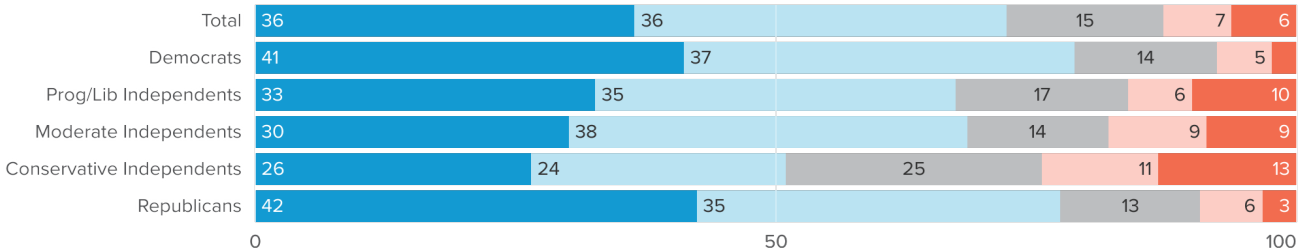
Civic Responsibility

Agreement with Statements

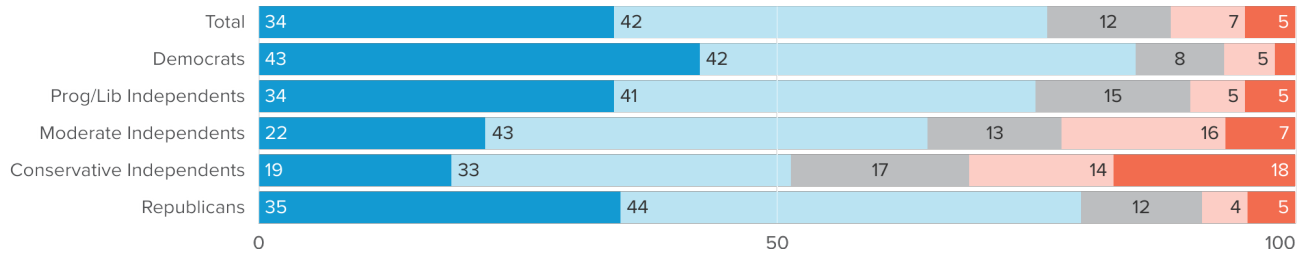● Strongly Agree ● Somewhat Agree ● Neither ● Somewhat Disagree ● Strongly Disagree

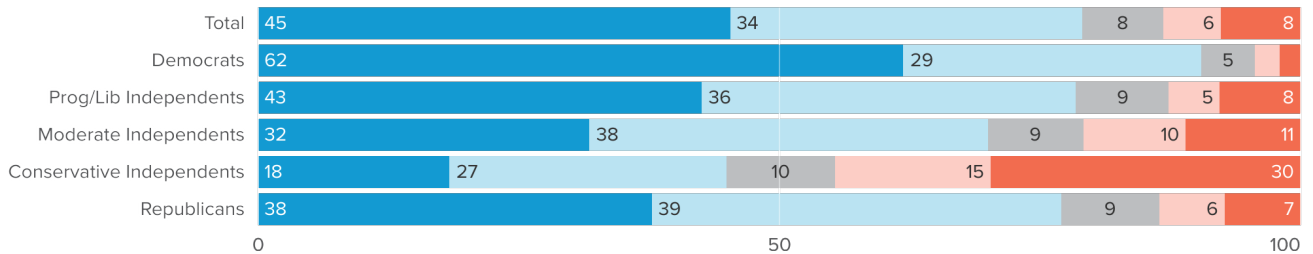### "Everyone should be required to pay taxes for the sake of the collective good"

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	43	29	8	9	10
Democrats	59	27	6	5	3
Prog/Lib Independents	53	28	7	7	5
Moderate Independents	27	34	10	13	16
Conservative Independents	12	24	13	12	38
Republicans	22	35	12	13	18

0 — 50 — 100

"Jury duty is my civic responsibility"

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	36	36	15	7	6
Democrats	41	37	14	5	
Prog/Lib Independents	33	35	17	6	10
Moderate Independents	30	38	14	9	9
Conservative Independents	26	24	25	11	13
Republicans	42	35	13	6	3

0 — 50 — 100

"Even if it is inconvenient, I am willing to fulfill civic obligations"

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	34	42	12	7	5
Democrats	43	42	8	5	
Prog/Lib Independents	34	41	15	5	5
Moderate Independents	22	43	13	16	7
Conservative Independents	19	33	17	14	18
Republicans	35	44	12	4	5

0 — 50 — 100

"Fulfilling civic obligations, like paying taxes, voting, and jury duty, is important to the functioning of our democracy"

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total	45	34	8	6	8
Democrats	62	29	5		
Prog/Lib Independents	43	36	9	5	8
Moderate Independents	32	38	9	10	11
Conservative Independents	18	27	10	15	30
Republicans	38	39	9	6	7

0 — 50 — 100

Views on civic responsibility are likely important for political participation as a greater sense of civic responsibility most likely translates into higher civic participation. In our sample, 18-29 year olds' sense of civic responsibility is generally consistent with that of adults in a general population survey we conducted with Amerispeak at NORC in October 2021. In that survey, 73% agreed that "everyone should pay taxes for the sake of the collective good" and that "jury duty is my civic responsibility," 74% agreed that "even if it is inconvenient, I am willing to fulfill civic obligations," and 80% agreed that "fulfilling civic obligations, like paying taxes, voting, and jury duty, is important to the functioning of our democracy."

Across all four measures of civic responsibility we asked about, the vast majority of 18-29 year olds reported that they strongly or somewhat agree that it is important. However, there are partisan differences in opinions on civic responsibility. More specifically, a large majority of Democrats strongly or somewhat agree that each is important. For Republicans, it varies. More than three-quarters of Republicans agree that "jury duty is my civic responsibility," that they are willing to fulfill civic obligations, even if it is convenient, and that fulfilling civic obligations is important for the functioning of democracy.

However, over half (57%) agree that "everyone should pay taxes for the sake of the collective good." Conservative-leaning Independents are even less likely to display high levels of civic responsibility. Interestingly, respondents who self identified as Republicans were more likely to agree that everyone should pay taxes for the sake of the collective good than conservative respondents who identified themselves as independent rather than Republican. This suggests an interesting difference between Republicans and conservative Independents that is worth further exploration.

Civic Engagement

Civic Engagement Among Young Americans
- Most (75%) have expressed support for an issue-based movement or expressed support for a campaign or candidate (59%) on social media some point in the
- last 5 years
- More than half (51%) have contacted an elected official in the past 5 years
- 39% have attended a protest in the last 5 years
- Roughly a third have attended a government meeting (35%), contributed money (31%), or attended a political event (34%)
- About a quarter have worked or volunteered for an issue based organization or political group
- 16% have worked or volunteered for a party, candidate, or campaign and 15% have attended a labor union meeting, voted in a labor union election, or supported or participated in a work action
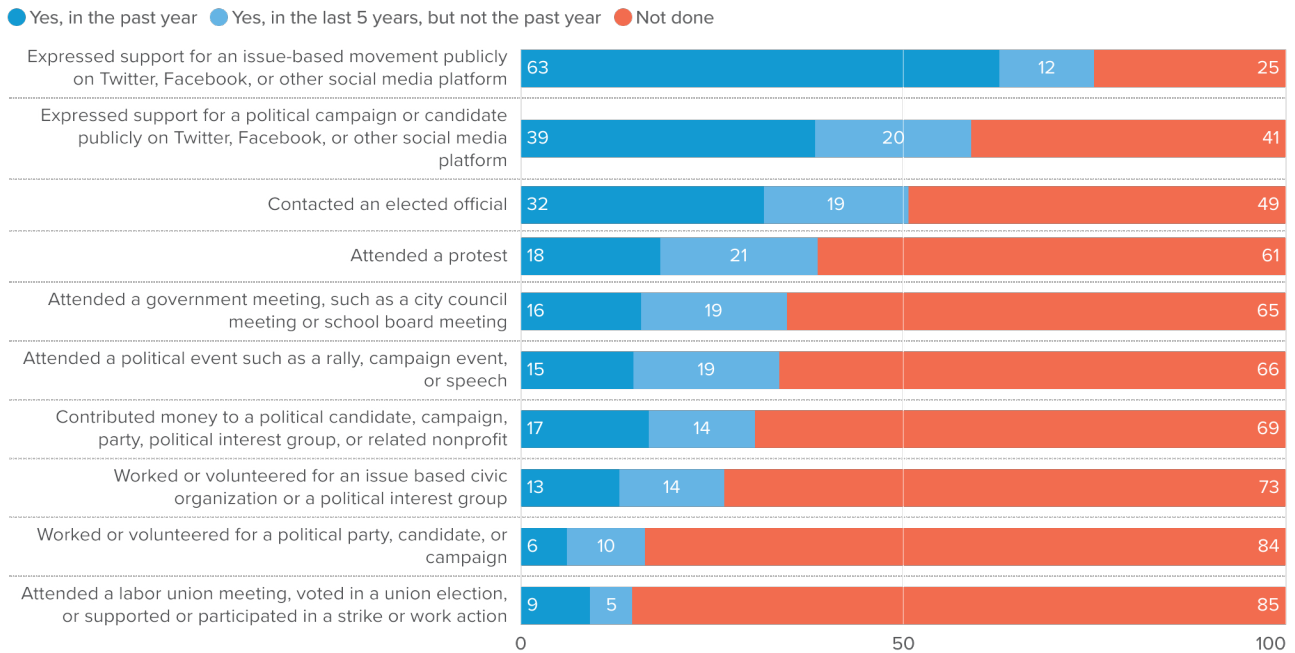
One way to think about voting behavior is through the lens of other types of civic engagement. We may expect individuals who participate in civic activities, engage with politics, express public opinions, and otherwise interact with social institutions to also be more likely to participate in democracy by exercising their right to vote to choose their government representatives.

Pew Research ran a poll just after the elections in November of 2020 asking Americans who reported voting about their civic engagement activities. They found that just over half of reported voters engaged in civic and political activities other than voting.

We asked our respondents about many of the same activities that Pew included in their study. We found that they self-report more engagement on every comparable measure of civic activity than Pew's sample of American voters from late 2020.

Older young people (25-29) are more engaged than younger ones (18-24) for all activities except 'attended a protest' and 'attended a government meeting' (39% of younger people and 38% of older people have attended a meeting; 35% of both older and younger people have attended a protest). For more details on civic engagement activities see the table in Appendix D.

Activist Engagement

● Yes, in the past year ● Yes, in the last 5 years, but not the past year ● Not done

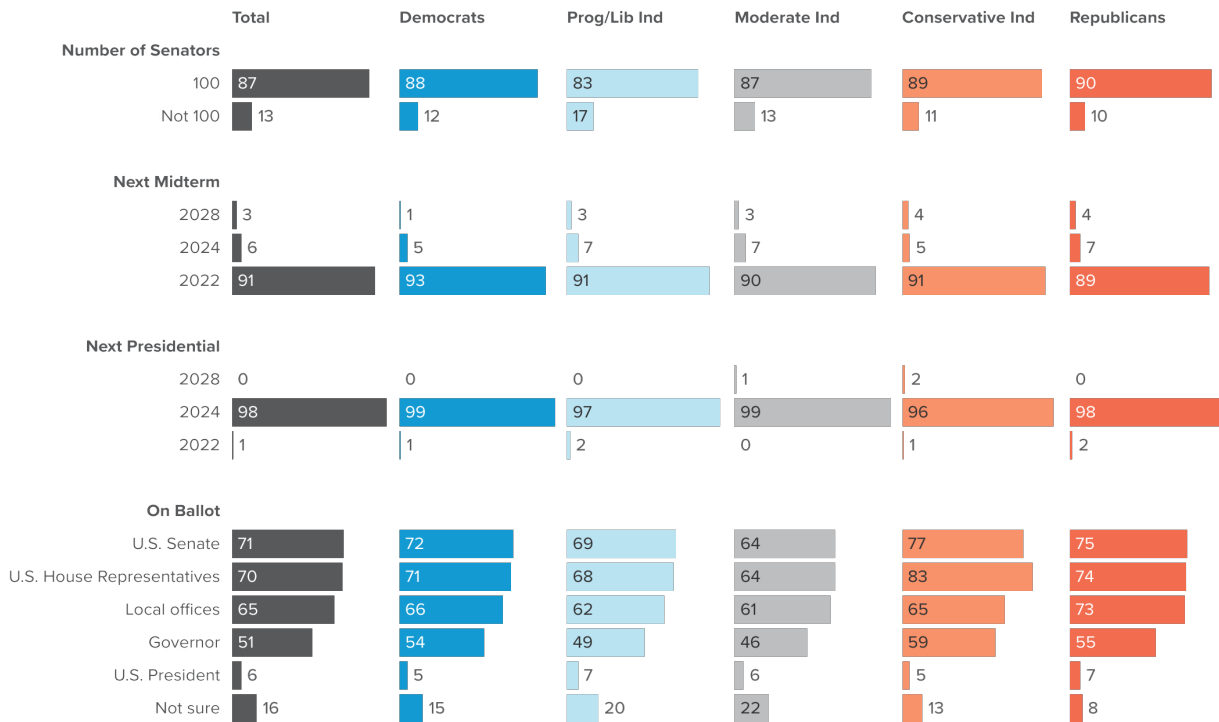|	Yes, in the past year	Yes, in the last 5 years, but not the past year	Not done
Expressed support for an issue-based movement publicly on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media platform	63	12	25
Expressed support for a political campaign or candidate publicly on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media platform	39	20	41
Contacted an elected official	32	19	49
Attended a protest	18	21	61
Attended a government meeting, such as a city council meeting or school board meeting	16	19	65
Attended a political event such as a rally, campaign event, or speech	15	19	66
Contributed money to a political candidate, campaign, party, political interest group, or related nonprofit	17	14	69
Worked or volunteered for an issue based civic organization or a political interest group	13	14	73
Worked or volunteered for a political party, candidate, or campaign	6	10	84
Attended a labor union meeting, voted in a union election, or supported or participated in a strike or work action	9	5	85

0   50   100

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph
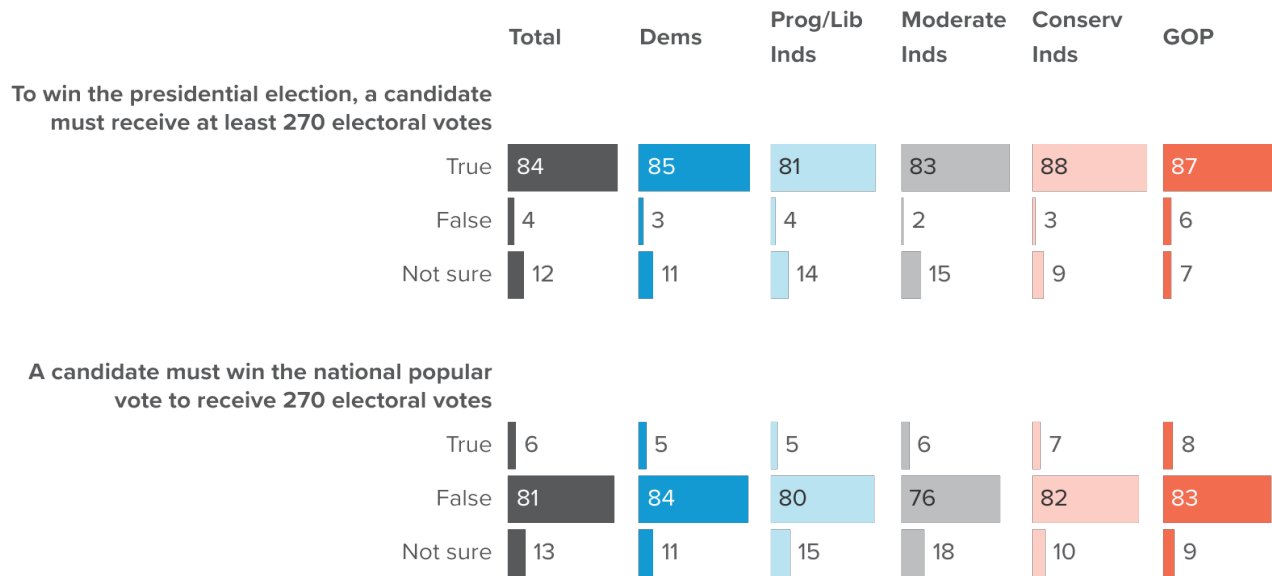
Civic Knowledge

We asked several questions to get a sense of younger people's civic knowledge. Across the board, 18-29 year olds' basic civic knowledge is high. 87% correctly answered the total number of senators in Congress, 91% correctly identified that the next midterm will be held in 2022, 98% correctly identified the year of the next presidential election, and only 6% incorrectly selected that the United States President will be on the ballot in 2022.

How many senators? When are the next midterms? When is the next presidential election? Who's on the midterm ballot?

	Total	Democrats	Prog/Lib Ind	Moderate Ind	Conservative Ind	Republicans
Number of Senators						
100	87	88	83	87	89	90
Not 100	13	12	17	13	11	10
Next Midterm						
2028	3	1	3	3	4	4
2024	6	5	7	7	5	7
2022	91	93	91	90	91	89
Next Presidential						
2028	0	0	0	1	2	0
2024	98	99	97	99	96	98
2022	1	1	2	0	1	2
On Ballot						
U.S. Senate	71	72	69	64	77	75
U.S. House Representatives	70	71	68	64	83	74
Local offices	65	66	62	61	65	73
Governor	51	54	49	46	59	55
U.S. President	6	5	7	6	5	7
Not sure	16	15	20	22	13	8

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

18-29 year olds in our sample likewise understood specific provisions of our electoral system, with 84% correctly saying it is "True" that a candidate must receive at least 270 electoral votes to win a presidential election and 81% correctly saying it is "False" that a candidate must win the national popular vote to receive 270 electoral votes. It is also worth noting that only 4% and 6% answered incorrectly to those questions. Rather than guessing when they were not sure, 12% were not sure about the former and 13% were not sure about the latter.

	Total	Dems	Prog/Lib Inds	Moderate Inds	Conserv Inds	GOP
To win the presidential election, a candidate must receive at least 270 electoral votes						
True	84	85	81	83	88	87
False	4	3	4	2	3	6
Not sure	12	11	14	15	9	7
A candidate must win the national popular vote to receive 270 electoral votes						
True	6	5	5	6	7	8
False	81	84	80	76	82	83
Not sure	13	11	15	18	10	9

Source: Public Wise/Change Research Poll conducted May 2022; Change Research graph

Compared to the general population, our data suggest that the basic political knowledge of younger people is quite high. In a nationally representative survey we fielded with Avalanche in August/September of 2021, we asked "How many senators represent each state in the United States Congress?" Only 40% responded with the correct answer, 2, while 22% were not sure, and a quarter said it depends on the state. 13% selected an incorrect number of 1, 4, or 6.

However, while these questions are similar, they are not the same. For one, discussion of the total number of senators has dominated discussions of politics in the media for several months. From the moment it was clear that Georgia would be holding two runoff elections that would determine the balance of the Senate, the importance (and limitations) of Democrats holding 50 seats in an evenly divided Senate has framed discussions of virtually every policy. This featured prominently in disourse around several important issues like voting rights, gun safety, budgets, and abortion, as well as the feasibility of those policies given the nature of the Senate and procedural issues like the filibuster. Given this, it is possible that everyone is just more familiar with the size of the Senate because it is so important for understanding the current political environment. For this reason, we caution against drawing strong conclusions about the civic knowledge of 18-29 year olds relative to the general population.

Additionally, when asked to describe what the midterms are, many correctly stated midterms are halfway through the presidential term and a time to elect House representatives and a third of the Senate. Still, there were some who did not know, including those who thought that the midterms were the same as the primary elections. Better civic education is necessary to make sure everyone knows more than just the basics, but also understands the details of our system.

Message Frames

Following the Ad Council's methodology from their 2019 report on messaging to different generations, we tested message frames with our 18-29 year olds. Message frames are short narrative frameworks or themes, rather than specific detailed messages. Frames are useful because they can be adapted to be more specific depending on their intended use and audience.

We tested six message frames, each written to represent a way of conceptualizing why people might vote. Each respondent was shown a randomly selected frame from the six possible frames. They were asked to read the frame and then answer several questions to measure their reaction to the frame they saw.

Issue that Matter Most
There are so many issues that impact our lives. I vote to make sure I have a say in how we confront these issues now and in the future.

Power of the Youth Vote
I vote because young people like me are the future and our vote is powerful.

Voting as Pragmatic
I vote because someone is going to get elected and I don't want that choice to be made without me.

Voting as Accountability
Elected officials should be accountable to the people they represent. I vote to hold my representatives accountable. If they don't keep their promises, I'll vote for someone else who will.

Right Direction
Even if there isn't an ideal candidate for me, I vote for whichever candidate will help steer the country closer to the direction I think we should go.

Representation Matters
I vote for a more representative government with leaders who look like me and understand my community.

Each respondent was first asked an open-ended question: how does this message make you feel? The message frame with the most positive response to the open-ended question was *Voting as Accountability*.

Voting as Accountability
Approximately **78%** of respondents who saw the *Voting as Accountability* message frame reacted either in **agreement** or otherwise **positively** in the open-ended response.

Respondents were also asked how likely they are to share the message on social media. Most respondents reported that they were not likely to share messages on social media, no matter the message frame they saw. This does not necessarily mean that they don't like the message or that the frame doesn't speak to them. It also does not mean that the message will have no impact on their own voting behavior. However, it does suggest that there may be challenges to inducing viral spread of GOTV messages on social media.

Message Seen -- How Likely to Share

	Issues that Matter Most	Power of the Youth Vote	Representation Matters	Right Direction	Voting as Accountability	Voting is Pragmatic
Very likely	11	12	9	10	17	13
Somewhat likely	18	17	20	24	20	17
Not too likely	23	26	20	25	1	21
Not at all likely	41	40	44	35	32	43
Not Sure	7	5	7	6	10	6
Total Likely	28	29	29	34	37	30
Total Not Likely	65	66	64	60	53	64
Net Likely	*-37*	*-37*	*-35*	*-26*	*-16*	*-34*

Message Seen -- More/Less Likely to Vote

	Issues that Matter Most	Power of the Youth Vote	Representation Matters	Right Direction	Voting as Accountability	Voting is Pragmatic
More likely	33	30	31	36	40	31
Not sure	54	54	59	49	51	57
Less likely	12	17	10	15	9	12

Registered voters were then asked if the message frame they saw made them more or less likely to vote in the midterm elections in 2022. Across each message frame, respondents were most likely to respond "Not Sure" when asked how the message would affect their voting behavior. Across all of the message frames, only about 30-40% of respondents said it would make them more likely to vote. 40% of the respondents who saw the *Voting as Accountability* frame said they thought that a message like that would make them more likely to vote.

In a preliminary analysis of open-ended responses to the question "How does this message make you feel?," the accountability frame received the largest share of responses that were positive or in agreement. However, while the tone was largely positive or in agreement, the responses did not enthusiastically support any frame, including accountability. One reason is that their agreement often came with caveats, such as criticisms of our election system, voting, or politicians more broadly. For example, responding to the accountability message, one respondent wrote, "I agree with this in principle but too often we are made to vote for the lesser evil." Although they agree with the message "in principle," they indicated that they are "not at all likely" to share the message on social media and weren't sure if it made them more or less likely to vote in the upcoming midterms. While preliminary, these findings suggest that 18-29 year olds agree with the sentiment of the accountability message, and to a lesser extent, even some of the other messages. However, their caveats suggest that there is a gap between the way they believe politics *should* work and how they believe politics do work, which dampens some of the enthusiasm they may otherwise have for these message frames.

While *Voting as Accountability* got the most positive response on the open-ended questions and had the highest percentage of respondents saying they were likely to share and more likely to vote than any of the other message frames, this does not guarantee that this frame is meaningfully different from the other messages on the share and vote metrics. To better compare messages, we ran a logistic regression analysis for both the share and vote questions. A full description of the analysis and findings can be found in Appendix E. In this analysis, we controlled for respondents' gender, age, self-reported ideology, and whether or not the respondent self-identified as white. We wanted to ensure that the percentages that we see in the cross tabs are not being driven by particular types of respondents, which could make certain messages look more successful than others in a way that might not be true for the majority of people.

Because the *Voting as Accountability* frame on its face seemed to be the best at first glance, in this analysis we compared all the other message frames to this frame. Based on the results of this analysis, there is not a clear winner among the message frames. One message does as well as *Voting as Accountability* when it comes to the odds of a respondent saying they are likely to share the message (the *Right Direction* frame), and two messages are indistinguishable from *Voting as Accountability* when it comes to the odds of a respondent saying they are more likely to vote after encountering the message (the *Issue* frame and the *Right Direction* frame).

In combination with the responses to the open-ended questions, we believe that while overall none of the messages performed particularly well. The *Voting as Accountability* frame has a slight edge over the others and *Voting as Accountability*, *Issue*, and *Right Direction* are generally better than the other three frames. This might suggest that some combination of *Voting as Accountability*, *Right Direction*, and *Issue* focused messaging could be useful in reaching the broadest youth audience. The open-ended responses indicated that young potential voters will not be satisfied with vague platitudes about issues that matter, as they find the sort of verbal gymnastics sometimes necessary to maintain compliance with rules around non-profit, non-partisan, and non-political status to come across as disingenuous. This is a legitimate hurdle that GOTV messaging will need to overcome to be effective.

Conclusion

Recent research, including our own, has pointed to a growing sense of disillusionment in the American public regarding how our government works and the utility of voting as a means to affect change in the system. This disillusionment appears to be amplified among younger Americans, who express distrust regarding existing political institutions and deep concern about the trajectories of their own lives. They care about issues like bodily autonomy, abortion access, climate change, and the economy; and they are worried about access to rights and how these and other social factors will impact their ability to live the lives they envisioned.

In this political environment, it would be unreasonable to expect that a message, even one that is well-crafted, would have a significant impact on its own. Indeed, the open-ended responses to our message frames revealed that young people agree with positive political sentiments. They agree that they should have representatives who will fight for the issues they think are important, who truly represent them, and who will drive our country in the right direction. However, they remain skeptical of any messaging that rests on platitudes rather than specifics. The message that received the most positive open-ended responses framed voting as a tool for holding elected officials accountable. Yet, despite the desire for accountability, with over three-quarters of respondents agreeing with the sentiment, many also expressed skepticism that the system would work that way in practice.

Likely in part because of their distrust in existing political institutions, young Americans defy many traditional expectations regarding political engagement and participation. For example, when it comes to party affiliation, they do not map neatly along ideological lines. Compared to older Americans, more Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 report that they are Independents, rather than Democrats or Republicans, suggesting that their beliefs do not fit nicely into the existing two-party system.

Additionally, young Americans overwhelmingly report getting their news from nontraditional sources. The most cited source of news among respondents to this survey was YouTube, followed by Instagram. As we noted, it is possible that young people are getting news from traditional sources of media via nontraditional platforms, but this finding reiterates the need for GOTV efforts to pay attention to different platforms when attempting to reach voters across the age spectrum.

Engagement also looks different for younger people. They regularly express their political opinions online. They participate in protests. Many even reach out to their elected officials. Despite their disillusionment, they are engaged with government and current events, just not in the traditional ways that earlier generations were.

However, political engagement does not necessarily translate to voting behavior. If young people are skeptical about the system's ability to actually make a difference in their lives, or about their ability to make a difference in the system via one vote, even messages they agree with will likely fall flat in efforts to energize and mobilize the young electorate. Young voters want accountability, they want the government to act on issues that matter to them in a way that is effective, they want to feel represented, and they want their voices to matter. Against this backdrop, the evidence suggests that the most effective message to mobilize young voters pairs accountability with some means of actually achieving it to produce a system they can believe in.

Appendix A

Public Wise x HeadCount Youth GOTV Message and Civic Knowledge Survey

National Survey
Adults aged 18-29
n = 3,241

Questionnaire
Change Research Required for Weighting Plus Other Demographics

---

1. What is your gender?
- Male
- Female

2. In what year were you born?

3. In what ZIP code do you currently live?

4. What is your race or ethnicity?
- Black or African American
- White / Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Asian / Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Other (please specify)

4a. (If not Hispanic) Are you from a Hispanic, Latino/a or Spanish-speaking background?
- Yes
- No

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- High school diploma or less
- Some college, but no degree
- Associate's degree, or two-year college degree
- Bachelor's degree, or four-year college degree
- Graduate degree

5a. [if answered 'high school,' 'some college,' or 'associate's degree' to Q5] Are you currently enrolled in a degree granting program?
- Yes
- No

5b. [if answered 'BA' or 'Graduate Degree' to Q5] Are you currently enrolled in a graduate or professional degree program (Masters, PhD, law school, medical school, etc)?
- Yes
- No

6. Are you currently registered to vote?
- Yes
- No
- Not sure

7. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a:
- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent/Other

7a. (If Democrat/Republican) Do you consider yourself a:
- Strong Democrat/Republican
- Not so strong Democrat/Republican

7b. (If Independent/Other) Do you consider yourself closer to:
- The Democrats
- The Republicans
- Neither

VOTING AND CIVIC BEHAVIOR

8. Have you voted in a federal election in the past?
- Yes
- No
- Not sure

8a. [if 'yes' to 8] Which recent federal elections have you voted in? Choose all that apply
- 2020
- 2018
- 2016
- 2014
- 2012
- 2010
- 2008

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements [strongly agree | somewhat agree | neither agree nor disagree | somewhat disagree | strongly disagree | not sure] [RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS IN GRID]
- Everyone should be required to pay taxes for the sake of the collective good
- Jury duty is my civic responsibility
- Even if it is inconvenient, I am willing to fulfill civic obligations
- Fulfilling civic obligations, like paying taxes, voting, and jury duty, is important to the functioning of our democracy

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GRID

10. Below is a list of activities that some people participate in and some do not. Please indicate if you have done each of these activities [Yes, in the past year | Yes, in the last 5 years, but not the past year | Not done] [RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS IN GRID]

- Worked or volunteered for a political party, candidate, or campaign
- Worked or volunteered for an issue based civic organization or a political interest group
- Attended a political event such as a rally, campaign event, or speech
- Contacted an elected official
- Contributed money to a political candidate, campaign, party, political interest group, or related nonprofit
- Attended a government meeting, such as a city council meeting or school board meeting
- Attended a protest
- Attended a labor union meeting, voted in a union election, or supported or participated in a strike or work action
- Expressed support for a political campaign or candidate publicly on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media platform
- Expressed support for an issue-based movement publicly on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media platform

11.How motivated do you feel about voting in the November 2022 election?
[10 - Extremely motivated to vote | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 - Not motivated at all to vote]

12. Thinking about the upcoming midterm elections, what issues are top of mind for you? Please list up to three [OPEN ENDED]

MESSAGE TESTING

Now we are going to ask you to read something and answer some questions about it

[RANDOM SPLIT AMONG 6 MESSAGES]
Split A Issues that Matter Most [16 % of sample]
There are so many issues that impact our lives. I vote to make sure I have a say in how we confront these issues now and in the future.

Split B Power of the Youth Vote [16% of sample]
I vote because young people like me are the future and our vote is powerful.

Split C Voting as Accountability [16% of sample]
Elected officials should be accountable to the people they represent. I vote to hold my representatives accountable. If they don't keep their promises, I'll vote for someone else who will.

Split D Voting is Pragmatic [16% of sample]
I vote because someone is going to get elected and I don't want that choice to be made without me.

Split E Right Direction [16% of sample]
Even if there isn't an ideal candidate for me, I vote for whichever candidate will help steer the country closer to the direction I think we should go.

Split F Representation Matters [16% of sample]
I vote for a more representative government with leaders who look like me and understand my community.

13. How does this message make you feel? [OPEN ENDED]

14. How likely would you be to share this message on social media?
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not too likely
- Not at all likely
- Not sure

15. [if answered 'not registered to vote' to Q6] Does this message make you more or less likely to register to vote?
- More likely
- Not sure
- Less likely

16. [if answered 'registered' to Q6] Does this message make you more or less likely to vote in the upcoming midterm elections?
- More likely
- Not sure
- Less likely

CIVIC EDUCATION/KNOWLEDGE

17. How many Senators are there in the U.S. Senate?
- 100
- 150
- 435
- 535
- 620

18. To the best of your knowledge, what are the midterm elections? [OPEN ENDED]

19. To the best of your knowledge, when are the next midterm elections?
- 2028
- 2024
- 2022

20. To the best of your knowledge, when are the next presidential elections?
- 2028
- 2024
- 2022

21. To the best of your knowledge, which offices are on the ballot in the election that will be held on November 8th? Please choose all that apply
- U.S. President
- U.S. House Representatives
- U.S. Senate
- {{State}} Governor
- Local offices
- I am not sure which offices are on the ballot this year

22. To the best of your knowledge, please indicate whether each of the following statements is true or false: [True | False | Not sure] [RANDOMIZE STATEMENTS IN GRID]
- To win the presidential election, a candidate must receive at least 270 electoral votes
- A candidate must win the national popular vote to receive 270 electoral votes

IDEOLOGY

23. How did you vote in the 2020 election for President, or for some reason were you unable to vote? [RANDOMIZE CHOICES]
• Joe Biden, the Democrat
• Donald Trump, the Republican
• Jo Jorgensen, the Libertarian
• Did not vote
• Not registered/Too young/Ineligible

24. Who do you believe got more votes in the 2020 election? [RANDOMIZE CHOICES]
• Joe Biden
• Donald Trump
• Not sure

25. How much, if at all, would it bother you to regularly hear people speak a language other than English in public places in your community?
• A lot
• Some
• Not much
• Not at all

26. Do you think abortion should be...
• Legal in all cases
• Legal in most cases
• Illegal in most cases
• Illegal in all cases

27. When considering politics and government, do you think of yourself as:
• Progressive
• Liberal
• Moderate
• Conservative

ADDITIONAL SEGMENTING QUESTIONS

28. Which of the following best matches your religious affiliation?
• Evangelical or born again Protestant
• Non-Evangelical Protestant
• Roman Catholic
• Mormon/Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
• Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox
• Jewish
• Muslim
• Buddhist
• Hindu
• Atheist
• Agnostic
• Something else [please specify]
• Nothing in particular

29. Please indicate which of the following statements best describes you.
• I pay a lot of attention to the news
• I pay some attention to the news, but not a lot
• I rarely pay attention to the news
• I never pay attention to the news

30. Please indicate which of the following statements best describes you:
• I pay a lot of attention to the news
• I pay some attention to the news, but not a lot
• I rarely pay attention to the news
• I never pay attention to the news

NEWS GRID

31. For each of the following sources, please indicate if it is a place you typically get news. Choose all that apply.
• Local TV News
• Fox News
• CNN
• MSNBC
• Newsmax
• One America News Network (OANN)
• Local newspapers (print or online)
• National newspapers (print or online)
• Radio
• Talk radio
• Podcasts
• Magazines
• Facebook
• Twitter
• YouTube
• TikTok
• Snapchat
• Instagram
• Blogs
• Newsletters

32. How much do you trust the news media in general?
• Trust a lot
• Trust some
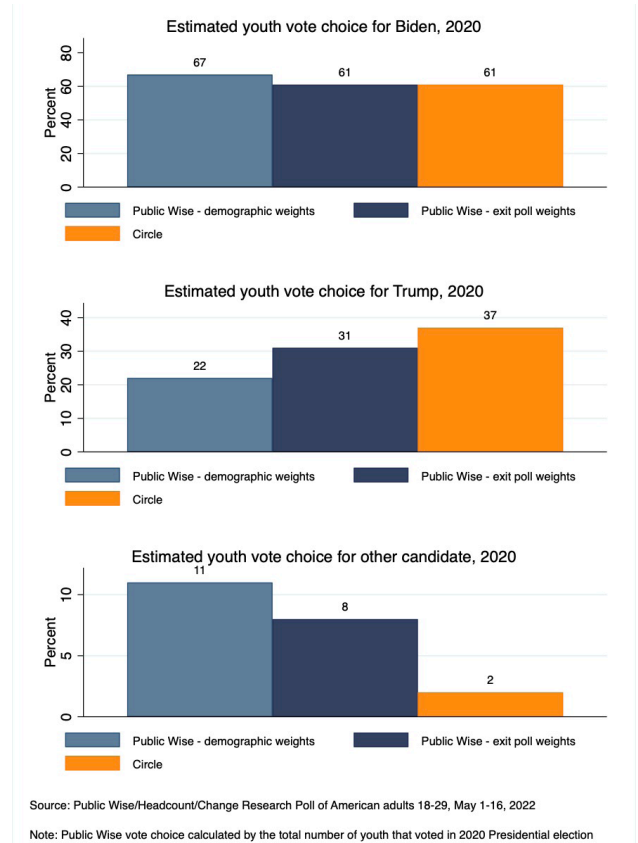• Trust a little
• Do not trust at all

Appendix B

Sample Weighting

Youth voting behavior is demonstrably difficult to estimate. Surveys often over represent youth voter turnout due to limited sample sizes and reliance on self-reported voting behavior[1]. In fact, research conducted by Pew found men and registered Democrats tend to over-report their voting behavior. Researchers are increasingly turning to commercial voter file data such as L2 to estimate voter turnout as they are often more representative than surveys[2]. However, a study conducted by Pew revealed commercial voter files may under-represent youth. On the other hand, Circle draws from the Census voter age population estimates and commercial voter file data to estimate youth voter turnout.

In an effort to approximate U.S. youth voters and minimize estimation error, we compare and contrast two sample weights created by Change Research – one made with a combination of turnout and vote choice estimates and demographic data, and one made solely with census demographic data – with estimates from L2[3] and Circle[4]. Our sample was weighted in two ways: (1) by demographics for 18-29 year olds from Census demographics in the 2020 voting supplement based on age/sex, education/sex, census 4-way region, and race-ethnicity/sex and (2) by the aforementioned demographics plus voter turnout and vote choice drawn from exit polls. The sample was not weighted by party affiliation because there is not a reliable data source for those population distributions. The chart below displays the comparison of our survey weights to alternative estimates of voter turnout.

Source: Public Wise/Headcount/Change Research Poll of American adults 18-29 May 1-16, 2022
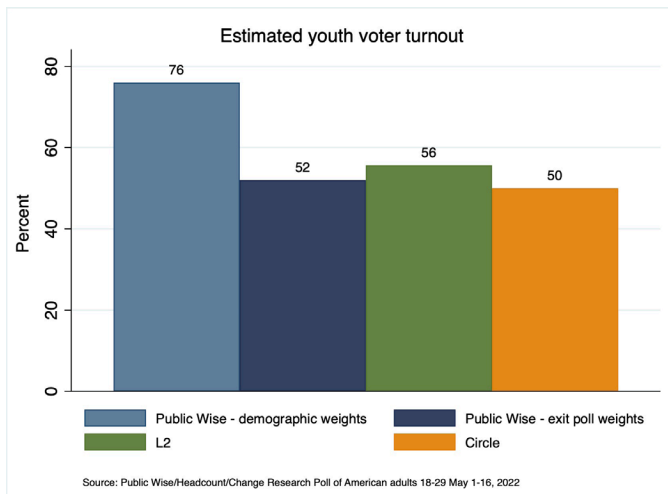
When we apply the sample weights that use only Census demographic data, the distribution in our sample skews toward voters, particularly those that voted for Biden, potentially underrepresenting nonvoters and Trump voters. Alternatively, the addition of exit poll data to our second weights reflect a sample of young people more closely aligned with L2 and Circle estimates on these political parameters. Given that our second weighting strategy utilizes both voter turnout and vote choice, we compare our weights with Circle's vote choice statistics for the 2020 presidential election, shown in the graph below.

Source: Public Wise/Headcount/Change Research Poll of American adults 18-29, May 1-16, 2022

Note: Public Wise vote choice calculated by the total number of youth that voted in 2020 Presidential election

Weighting by voter turnout and vote choice in addition to demographics reflects a population of young people that closely resembles Circle's population estimates for vote choice and voter turnout, though our sample skews somewhat toward third-party voters compared to Circle. Given alignment with these reputable sources, we apply weights using demographic and exit poll data to all survey data analysis in this report. While no survey can perfectly approximate the population, our weighting strategy ensures our analysis is consistent with existing research to more closely resemble the true population of 18-29 year olds.

Despite the fact that many polls are now done using web-based sampling methods, it is worth noting that there are limitations to samples collected through online polling and it is not clear how these limitations affect sampling and results. Our sample is likely to be skewed towards young people who are both online and willing to take the time to engage in a political or public opinion survey. While survey weights help to mitigate this effect, we expect our findings are more representative of the views of moderately to very engaged young people. However as with all polling, we continue to grapple with the problem of nonresponse bias among the segment of the population that is less engaged and therefore less reachable.

1   Barber, M., & Holbein J. (2022). 400 million voting records show profound racial and geographic disparities in voter turnout in the United States. PLoS ONE, 17(6), e0268134. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0268134
2   Fraga, B., & Holbein, J. (2020). Measuring youth and college student voter turnout. Electoral Studies, 65, 102086. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2019.102086
3   L2 is a commercial provider of voter file data. This includes all the data compiled from state voter files along with commercially created variables meant to predict things about individual voters.
4   CIRCLE, or the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, is a nonpartisan independent research organization affiliated with Tufts University. CIRCLE focuses their research on youth civic engagement.

Appendix C

Note on Key Issue Coding

Public Wise Research used Change Research's original coding scheme for categorizing the top issues in the open-ended responses, which included almost 40 categories, to combine issue codes into larger categories of codes. Any category that comprised less than 1% of responses to the first issue question was either combined with a similar category or it was put into the "other" category if there were no similar groups. For example, we combined Criminal Justice Reform (0.14%); Police Violence/Defund the Police (0.37%); and Racism/Black Lives Matter/Civil Rights (1.46%) into one category. However, issues like Too Much Liberalism/CRT (0.07%) or Public Transit/Infrastructure (.61%) were put into the "other" group. We did this for the first issue mentioned and used the same coding scheme for the second and third issues. Although there were a few codes in the second and third issues that were not in the first issue, they were all less than 1% of responses and most went into the "other" category.

The top groups include the following issue categories: (Climate Change/Environment and LGBTQ Rights were unchanged)

Abortion/Bodily Autonomy/Women's Rights/Birth Control
* Abortion/Bodily Autonomy/Women's Rights
* Birth Control

Economy/COL/Poverty
* Economy
* Inflation/Gas Prices/Supply Chain
* Housing/Affordability
* Jobs
* Minimum/Liveable Wage
* Poverty/Homelessness

Social Issues/Social Justice/Labor
* Social Issues/Moral Values
* Income Inequality
* Social Justice
* Tax the Rich
* Worker Rights
* Abolish Capitalism
* Equal Rights
* Human Rights
* Child Care/Family Leave (for the second issue question)

First Top of Mind Issue for 2022 Midterms

Abortion/Bodily Autonomy/ Women's Rights/Birth Control	31.12
Economy/COL/Poverty	17.74
Other	11.50
Climate Change/Environment	8.38
Social Issues/Social Justice/Labor	4.22
Health Care/Medicare for All	4.01
LGBTQ Rights	3.75
Taxes	2.37
Criminal Justice Reform/ Police Violence/Defund/Racism/ BLM/Civil Rights	2.32
Higher Education Affordability/Loans	2.14
Foreign Policy/Military/Ukraine	1.86
Second Amendment/Gun Rights	1.84
Immigration/Abolish ICE	1.72
Accountability in Government	1.66
Voting Access	1.58
Education	1.46
Gun Control/Safety	1.05
DK	0.51
Refused	0.43
No/None/Nothing	0.33

Second Top of Mind Issue for 2022 Midterms

Other	16.27
Economy/COL/Poverty	16.25
Abortion/Bodily Autonomy/ Women's Rights/Birth Control	10.59
LGBTQ Rights	7.22
Social Issues/Social Justice/Labor	7.00
Climate Change/Environment	6.28
Health Care/Medicare for All	6.04
Foreign Policy/Military/Ukraine	4.69
Criminal Justice Reform/ Police Violence/Defund/Racism/ BLM/Civil Rights	4.07
Higher Education Affordability/Loans	3.89
Education	3.83
Immigration/Abolish ICE	3.25
Taxes	2.80
Accountability in Government	2.11
Second Amendment/Gun Rights	1.90
Voting Access	1.89
Refused	0.74
Gun Control/Safety	0.73
DK	0.35
No/None/Nothing	0.09

First Top of Mind Issue for 2022 Midterms

Other	18.24
Economy/COL/Poverty	14.25
Social Issues/Social Justice/Labor	7.66
Climate Change/Environment	7.60
Health Care/Medicare for All	6.47
Abortion/Bodily Autonomy/ Women's Rights/Birth Control	6.34
Criminal Justice Reform/ Police Violence/Defund/Racism/ BLM/Civil Rights	5.95
Foreign Policy/Military/Ukraine	5.84
Education	4.28
Accountability in Government	4.27
Higher Education Affordability/Loans	3.72
Immigration/Abolish ICE	3.50
LGBTQ Rights	3.41
Taxes	2.39
Gun Control/Safety	1.76
Voting Access	1.55
Second Amendment/Gun Rights	1.36
Refused	0.84
DK	0.50
No/None/Nothing	0.08

Appendix D

Civic Engagement	18-24	25-31
Expressed support for issue-based movement on social media	72.23	78.09
Expressed support for a campaign or candidate on social media	53.92	64.58
Contacted an elected official	46.63	55.17
Attended a protest	39.24	38.23
Contributed money	21.91	40.36
Attended government meeting such as city council or school board	34.63	34.91
Attended a political event like rally, campaign event, or speech	30.51	37.40
Worked or volunteered for issue based org or political group	23.41	30.21
Labor union meeting, election, participation, or support	9.77	20.05
Worked or volunteered for party, candidate, or campaign	13.82	18.99

Percent includes those reporting having done each "in the last 5 years, but not the past year" and those who have done each in "in the past year."

Appendix E

Regression analysis of message sharing and voting

The below tables show results from a logistic regression analysis modeling responses to two questions: one question about whether respondents were likely to share the message they were shown and, for those who are registered to vote, if they felt that the message made them more likely or less likely to vote. In these models, we control for gender, age, race, and ideology. The results are exponentiated and show odds ratios. In the first table, the coefficients correspond to the log odds that a respondent said they would be likely to share the message compared to saying they would not or were not sure. In the second table, the coefficients correspond to the log odds that a respondent said they felt they would be more likely to vote after seeing a message compared to saying they were less likely to vote or not sure. Values less than one correspond to lower odds while values greater than one correspond to higher odds. Our predictor of interest, in both cases, is the message frame that respondents were shown. We are interested if particular message frames are associated with higher odds of being likely to share a message or being more likely to vote. In both models, we use the accountability message as our reference. This means that the coefficients tell us the log odds of respondents for each message frame compared to respondents who saw the accountability frame. Here we ignore the value of the coefficient (its magnitude) and pay attention instead to whether it is statistically significant and if the value is greater or lesser than one.

Beginning with Table 1, we can see that respondents who saw the issue frame, the power of the youth vote frame, the pragmatic frame, and the representation matters frame all had lower odds of saying they would be likely to share the message compared to respondents who saw the accountability frame. Respondents who saw the right direction frame were no more or less likely to say they were likely to share the message than respondents who saw the accountability frame. From the control variables we see that overall, regardless of the message frame they saw, women had higher odds of saying they were likely to share the messages than men. Age and race were not associated with odds of being likely to share a message. In terms of ideology, moderates had lower odds of saying they were likely to share a message, regardless of the frame, than progressives (our reference category). Liberals and conservatives were no more or less likely to say they would share the message than progressives.

Table 2 shows that respondents who saw the power of the youth vote, pragmatic, and representation matters frames had lower odds of saying the message made them more likely to vote compared to the respondents who saw the accountability frame. There was no statistically significant difference in odds of saying the message made them more likely to vote for the respondents who saw the issue, power of the youth vote, and pragmatic frames compared to the accountability frame. Overall, regardless of frame, women were more likely to say that the message made them more likely to vote. Older respondents had slightly lower odds of saying the message made them more likely to vote compared to younger voters. Liberals had higher odds of saying the message made them more likely to vote than progressives, while moderates had lower odds compared to progressives. There was not a significant difference in odds of saying the message made them more likely to vote between conservatives and progressives.

TABLE 1. Which Message is Most Likely to be Shared?

Not likely to share or not sure (reference)

Likely to share

MESSAGE FRAME	
Accountability (reference)	
Issue	0.668** (0.0895)
Power of youth vote	0.672** (0.0896)
Pragmatic	0.744* (0.0962)
Right direction	0.788 (0.103)
Representation matters	0.642** (0.0867)
DEMOGRAPHICS	
Female	1.770*** (0.147)
Age	0.983 (0.0106)
White	1.038 (0.100)
IDEOLOGY	
Progressive (reference)	
Liberal	1.042 (0.108)
Moderate	0.553*** (0.0637)
Conservative	0.778* (0.0917)

Observations	3117

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

TABLE 2. Which Message is Most Likely to Encourage Voting?

Less likely to vote or not sure (reference)

More likely to vote

MESSAGE FRAME	
Accountability (reference)	
Issue	0.797 (0.116)
Power of youth vote	0.688* (0.101)
Pragmatic	0.675** (0.0980)
Right direction	0.825 (0.118)
Representation matters	0.721* (0.105)
DEMOGRAPHICS	
Female	1.331** (0.117)
Age	0.939*** (0.0114)
White	0.882 (0.0908)
IDEOLOGY	
Progressive (reference)	
Liberal	1.657*** (0.186)
Moderate	0.722** (0.0896)
Conservative	1.137 (0.0908)

Observations	2600

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001