

## Youth GOTV Report: Spotlight on Geography

### Supplement to the Youth Vote GOTV Report

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Our youth voter report took a national view of public opinion, civic knowledge, and reactions to the GOTV message frames that we tested. Based on the national analysis, we made several evidence based recommendations for messaging strategy to reach potential young voters ahead of the midterm elections. But what about organizations that want to take a more geographically specific approach? In this memo, we describe the responses to many of the questions in our report by region and by urban/rural geographies. Ultimately, we find that taking into account region and urban/rural status our recommendations are still supported by the evidence. We detail our findings below and reiterate our recommendations at the end of this memo.

#### Defining Regions and Rural/Urban Designations

We used the [Census Bureau](#) regional divisions to divide respondents into regions. The regions and the states they include can be found in the table below. The regional breakdown of our sample is 9% Northeast, 40% South, 24% Midwest, and 27% West.

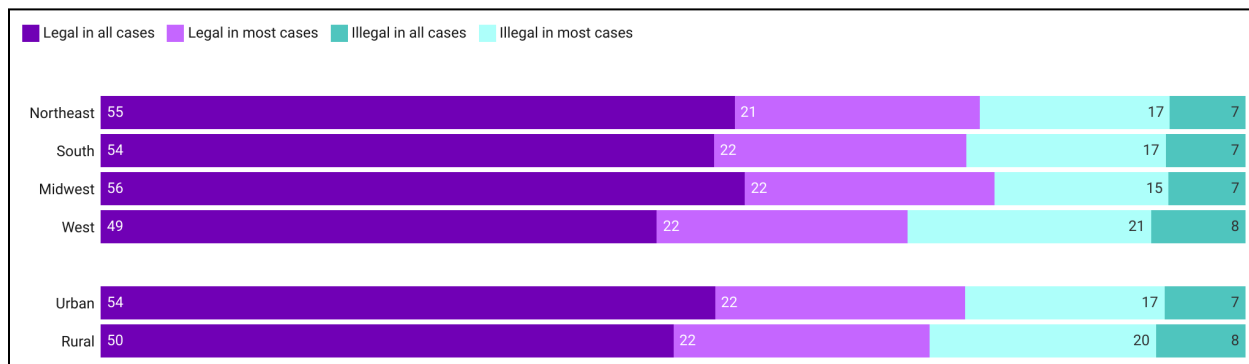
Region	States
Northeast	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont
Midwest	Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin
South	Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia
West	Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

In this analysis, we classify respondents as rural or urban using the 2013 Rural Urban Continuum Codes ([RUCC](#)).<sup>1</sup> RUCC includes nine categories that classify counties as metro (“urban”) or nonmetro (“rural”) according to population size and adjacency to one or more metro areas. Using this designation, 18% of our sample lives in rural areas and 82% lives in urban areas.

## Issue Positions

We noted in our Youth Report that three-quarters of young Americans think that abortion should be legal in most or all cases. The main divider of opinion on this question was party/ideology. When we split responses by region and by urban/rural status, we find that there are not notable differences by region. While slightly more young Americans in urban areas compared to rural areas and in the Midwest compared to the other regions say they think abortion should be legal in most or all cases, the differences are small and mostly within the margin of error.

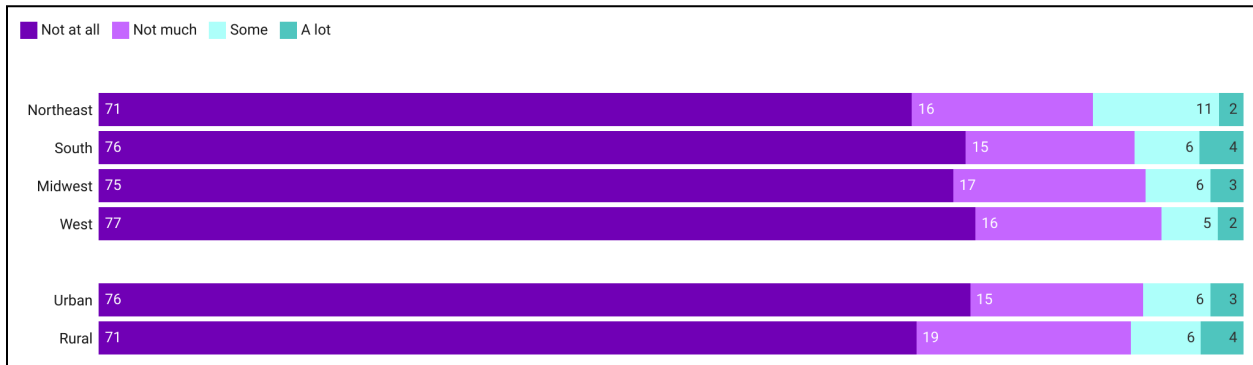
### Do you think abortion should be ...?



As a measure of social tolerance, we asked respondents if it would bother them to regularly hear people speak in a language other than English in public places in their community. 91% of young Americans across the country said that it would not bother them much or at all. Looking at the split by region and urban/rural, the geographic differences are very small.

<sup>1</sup> Thank you to Raeda Anderson, PhD for [sharing](#) code that converts zipcodes to county FIP codes and county FIP codes to RUCC codes.

## Would it bother you to regularly hear people speak in a language other than English in public places in your community?



The outcome of the 2020 election has been very polarizing. A surprising number of people in the country do not believe the factual outcome of the election. In order to get a sense of where young people fall with regards to the outcome of the 2020 election, we asked them who they think got more votes. In general, 71% of young people correctly believe that Joe Biden got more votes in 2020. When we look at opinion by geography we see a few notable differences. Young people in the West are a little less likely to believe that Biden won the most votes and a little more likely to be unsure of the results than young Americans in other regions of the country. Even still, two-thirds of young people in the West believe Biden got more votes. Young Americans in urban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to believe that Biden got more votes. Despite these differences, two-thirds or more of young Americans believe Biden got more votes regardless of region or geography.

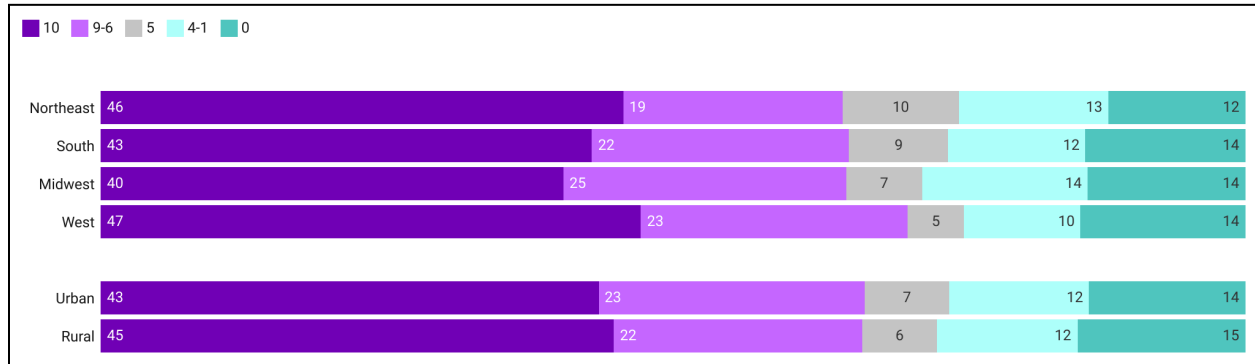
## Who do you think got the most votes in the 2020 election?



In order to gauge excitement leading up to the midterm elections we asked how motivated young Americans are to vote in November. We found that nationally 43% of young Americans are 10 out of 10 excited to vote. Young Americans in the Northeast and West appear to be a little more likely to be 10 out of 10 motivated to vote in November compared to young

Americans in the South and Midwest. There are no substantial differences in vote motivation between urban and rural young Americans.

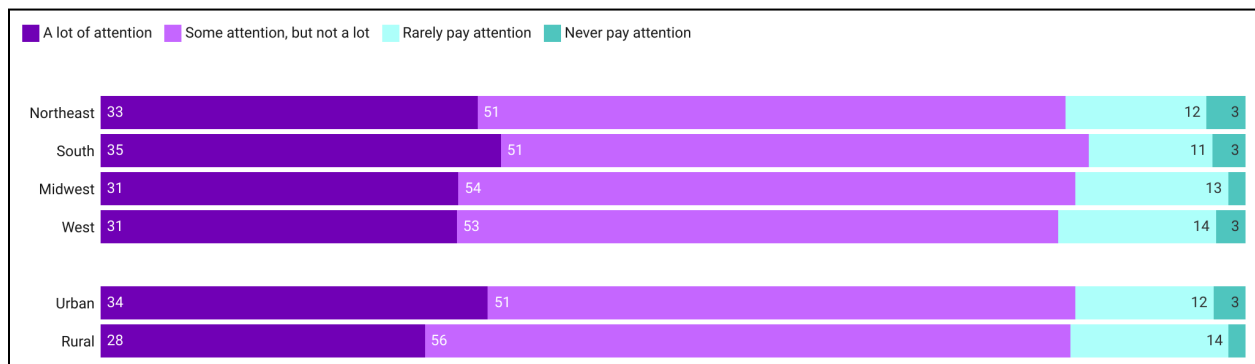
### How motivated are you to vote in November?



### News Media Attention and Trust

We wanted to know how much young Americans pay attention to the news. We found that nationally 32% of young Americans say they pay a lot of attention to the news and another 52% say they pay some attention to the news. For the most part, young Americans are paying approximately the same amount of attention to the news across regions. When we look at the urban/rural split, there is a slightly larger difference with 34% of young Americans in urban areas saying they pay a lot of attention to the news compared to 28% of young Americans in rural areas. The number who say they rarely or never pay attention to the news is approximately the same between urban and rural areas.

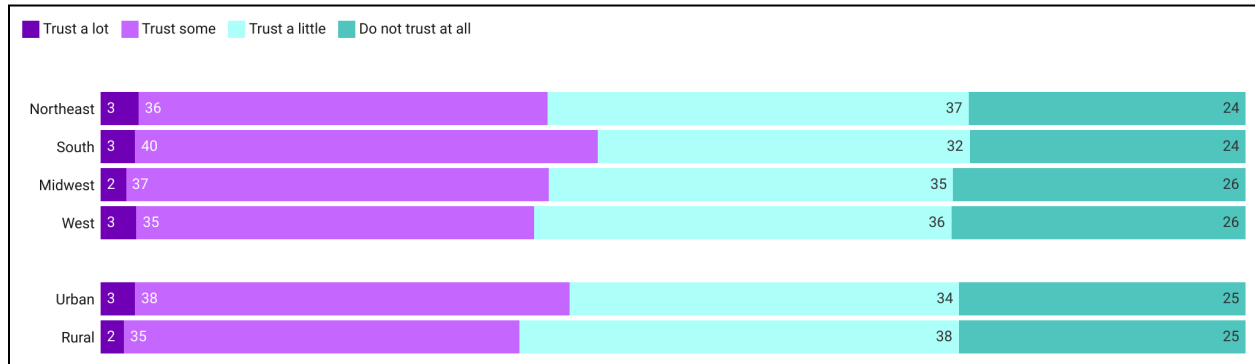
### How much attention do you pay to the news?



Beyond attention to the news, we also asked how much young Americans trust the news media in general. Nationally, only 3% of young Americans said they trust the news media a lot. Another 37% said they trust the news media some. More than half said they only trust the news media a little or not at all. When we look at trust in the news media by region and urban/rural areas,

there are not many differences. Young Americans in the South are a little more likely to say they have some trust in the news media than young Americans in other regions, but no more likely to say they trust the media a lot. Similarly, young Americans in urban areas are a little more likely to say they have some trust in the news media than those in rural areas, but the difference is quite small.

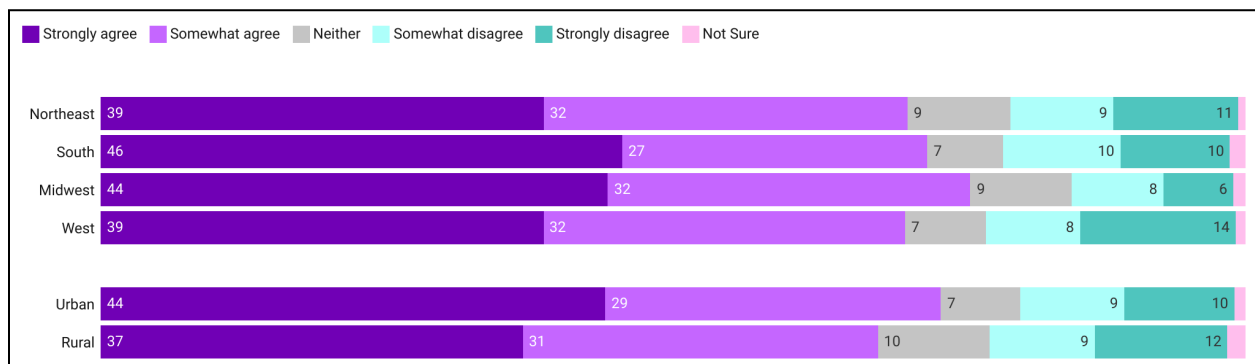
### How much do you trust the news media in general?



## Civic Responsibility

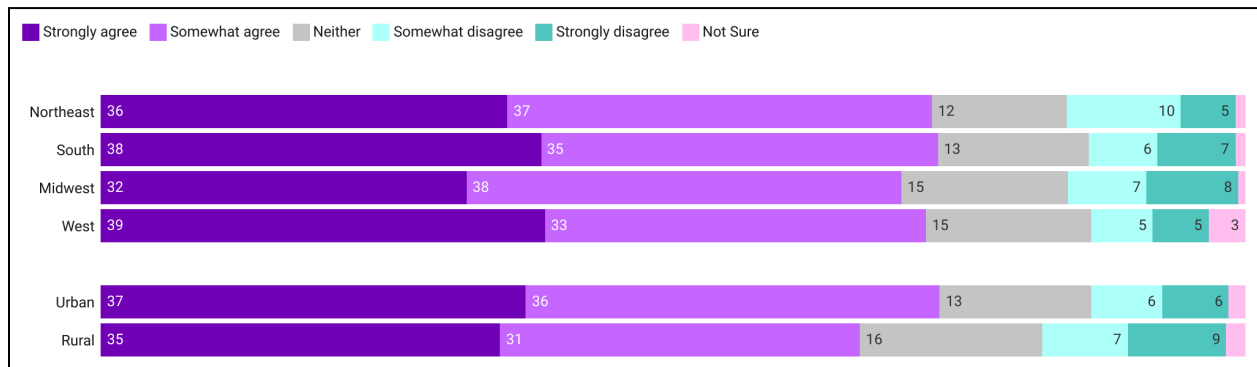
In order to understand how young Americans view their role in civic life, we asked several questions about civic responsibility. First we asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the idea that everyone should be required to pay taxes for the sake of the collective good. 43% of all young Americans said they strongly agree with this statement, and another 29% somewhat agreed. When we look at the response to this question by geography, we see that more young people in the South and Midwest strongly agree with this statement than young people in the Northeast and West. Young Americans in urban areas are also more likely to strongly agree with this statement than young Americans in rural areas.

### Everyone should be required to pay taxes for the sake of the collective good: Agree or disagree?



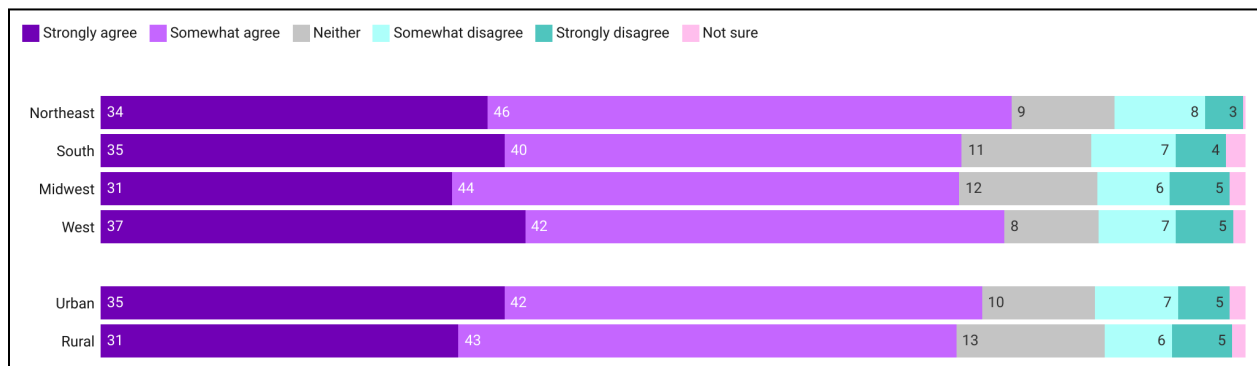
Next we asked to what extent young Americans agree or disagree with the statement “Jury duty is my civic responsibility.” Overall 36% of young Americans say they strongly agree and another 36% say they somewhat agree. Looking at the responses by geography, responses are mostly on par with the national average. However, young Americans in the Midwest are least likely to say they strongly agree with this statement compared to young Americans in the other regions. The biggest difference is between young Americans in the Midwest and West. There are not notable differences between young Americans in urban and rural areas on this question.

### Jury duty is my civic responsibility: Agree or disagree?



To better understand how young Americans view the importance of civic obligations, we asked them how willing they are to fulfill these obligations even when they are inconvenient. Here again, when splitting by geography, young Americans in different regions are approximately as likely to say they strongly agree with this statement as the national average. Just as with jury duty, those in the Midwest are the least likely to say they strongly agree. Young Americans in urban areas are 4 percentage points more likely to say they strongly agree that they are willing to fulfill civic obligations even when inconvenient than young Americans in rural areas.

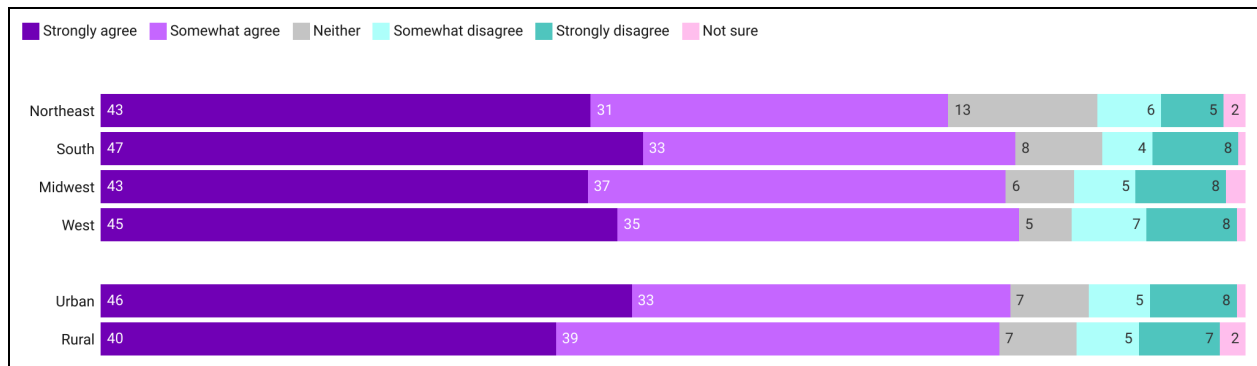
### Even if it is inconvenient, I am willing to fulfill my civic obligations: Agree or disagree?



In order to gauge how much young Americans connect individual civic action to broad government function, we asked them whether they agree or disagree with the idea that fulfilling

these civic obligations is important to the functioning of democracy. Again, the regional trends are very similar to the national trend. Those in the South are most likely to say that they strongly agree that civic obligations are important to the functioning of democracy, but the differences across regions are not large. Young Americans in urban areas are 6 percentage points more likely to say they strongly agree with this than young Americans in rural areas.

### Fulfilling civic obligations, like paying taxes, voting, and jury duty is important to the functioning of our democracy: Agree or disagree?



### Civic Knowledge

To put public opinion, vote motivation, and civic participation in context, we wanted to know the extent to which young Americans know some basic facts about our elections. We asked them when the next midterm and presidential elections are. 90% or more know that the next midterms are in 2022 across the regions. At least 98% know that the next presidential election is in 2024 across the regions. Similarly approximately 80% or more know that to win the presidency a candidate must secure 270 electoral votes but that it is not necessary to win the popular vote in order to get those 270 electoral votes. There are not significant differences across the regions.

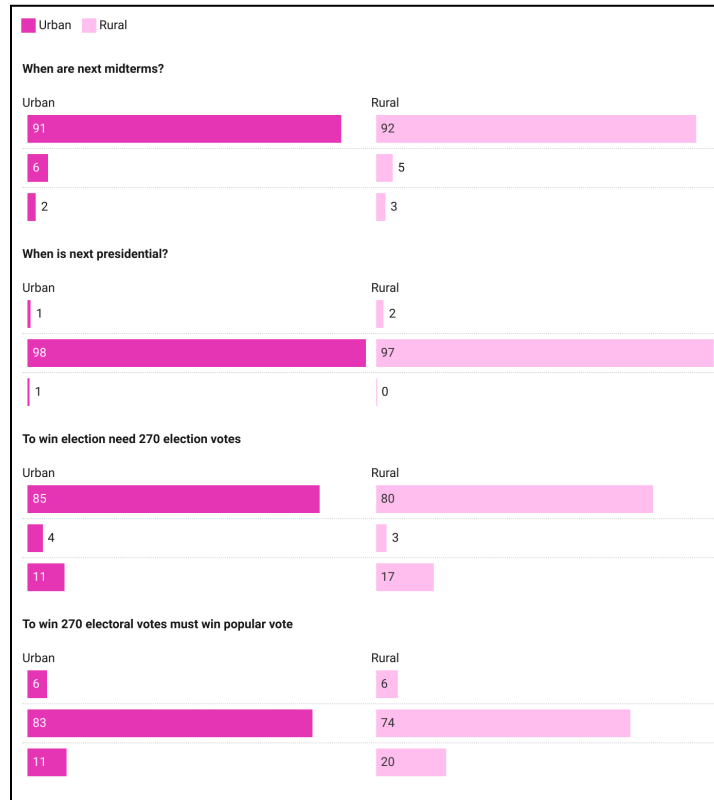
## Basics of Elections: By Region



Young Americans in urban and rural areas are equally likely to know that the midterms are in 2022 and the next presidential election is in 2024. When it comes to questions about the electoral college and popular vote, young Americans in urban areas seem to be a little ahead of those in rural areas. 85% of young Americans in urban areas know that you need 270 electoral votes to win the presidency, compared to 80% of young Americans in rural areas. The difference is bigger when it comes to whether you need to win the popular vote to get to 270 electoral votes. 83% of young Americans in urban areas correctly answered that you do not need to win the popular vote to get 270 electoral votes while only 74% of young Americans in rural areas answered this correctly.



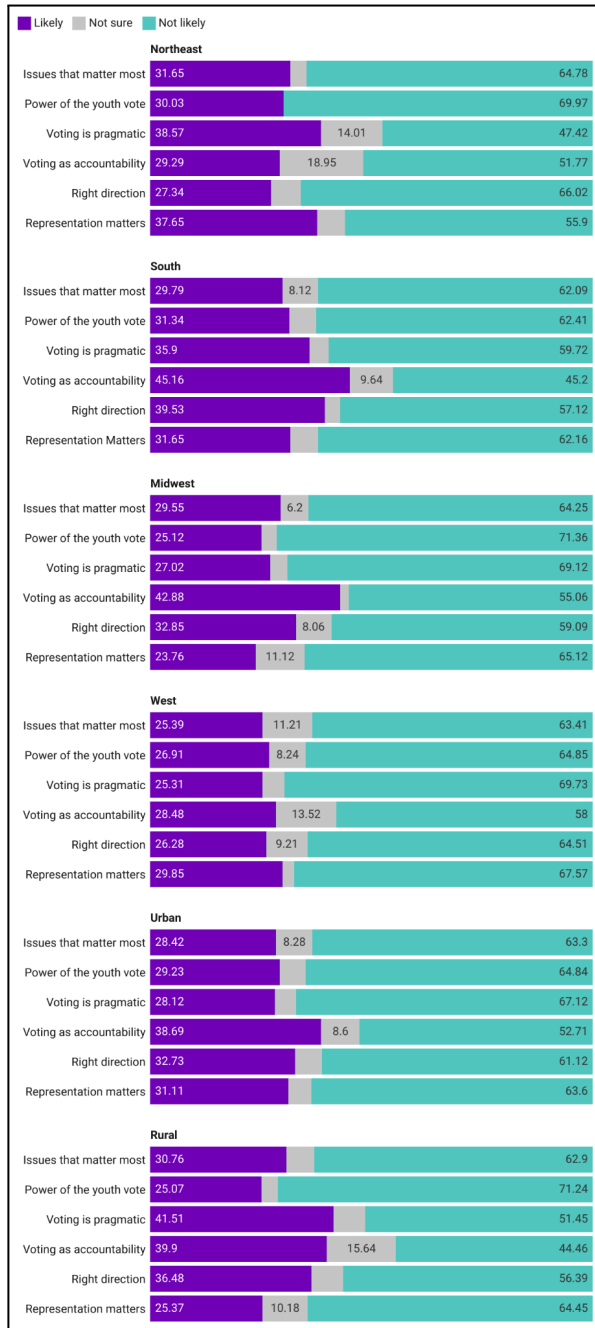
## Basics of Elections: Urban versus Rural



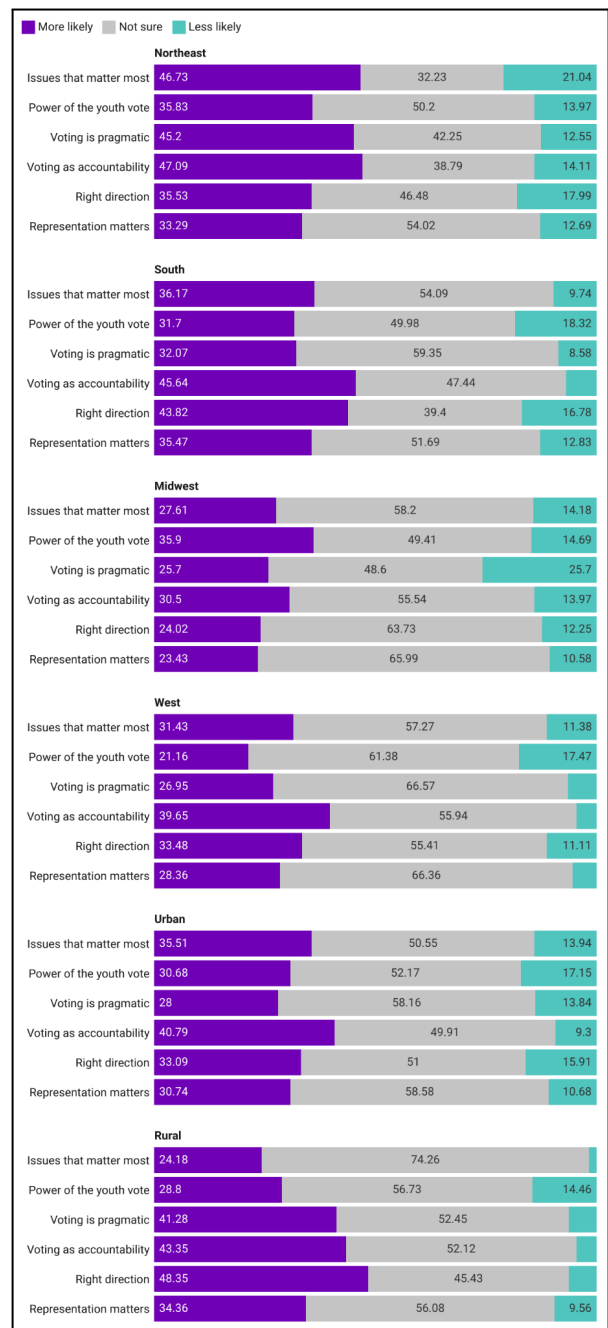
## Message Testing

We tested six GOTV message frames to see which played best to young Americans. Each respondent was randomly assigned a message frame so each respondent only saw one frame. We then asked respondents to answer several questions about the frame that they saw. First we asked, how likely are you to share this message on social media. In our national analysis, we found that the Voting as Accountability frame was most likely to garner a positive response to the question of sharing. From a statistical perspective, controlling for individual characteristics we found that the Voting as Accountability and Right Direction frames were significantly more likely to get a positive response on the question of sharing than the other frames. Running the same statistical analysis but including controls for region and urban/rural areas, the results are the same. Nationally on average, the best messages when it comes to likelihood of sharing are the Voting as Accountability and Right Direction messages holding individual characteristics, region, and urban/rural location constant.

How likely are you to share the message on social media?



Does this message make you more or less likely to vote?



When we look at how the messages play with young Americans in different regions and geographic locations, we see that there are some differences from the national average. In the Northeast, Voting is Pragmatic and Representation Matters are mostly to be shared, although when we control for individual characteristics of young people in a statistical analysis, we see that the differences among the messages are not statistically significant. In other words, no message is more likely to get a positive response to the question of sharing than any other.

In the South and Midwest, Voting as Accountability does the best on this question. For these regions, when we run our statistical analysis controlling for individual characteristics of young people, we see that the Voting as Accountability message frame is statistically significantly better than all other message frames in the Midwest, and the Voting as Accountability frame is significantly better than all other frames except the Right Direction frame in the South.

In the West, there are no real differences among the messages on the question of sharing. This remains true when we run our statistical analysis controlling for individual characteristics of the young people who might see the messages.

In urban areas, the Voting as Accountability frame is mostly likely to be shared and when we run our statistical analysis controlling for individual characteristics of the young people who see the message we find that the Voting as Accountability frame is significantly better than the other messages. In rural areas Voting is Pragmatic, Voting as Accountability, and Right Direction are ahead of the other messages. When we control for the individual characteristics we see that the Voting as Accountability, Voting is Pragmatic, Right Direction, and Issues that Matter Most are statistically indistinguishable from each other and significantly better than the Power of the Youth Vote and Representation Matters frames.

In addition to the question of sharing, we also asked if the messages made young Americans more or less likely to vote. Nationally, the messages most likely to garner a response of “more likely to vote” were the Voting as Accountability, Issues that Matter, and Right Direction messages, controlling for individual respondent characteristics. When we added controls for region and urban/rural status, this finding held.

Looking region by region things get a little more complicated. In the Northeast, more young Americans say they are more likely to vote after seeing the Issues that Matter Most frame, followed by Voting as Accountability and Voting is Pragmatic. From a statistical point of view, when controlling for individual characteristics and urban/rural status, there is no statistical difference between the messages. In other words, when we take into account things about the people who saw the messages that might influence what messages will speak to them, no message is appreciably better than any other at getting young Americans to say the message will make them more likely to vote.

In the South, more young Americans say they are more likely to vote after seeing the Voting as Accountability frame, followed by the Right Direction frame. After running our statistical analysis, we see that controlling for individual respondent characteristics and urban/rural location, the Voting as Accountability and Right Direction frame are statistically better than the other frames, with the Voting is Pragmatic frame not far behind. In the Midwest, while in the graph it looks as if the Power of the Youth vote message frame may be the best, when we control for individual characteristics the Voting as Accountability frame is statistically significantly better than the other frames.

In urban areas, more young Americans say they are more likely to vote after seeing the Voting as Accountability frame. In our statistical analysis, Voting as Accountability is statistically significantly better than the other frames, except Right Direction. In rural areas, more young Americans say they are more likely to vote after seeing the Right Direction frame followed by Voting as Accountability and Voting is Pragmatic. In our statistical analysis, controlling for individual characteristics and region, we see that these three frames – Right Direction, Voting as Accountability, and Voting is Pragmatic – plus the Issues that Matter Most frame are significantly better than the other frames, and statistically indistinguishable from each other. Here we see that the same messages – Voting as Accountability and Right Direction – are among the best performers in both urban and rural places.

## **Conclusions**

Overall there are not major surprising differences among young Americans across US regions. There are also perhaps fewer differences between young Americans in urban and rural places than we might expect. It is worth noting that young Americans in urban areas were more likely to know the right answer to questions about the electoral college and popular vote than young Americans in rural areas, although even in rural areas at least three-quarters of young Americans got those answers right. Young Americans in urban areas are more likely to pay attention to the news than rural young Americans, and are more likely to agree that paying taxes is important for the public good and that fulfilling civic obligations is important to democracy than rural young Americans.

There were statistically identifiable differences in how the message frames performed region by region, however we advise against reading too much into these regional differences. From a political and sociological perspective, there is not much reason to expect there to be meaningful and coherent differences by region in what message frames will speak to young people, especially when the frames are relatively abstract and free of details. We might expect the differences to be more meaningful if the messages were focused on things that were region specific, like issues to do with climate change that might affect the West differently from the Northeast. Regions are very heterogeneous units – there is great political and social diversity within each region – and we do not have reason to believe that messaging strategies should be decided at the regional level rather than some other more meaningful political and geographic unit.

On the other hand, the urban rural differences may be worth more attention. From a political and social perspective, urban and rural places tend to be different from each other in similar ways across regions. Therefore, it makes sense to consider tailored approaches to urban and rural places. Although, from this analysis, the findings from our urban/rural analysis do not show contradictions in which messages are preferable. In both areas, Voting as Accountability and

Right Direction come out ahead of other messages, just in the case of urban places, they come out ahead of more frames than in rural areas.

Based on our original analysis and the evidence from this subsequent analysis, we believe that our national messaging recommendation remains the best, most widely applicable strategy when messaging to mobilize young Americans to get out and vote in the upcoming election. All the evidence suggests that the most effective message to mobilize young voters pairs accountability with issues and some means of believable action to move the country in the right direction to produce a system they can believe in.