



# CIRCLE at 20

Striving Toward a More Equitable Democracy



Jonathan M. Tisch  
College of Civic Life





# Table of Contents

---

## Who We Are 3

A Letter from Our Director

Major Milestones

Theory of Change


---


## 20 Years of Impact 8

9  
Growing  
Voters for a  
Representative  
Electorate 

13  
Civic Education  
for Just  
Communities 

17  
Pathways to Civic  
Participation for  
All Youth 

21  
Civic Learning  
for Youth Voice  
and Thriving 

25  
Illuminating  
Barriers to  
Equitable Youth  
Support 

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## Looking Back & Looking Forward 29

CIRCLE and the 2020 Election

CIRCLE in the Media

A Word from Our Friends

Partner with Us

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## Acknowledgments & Gratitude 36

For two decades we have built evidence for best practices, shifted perceptions and institutions, and forged unlikely but productive collaborations that have had an impact on our democracy.

CIRCLE AT 20

WHO WE ARE



A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Partners and friends,

I'm excited to share with you **CIRCLE at 20**, a chronicle of our major initiatives and accomplishments over the past two decades, and a roadmap to our north star: an American society where young people have equitable access to civic learning and engagement opportunities that allow them to contribute to communities—and, ultimately, to a thriving multiracial democracy.

When I joined CIRCLE in 2008, it was already an extraordinary organization that conducted and supported critical, innovative research on young people's civic learning and engagement. At the time, I couldn't have imagined that I would be writing to you as the Newhouse Director of CIRCLE. I'm exceedingly proud of the growing but close-knit team of leaders, scholars, experts, and students who have made CIRCLE, not just influential, but an indispensable institution in multiple communities of practice and scholarship that shape youth engagement.

As we cap off the celebration of CIRCLE's 20th anniversary, we look back with both humility and pride at some of what we've accomplished. For two decades we have built evidence for best practices, shifted perceptions and institutions, and forged unlikely but productive collaborations that have had an impact on our democracy.

Just as we look back, we also look forward. The nation's most pressing problems pose formidable challenges to our work: fraying civic institutions, acrid political divisions, increasing socioeconomic inequality, and the continued marginalization of people of color. **Meeting those challenges, and preparing a new generation to address them, will continue to guide our work for the next 20 years and beyond.**

I conclude this letter with immense gratitude for the partners, funders, and advisory board members who share our dedication to civic access and opportunities for all youth, and who have championed and influenced our work. Whether they worked directly with us on projects, provided insights that pushed us to do better, or financially supported CIRCLE, we could not have done most of our work without these valued colleagues' knowledge, passion, and commitment to youth civic learning and engagement.

While these steadfast supporters and collaborators are too many to name, I cannot help but mention Dean Emeritus Alan Solomont, who served as the Dean of Tisch College from January 2014 to June 2021; Dean Dayna Cunningham who took the helm in July 2021; and the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation. **These exceptional leaders and institutions have embodied the belief that research-based action is essential for our democracy,** and they have acted on that commitment through enduring financial and leadership support. Thank you.

And, on behalf of the entire CIRCLE team, thank you to the nation's youth: both the not-so-young-anymore people who first called us to action 20 years ago, and today's rising generation whose passion for justice drives our work. We must ensure that these young people are not just the future of our democracy, but part of its vibrant present.



**Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, Ph.D.**

Newhouse Director of CIRCLE



CIRCLE BEGINS

2001

**Multimillion dollar grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts launched CIRCLE, founded at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy**

2002 - 2006

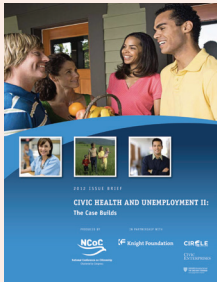
**Awarded \$3.5 million to over 100 research teams, building civic education and engagement as major fields of scholarship**

2004

**Launched** analysis of young voters with pre-election survey in partnership with MTV and first-ever post-election youth turnout estimate

Major Milestones  
2001 - 2021

2011



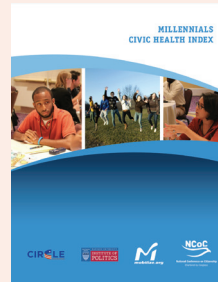
**Released** two major reports on Civic Health and Unemployment, underscoring link between civic and economic well-being

2013



**Presented** research at the White House Conference on Girls Leadership and Civic Education

2015



**Released** first-ever Millennials Civic Health Index

**Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg became the third Director of CIRCLE**

2006

**Partnered** with the National Conference on Citizenship to produce the first ever Civic Health Index

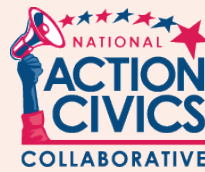
2008

**Became** part of Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life



Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life

**Co-founded** the National Action Civics Collaborative

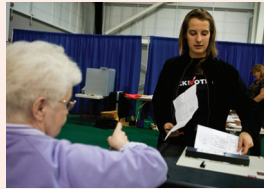


2010

2016

**TEACHING FOR DEMOCRACY ALLIANCE**

**Co-founded** the Teaching for Democracy Alliance coalition to support nonpartisan teaching about voting



**Provided** expert testimony in federal court about a North Carolina law's impact on young voters

2019

**Received \$650k NEH grant to co-lead Educating for American Democracy, a major initiative to transform K-12 civic education**

2021

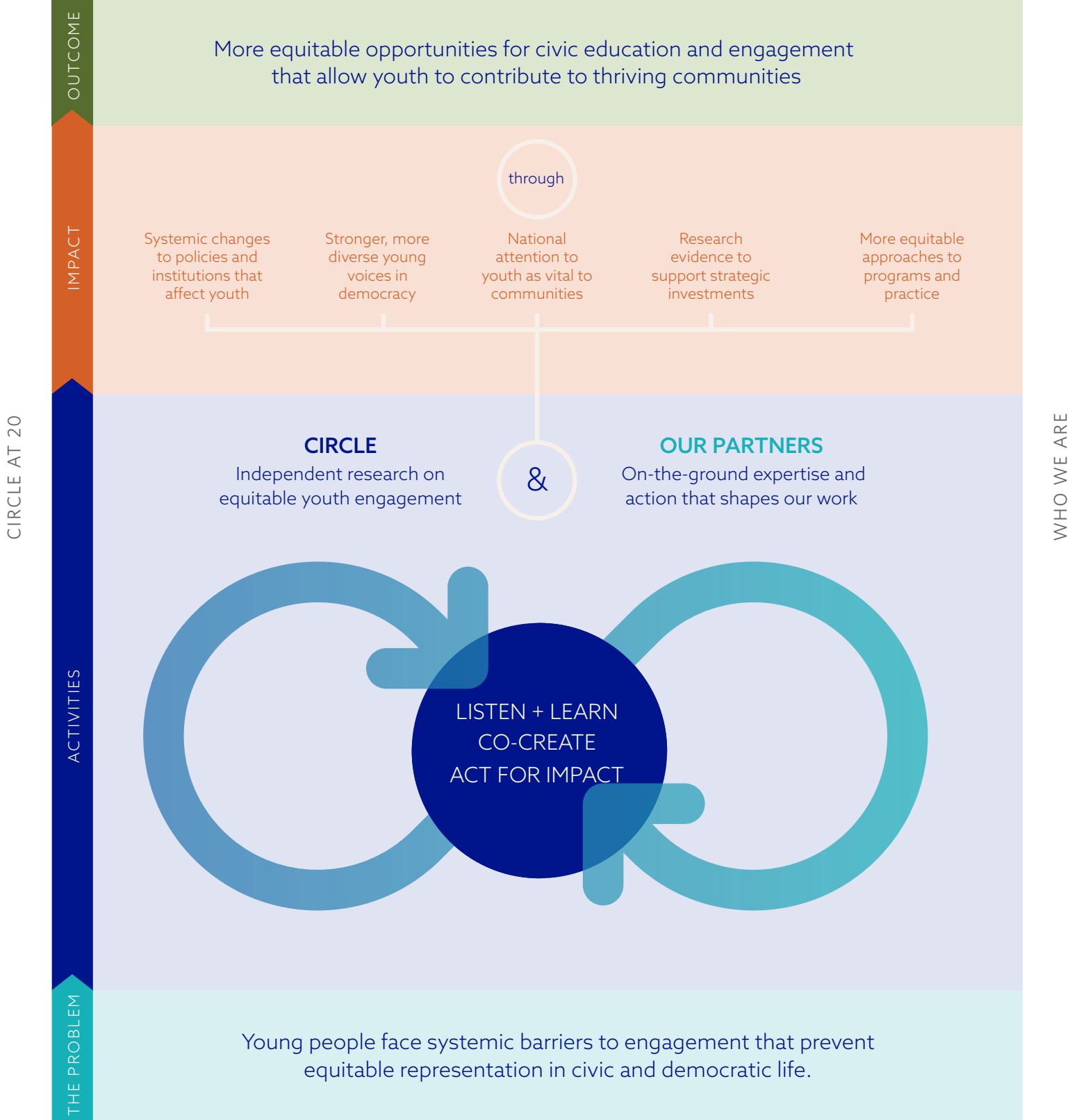
**CIRCLE TODAY**

CIRCLE Directorship is endowed by the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation

2020

**Revamped website** and launched data tool to highlight connections between community conditions and youth engagement

CIRCLE's model for creating a more equitable and inclusive democracy relies on research for action that is informed by, and shapes the work of, trusted partners and practitioners.





# 20 Years of Impact

**CIRCLE's work is focused on the systems and structures that shape young people's participation in civic life: from classrooms, to communities, to the ballot box. We strive to strengthen those that provide opportunities for all youth, and to effect change on those that present barriers to or perpetuate inequities in engagement.**

We focus on work that is timely, relevant, and responsive to the needs of the various fields and stakeholders that influence youth civic learning and engagement. That often means working with partners to design and disseminate actionable research that can have an immediate and sustainable impact in our communities.

## Where We Have Impact

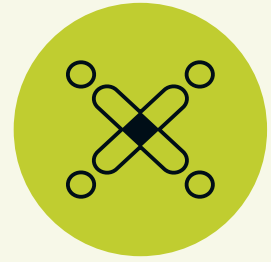
<p>01</p> <p>Growing Voters for a Representative Electorate</p> 	<p>02</p> <p>Civic Education for Just Communities</p> 	<p>03</p> <p>Pathways to Civic Participation for All Youth</p> 
<p>04</p> <p>Civic Learning to Help Youth Thrive</p> 	<p>05</p> <p>Illuminating Barriers to Equitable Youth Support</p> 	

## How We Have Impact

 <p><b>Creating Knowledge to Improve Practice</b></p> <p>Producing new knowledge about young people that informs practice</p>	 <p><b>Leveraging Collaborations for Impact</b></p> <p>Building and leveraging collaborations to expand our reach</p>	 <p><b>Changing Laws, Policies, and Institutions</b></p> <p>Examining and advocating for key structural changes</p>	 <p><b>Shifting Public Perceptions and Narratives</b></p> <p>Shaping how the field, the media, and the public talk about youth</p>
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CIRCLE AT 20

20 YEARS OF IMPACT



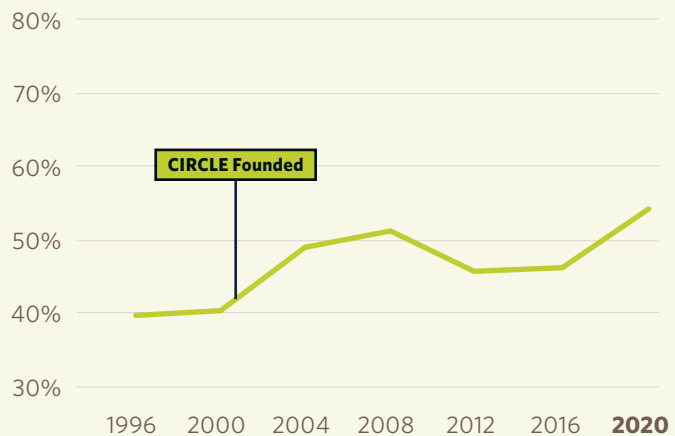
# Growing Voters for a Representative Electorate

**When CIRCLE was founded in 2001, youth voter turnout had been at an all-time low. A vicious cycle had developed: young people were dismissed as unlikely voters, they felt ignored and disconnected, and their voices went underrepresented in democracy.**

In the past two decades, our research has helped tell a different story about young people and politics: they care, they're engaged, and they want to make a difference. If institutions and communities Grow Voters by ensuring youth have the tools and information they need to vote, they'll show up. As we look back on recent election cycles with historic levels of youth voter turnout, we're proud of the work we've done over the past 20 years to study and strengthen youth electoral participation. But our work to examine and eliminate barriers of civic access and opportunity must continue and evolve to address intractable voting gaps by race/ethnicity, educational attainment, disability and mental health challenges urbanicity, and other factors.

## **Youth voting in the past two decades**

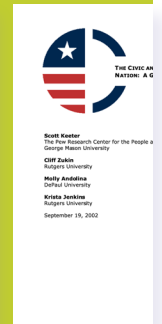
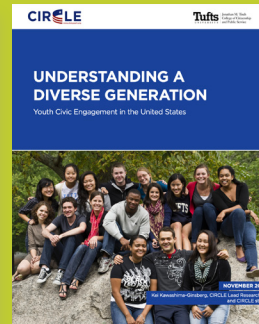
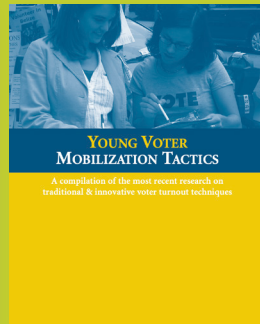
Estimates of the percentage of eligible voters, ages 18-29, who cast ballots in each presidential election





## A Foundation of Research for Action

CIRCLE's work has laid the foundation for the field of youth voting and civic engagement as a scholarly area of inquiry. Our major reports on the opportunities, challenges, and barriers related to youth voting have served as landmarks for future research and have deeply informed the work of practitioners to grow a more equitable youth vote.



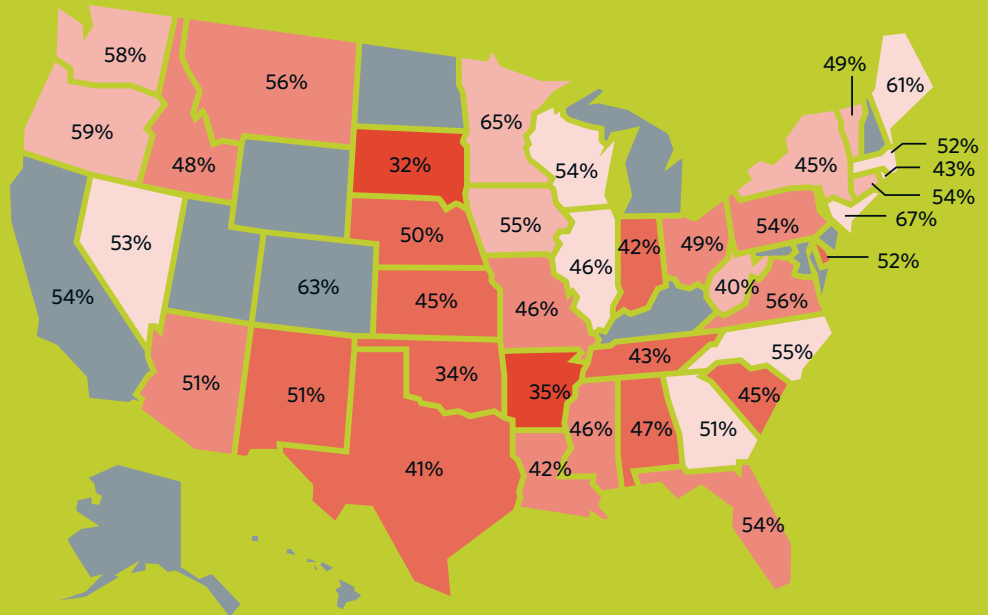
CIRCLE AT 20



## Laws + Policies that Help Grow Voters

Our research has helped make the case that facilitative election laws and policies like automatic and online voter registration can contribute to improving youth turnout. As the evidence for their impact has mounted, more states have adopted these laws and seen their voter participation rise.

**2020 Voter Turnout**  
How easy it was to register & vote



20 YEARS OF IMPACT



## Changing the Narrative

Every election cycle, CIRCLE's research helps put young people at the forefront of the national conversation about politics. By providing timely, in-depth, nonpartisan data and analysis, the media can tell accurate, nuanced stories about diverse young voters. The vicious circle is replaced by a virtuous one in which we elevate and celebrate young people's role in our democracy.



March 22, 1996

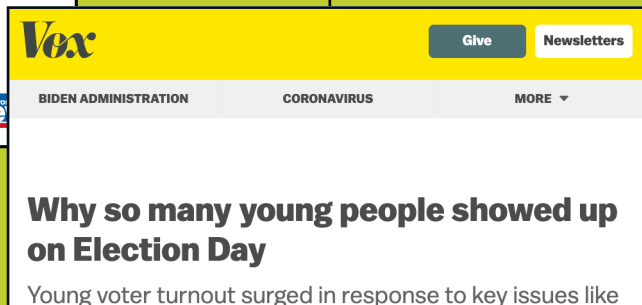
Oct 29, 2014



Nov 7, 2018



Nov 7, 2020



CIRCLE AT 20

20 YEARS OF IMPACT





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Far too often young potential voters are unfairly dismissed as apathetic or unlikely to vote; however, CIRCLE digs into the data to reveal the truth about youth voting trends and to identify systemic barriers and opportunities related to increasing this demographic’s participation in our nation’s democracy. Our work is better because of CIRCLE.

**Brent J. Cohen**

Former Executive Director, Generation Progress, Center for American Progress

# What's Next

**We see Growing Voters as a necessary paradigm shift in how we prepare a wider diversity of young people to participate in democracy. Look for a major report in 2022 on how parents, teachers, journalists, election officials, and other key stakeholders can help develop the next generation of engaged voters and close gaps in electoral participation.**

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20 YEARS OF IMPACT

SECTION 2



Civic Education for Just Communities



## Civic Education for Just Communities

**What kind of civic education prepares students of different backgrounds, views, and circumstances to participate and lead in a pluralistic society? What does it take to ensure every student receives such an education, and every teacher is prepared to impart it?**

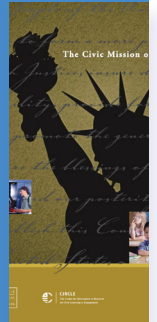
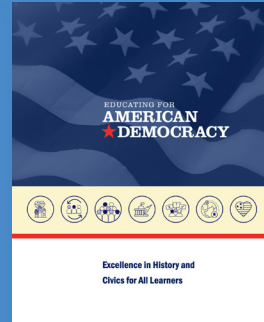
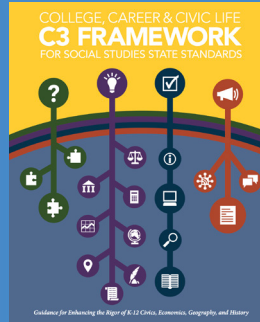
These are the essential questions about the present and future of civic education. But for years it went ignored, as pundits and policymakers focused instead on “whether schools teach civics anymore.” They did and do, but not always in ways that reach and engage all youth.

Since CIRCLE’s founding, our research has asked and helped answer the right questions, and our robust partnerships with educators and practitioners have enabled those answers to inform what happens in classrooms across the country. At a time when democratic crises have brought renewed attention to the importance of civics, we continue to bridge scholarship, policy, and practice to transform civic education in the United States.



## A Foundation of Research for Action

CIRCLE led a landmark commission to define a set of evidence-based practices that help young people, not just learn how civic life works, but find their place and participate in democracy. These “promising practices” framed research, program design, and legislation in civics for the past two decades. We continue to improve upon that work and advance K-12 civics by promoting the importance of social-emotional learning and equity as essential components of civic learning.

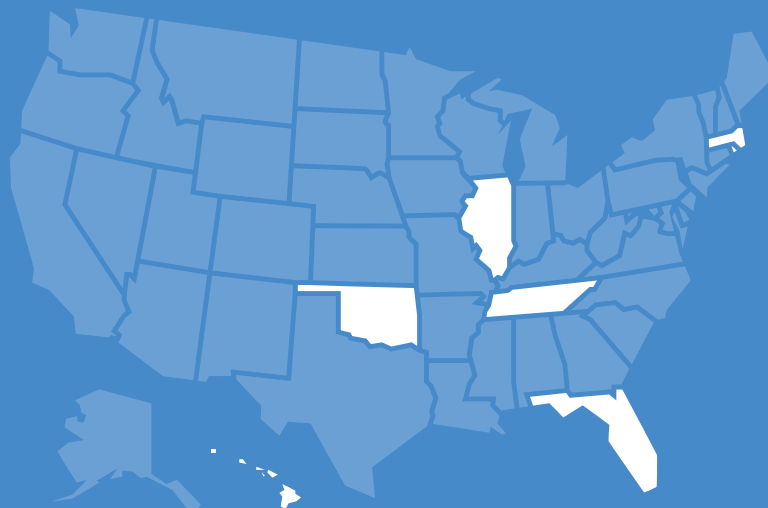


CIRCLE AT 20



## Shaping Civic Education Across the Country

Our work has shaped or evaluated the implementation of new civic education laws across the country—from case studies of policies in Hawaii and Tennessee, to teacher training in Oklahoma, to major ongoing partnerships in states like Illinois, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The lessons learned from our research in these states influences the work of education scholars, practitioners, and policymakers throughout the United States.



20 YEARS OF IMPACT



CIRCLE's research informed the 2010 Sandra Day O'Connor Act that reformed civic education in the state. Our work with the Florida Partnership for Civic Learning created early frameworks to evaluate its implementation, and we continue to partner with educators in the state to support teachers and students.



CIRCLE's work guided implementation and resource allocation for the state's new social studies framework and a law that established project-based civic learning. Key to that law: a fund for schools in under-resourced communities that would facilitate more equitable implementation and outcomes.



CIRCLE has had an ongoing, decade-long research and practice partnership in Illinois. Together we have defined Democracy Schools, evaluated policies, and established capacity-building efforts like the Guardians of Democracy online courses, which are transforming how we prepare teachers to teach civics—with major implications for the rest of the country.



## The Power of Coalitions

As co-founders of the National Action Civics Collaborative and the Teaching for Democracy Alliance, we've led the charge to ensure all students learn to be voters and effective civic actors. And as close advisors and collaborators of major civic education organizations, we've conducted research, written standards, trained teachers, and even developed digital games, shaping the education of millions of students in the United States.







“

CIRCLE has been an invaluable asset in civic education research over the past two decades. Their focus on youth civic engagement and knowledge, as well as teacher practices and disposition, serve as key indicators in the field. They are often at the forefront of developing and testing high quality quantitative metrics of civic outcomes, and the field continues to look to CIRCLE to advance research on these metrics in the field.

**Jane C. Lo**

Assistant Professor of Teacher Education, College of Education, Michigan State University

# What's Next

**The Educating for American Democracy Roadmap is an ambitious, cross-cutting effort to reimagine what it takes for every student to participate in America's constitutional democracy. CIRCLE will play a leading role in EAD's evaluation and implementation efforts, supporting hands-on efforts to transform civic education.**

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20 YEARS OF IMPACT

SECTION 3



Pathways to Civic Participation for All Youth



# Pathways to Civic Participation for All Youth

**If we've said it once, we've said it a million times: young people are not a monolith.**

That's doubly true for today's youth, whose wide range of identities, interests, and experiences shape their civic lives in myriad ways. Different youth have different needs, face different barriers, and walk different paths toward civic and political participation.

CIRCLE has long focused on what it takes to create structures that support engagement for all youth, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, who have historically faced exclusion, and who have been underrepresented in civic and political institutions. Our work has led to concrete initiatives to support diverse youth, and to promote understanding that our democracy is incomplete until every young person has an equal opportunity to participate.



## Broadening Perspectives on Youth

By shining a light on young people’s diversity across multiple dimensions, we’ve changed the civic engagement field’s, the media’s, and the public’s awareness of who young people are and what different youth need. CIRCLE has conducted research on how each aspect below can influence a young person’s civic education and engagement, and created data-driven recommendations that inform the work of practitioners, whose work in turn shapes our research on pathways for young people.



**Race/Ethnicity**



**Gender**



**Education**



**Urban/Rural**



**Income**

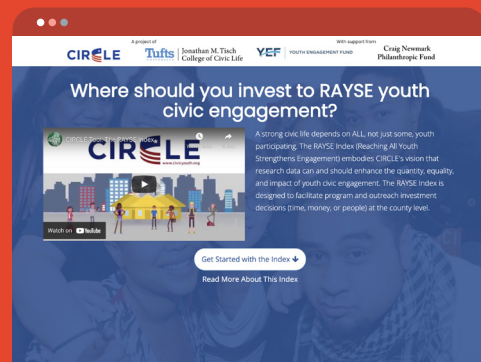
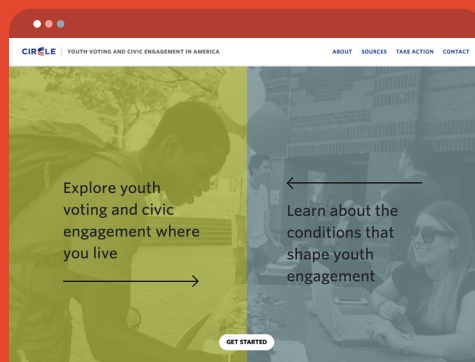


**Immigrant**



## Data Tools to Drive Equity

Supporting opportunities for all youth means meeting them where they are—figuratively and literally. CIRCLE’s two major tools, with tens of thousands of individual data points at the state, district, and county levels, illuminate the conditions that shape whether youth have pathways to civic life or what barriers stand in their way. Educators, campaigns, organizers, and funders have used these tools to focus their efforts and resources where they are needed most and can have the biggest impact.





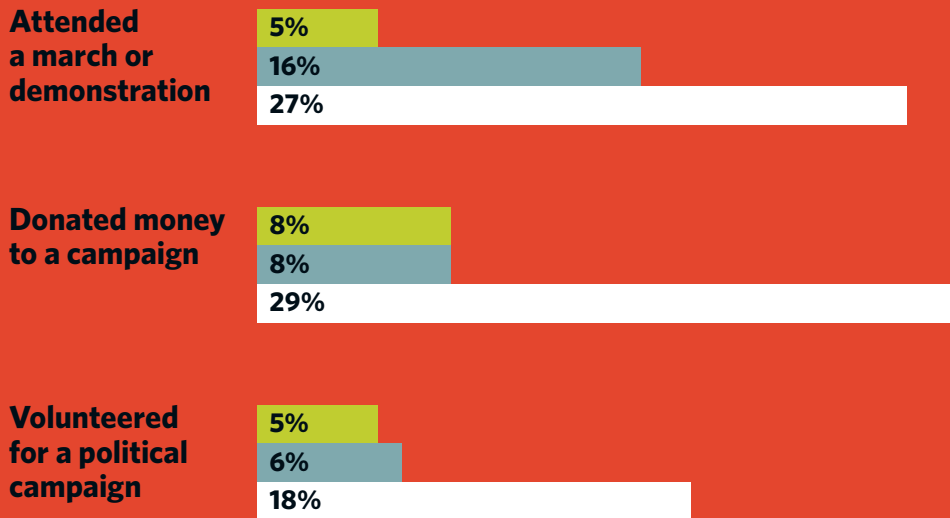
## Chronicling the Rise of an Activist Generation

As youth-led gun control protests became a political force in 2018, and protests over racial justice shaped American life in 2020, our research traced the relationship between activism and electoral participation. In a major study, "Protests, Politics, and Power: Exploring the Connections Between Youth Voting and Youth Movements," we offered recommendations to campaigns and organizers on how to better leverage activism as a pathway for engagement.

### Youth activism and political engagement is on the rise

The percentage of young people, ages 18-24, who said they had taken each action in our 2016, 2018, and 2020 pre-election polls.

● 2016 ● 2018 ● 2020







“

CIRCLE is an incredible partner for LCV in our work to engage young people and get them participating in the civic process. Involving BIPOC and youth in the climate justice movement is critical, and CIRCLE's leadership in this space allows us to improve our programs. Our staff love working with their highly capable research team and consider them one of our strongest allies.

**Gene Karpinski**

President, League of Conservation Voters

# What's Next

**We continue to focus on how underrepresented and marginalized youth can build their own pathways to civic engagement as they pursue change in their communities. We're launching a major project with the Youth Engagement Fund's Seeds of Power cohorts to support BIPOC-led and -focused organizations in Arizona and Georgia.**

CIRCLE AT 20

20 YEARS OF IMPACT

SECTION 4



Civic Learning to Help Youth Thrive



# Civic Learning for Youth Voice and Thriving

**When young people participate in civic life, their voices, views, and actions can transform our communities and our democracy.**

But young people themselves are also transformed by experiences of civic education and engagement: they can learn critical skills, develop their efficacy and agency, and develop a healthier sense of self and of their role in society.

For two decades, CIRCLE's research and partnerships have promoted a holistic vision of civic education and engagement in which young people's development goes hand in hand with their participation. From championing social-emotional learning in K-12 civics classrooms; to intergenerational civic spaces where youth can lead, thrive, and grow; to how digital engagement can amplify the power of young people's voices, our work has transformed what it means to fully support youth.



## Pioneering a Field of Research

CIRCLE’s 20 years of research have spanned and documented the rise of online media, social networks, and digital platforms as tools for civic learning and engagement. Within this ever-evolving landscape, we have built an emerging area of research on the connections between youth, the media, and democracy—with a special focus on how young people’s media creation contributes to their civic learning and development.

Through CIRCLE’s Rep Us! Initiative, we are influencing the work of major organizations at the intersection of youth and media. Our research has informed how the **National Association for Media Literacy Education** talks about wielding and creating media for democracy; how major media organizations like **PBS Newshour’s Student Reporting Labs** incorporate data in their reporting; and how social media giants like **Snapchat** conceive of their role in the civic development of their users.

### 01 REPRESENTATION

Young people are a core part of every community.



## Direct Impact on Youth Organizations

CIRCLE’s evaluations of organizations that directly serve young people have brought our research to bear on initiatives to support the positive development of historically underserved youth. Our landmark studies of youth-serving organizations like YouthBuild and Serviceworks provided a base of evidence for programmatic efforts to support all young people, and we presented some of our findings at the 2012 White House Summit on Community Solutions for Disconnected Youth.

In 2020, through the Civic Spring project, we supported and evaluated young people working on intergenerational partnerships to respond to COVID-19. Our study on the programs’ structures and the value of intergenerational spaces to youth development has broad implications for programs and initiatives that seek to develop young people’s skills and capacities.





## Advancing Civics for All through Social-Emotional Learning

CIRCLE has been at the forefront of efforts to make positive youth development and culturally responsive teaching central features of civic education. Major reports like **Civic Education and Deeper Learning**, **Equity in Civic Education**, and the recent **Educating for American Democracy Roadmap** have incorporated evidence from learning and developmental science to present a vision of K-12 civics that truly helps all students prepare for civic life. That vision has informed statewide civic education standards and national policy proposals like the Civics Learning Act of 2021.

### Civic Engagement Connected to Higher Well-Being During the Pandemic

CIRCLE's work has long focused on how civic education and engagement can impact youth well-being. In 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, our research found that youth engaged in civic life were feeling better than their peers.

● Low Well-Being   ● Moderate Well-Being   ● High Well-Being

#### Participate in decision-making with others



#### Express your opinion on how to solve a community issue



#### Work on addressing a community issue



#### Be a part of conversation on how community funds should be spent







“

Always willing to collaborate and share their expertise, the staff at CIRCLE has been invaluable in helping the NAMLE team understand why civic engagement matters and how youth voice impacts democracy. As part of this partnership, NAMLE has strengthened our knowledge of the intersection between civics education and media literacy, allowing us to support our members with resources and opportunities to enhance learning in their classrooms.

**Michelle Lipkin**

Executive Director, National Association for Media Literacy Education

# What's Next

**As the media landscape continues to change, and young people's use of social media and digital platforms only accelerates, we're expanding our research into how youth media creation can be a tool for positive civic development that helps young people build and wield their political voices.**

CIRCLE AT 20

20 YEARS OF IMPACT

SECTION 5



**Illuminating Barriers to Equitable Youth Support**



# Illuminating Barriers to Equitable Youth Support

**Perhaps CIRCLE’s signature contribution to the field of youth civic engagement has been the conviction—backed by two decades of rigorous scholarship—that young people who aren’t participating in civic life are far from apathetic.**

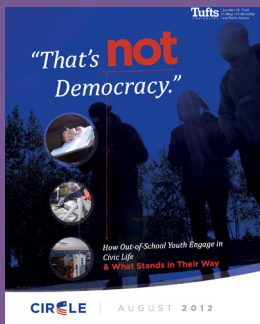
Instead, behind their disengagement often lurk systems and structures that do not offer youth support or, worse yet, place barriers in their way. And, as in nearly all aspects of American life, that support is far weaker, and the barriers more formidable, for youth of color and other young people from communities that suffer marginalization.

Our work has shone a light on many of the hurdles to equitable civic education and engagement faced by young people, and offered research-based recommendations to knock down those barriers.



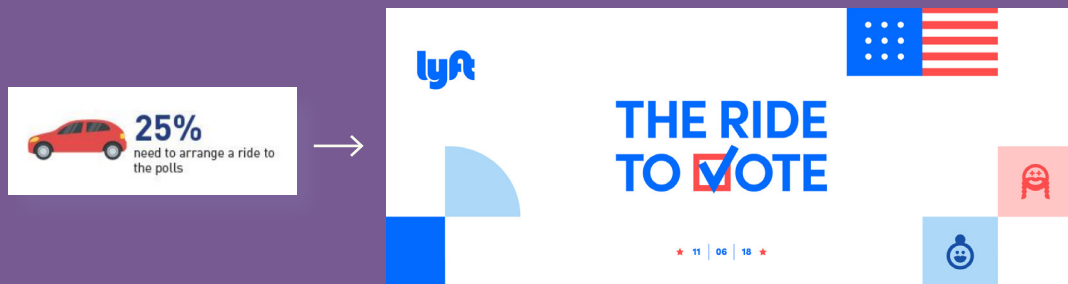
## A Research Focus Away from Campus

Since our founding, CIRCLE has been focused on disparities in engagement between different groups of youth. Ten years ago, we began to focus intensively on young people without college experience, who were less engaged in civic life than college students. That work led to a landmark report: **That's Not Democracy: How Out-of-School Youth Engage in Civic Life & What Stands In Their Way**. The findings and recommendations from that report served as a clarion call to the field of youth civic engagement to look away from college campuses and redouble their efforts to reach the tens of millions of young people who aren't in school.



## Working with Partners to Reduce Systemic Barriers to Voting

CIRCLE's study of barriers to voting has led to systemic changes and new initiatives to support young voters. In 2018, we partnered with **Opportunity Youth United** on research about pathways to electoral participation for youth from low-income backgrounds—especially youth of color. Alongside young people, we co-created a set of influential, practical recommendations for election officials and other stakeholders to help expand the electorate. One finding, about how many low-income young people didn't have transportation to go vote, motivated Lyft and other rideshare companies to offer free or reduced-price rides to polling places on Election Day.





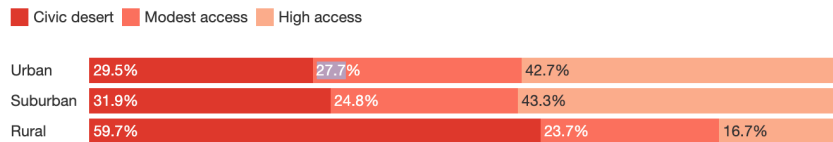
## New Concepts to Drive the Conversation

In 2017, CIRCLE leaders coined a new term, **civic deserts**, to describe places in the country—many of them in rural areas—where young people have limited access to civic opportunities and institutions. The term is now being used in the media, in scholarly research, and by organizers and advocates around the country and abroad to give a powerful name to a problem that results in inequities for millions of youth.



### 1. The majority of rural youth live in Civic Deserts

Access to institutional resources by geography



*Civic desert = 0-1 resources, Modest access = 2-3 resources, High access = 4-5 resources  
The Conversation, CC-BY-ND*

Source: [Tisch College/CIRCLE Millennial Election Poll](#) [Get the data](#)

### THE CONVERSATION

Youth with access to no resources, or only one, were classified as living in Civic Deserts. “Civic Desert” is a new term that we coined to describe places characterized by a dearth of opportunities for civic and political learning and engagement, and without institutions that typically provide opportunities like youth programming, culture and arts organizations and religious congregations.

### LISTEN NOTES



#### How Civic Deserts Alienate Youth

10. maj 2017



“

We are so grateful to have CIRCLE as a co-conspirator and partner as we work to uplift the vital role of young people in our democracy. Their commitment to ensuring a more complete and nuanced story about youth—from centering BIPOC young people to not overlooking out-of-work and school youth—is truly invaluable.

**Sarah Audelo**

Former Executive Director, Alliance for Youth Action

## What's Next

**Illuminating barriers to equitable youth support isn't just about the hurdles young people directly face; it's also about the systems and institutions that support youth. We're launching a project to study the role of equity in K-12 civic education in order to better understand how we can ensure all young people's civic learning opportunities prepare them for democracy.**



# CIRCLE and the 2020 Election

**In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, our work highlighted gaps in equitable access and the need to provide newly eligible voters with practical information about how and when to vote by mail.**

Throughout a national awakening on racial justice, we examined the growing connections between youth marching in the streets and heading to the voting booth. After Election Day, we provided exclusive data on historic youth voter turnout that told the story of a generation ready to lead our democracy.

But there's still work to be done. Half of young people didn't vote in 2020. Turnout rates varied widely by state. And, nationally, young people of color voted at much lower rates than white youth. As we look forward to 2022 and beyond, the challenge of growing voters equitably will continue to drive our work.

CIRCLE AT 20

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD



## Documenting and Supporting Youth Impact

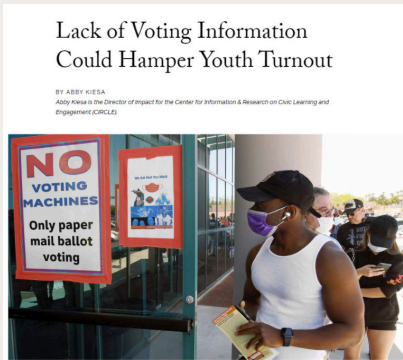
**CIRCLE's Youth Electoral Significance Index**, which is used by campaigns and organizations to direct outreach and resources, ranked Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Georgia among the top 10 states where youth could decide the presidential election if they turned out. They did.

	Arizona	Georgia	Pennsylvania	Wisconsin
<b>Margin of victory</b>	● 0.4%	● 0.3%	● 1.2%	● 0.6%
<b>Voter Choice</b>	BIDEN TRUMP	BIDEN TRUMP	BIDEN TRUMP	BIDEN TRUMP
● Young voters	63% 32%	56% 43%	62% 35%	59% 36%
● Voters age 45+	47% 53%	45% 54%	45% 56%	47% 53%

57%

**youth turnout (ages 18-29) in states that automatically mailed ballots to registered voters.**  
+7 points above national turnout rate

**CIRCLE's exclusive youth surveys** revealed that young people wanted to vote, but needed the information and access to do so easily and safely during the pandemic. We shared that story widely, and states that listened saw higher youth voter turnout.



280k

**young people ages 18-24 registered to vote for the first time through Snapchat**

**Election information and engagement on social media** and digital platforms was more important than ever in 2020. We worked closely with companies like Snapchat on their efforts to reach youth and more than 1 million people used the app's voter registration tools—including 280,000+ young people ages 18-24 who registered to vote for the first time.

# CIRCLE in the Media

CIRCLE AT 20

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

**When We All Vote** @WhenWeAllVote

**BREAKING**

The youth vote is making history. According to @CivicYouth, youth turnout in 2020 was \*much\* higher than in 2016.

Once all votes have been counted, youth turnout in this election might be the highest of \*all time\*.

12:48 PM · Nov 6, 2020 · Twitter Web App

489 Retweets 112 Quote Tweets 2,984 Likes

**NEWS** WATCH NOW

AMERICA'S DIVERSE VOTE

### Young Latinos mobilized, voted and were pivotal in 2020. Organizers want to keep it going.

"There's a good chance that a majority of those people who were first-time voters will continue to vote," says political scientist Stella Rouse.



Cuban American first-time voter Sophia Hildalgo applauds as Joe Biden speaks during a drive-in rally in Miramar, Fla., on Oct. 13.  
Jim Watson / AFP - Getty Images

**Daniel Coley** @RealDanielColey

This is incredibly powerful.

### Black Youth in Georgia Powered Joe Biden's Run to Flip the State

The percentage of Georgia voters in each group who voted for Joe Biden and for Donald Trump

■ Biden ■ Trump

Group	Biden	Trump
All Youth (ages 18-29)	57%	39%
Youth ages 18-24	60%	37%
Youth ages 25-29	54%	42%
Black Youth (ages 18-29)	90%	8%
White Youth (ages 18-29)	34%	62%
Voters ages 30-44	53%	45%
Voters ages 45-64	47%	52%
Voters ages 65+	43%	56%

CIRCLE Tufts University Tisch College · CIRCLE  
Source: CIRCLE analysis of AP VoteCast data from The Associated Press  
[Get the data](#)

7:43 AM · Nov 6, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

30.3K Retweets 3,767 Quote Tweets 115.1K Likes

**Bernie Sanders** @BernieSanders

The young people of America are, without a doubt, the most progressive generation in the history of this country. When young people stand up, and get involved in the political process, they can transform this nation.

**CIRCLE** @CivicYouth · Apr 29  
 NEW: We now estimate that 50% of young people voted in the 2020 election, a major 11-point increase from youth turnout in 2016. We find big variation between states, and connections between youth voting and electoral laws/policies. [circle.tufts.edu/latest-research...](https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research...)

1:32 PM · Apr 29, 2021 · Twitter Web App

713 Retweets 43 Quote Tweets 6,049 Likes

**The Guardian**  
For 200 years

**Activism**  
**'It was time to take charge': the Black youth leading the George Floyd protests**

Members of Generation Z are organizing events and registering voters across the US as activism shapes their own lives

**Miranda Bryant** in New York

Mon 15 Jun 2020 03:00 EDT

**teenVOGUE**

HILL STREET STUDIOS

**Politics**

**Getting Out the Vote Is Harder in Areas Where Young People Feel Forgotten**

March for Our Lives and the climate movement represent a new wave of youth activism. But that's not the case everywhere in the country.

BY **RAINESFORD STAUFFER**

OCTOBER 22, 2019

**HeadCount** @HeadCountOrg

It's been a record-breaking year and a record-breaking election. Youth voter turnout has surpassed 2016 numbers and is the highest in any election ever! 18-29-year-olds have shown up, made their voices heard, and are helping to shape the future. @CivicYouth

Year	Turnout Range
2016	45% - 48%
2020	53% - 56%

As of 11/6 • Source: CIRCLE

CIRCLE and 9 others

3:08 PM · Nov 6, 2020 · Twitter Web App

72 Retweets 17 Quote Tweets 266 Likes

# A Word from Our Friends

“

CIRCLE is the nation’s most trusted source for data on youth political participation, especially on voting, and **their ability to connect research and practice** as well as their ability to bring organizations and voices together from different sectors of the civic education field enables them to make a critical contribution. We always appreciate their focus on centering equity as well as lifting up the power of youth voice and youth civic engagement.

**Dr. Erica Hodgins & Dr. Joe Kahne**  
Co-Directors of the Civic Engagement  
Research Group at UC Riverside

“

CIRCLE has been a valuable partner for our efforts in Illinois to put policy into practice to prepare ALL students for civic life through the implementation of middle and high school civics course requirements. At the center of this partnership is **a mutual commitment for our work to have equitable access and impact** for all students and teachers across our diverse state.

**Mary Ellen Daneels**  
National Board Certified Teacher  
Civics Instructional Specialist, Illinois Civics  
Hub at the DuPage Regional Office of  
Education

“

CIRCLE has been **an indispensable resource for the entire field** of environmental education. Through our ongoing work together, we have shared effective practice across our fields, developed a civic engagement and environmental education fellowship, and been so fortunate to have had the outstanding CIRCLE Director, Dr. Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, as a speaker and facilitator for a number of our programs and conferences.

**Judy Braus**  
Executive Director, North American Association for Environmental Education

“

At the heart of CIRCLE and Tisch College’s work is a central tenet: that **our democracy is incomplete until every young person has the ability and the opportunities** to help co-create our communities, our institutions, and our nation.

**Dayna Cunningham**  
Dean, Tisch College of Civic Life

“

CIRCLE provides us with the polling, research, insights, and training that teach our team how to best engage young voters. The Independent Voter Registration report **allows us to gauge our effectiveness and think through new tactics.** As someone who works to turn out young voters professionally, each component of Tisch College is instrumental to our success.

**Ben Wessel**

Former Executive Director, NextGen American

“

As a resource constrained organization with a dual message to increase voting accessibility and gun violence prevention, **CIRCLE allows us to make quick, data informed decisions.** In this rapid response industry, we would've been lost without CIRCLE's knowledge when weighing investment opportunities in strategic districts.

**Brian Lemek**

Executive Director, Brady PAC

“

We continuously use **the research and strategies developed by CIRCLE to guide our youth organizing program.** From determining how to best train young people to become better civic leaders, to figuring out how to invest our resources, CIRCLE plays an invaluable role in helping our organization empower young people to fully participate in our democracy.

**Nick Guthman**

Co-Founder and Executive Director,  
Blue Future

“

Shoutout to CIRCLE and the team at Tufts University. You're **one of the best groups of people collecting and interpreting youth vote data.** Thank you for everything you do.

**Dr. Erica Hodgin & Dr. Joe Kahne**

Co-Directors of the Civic Engagement Research Group at UC Riverside





CIRCLE AT 20

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# Partner with Us

**Our work over the past two decades has been made possible by the steadfast support of partners, funders, and friends. Our work in the next 20 years will be no different: we need you to help us study and strengthen youth civic engagement, and to fulfill the promise of a strong, equitable, and representative multiracial democracy. Join us!**

### **Make a Gift to CIRCLE**

Donate to our home institution, the Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life, and select CIRCLE as your gift designation.

[\*\*Click to Make a Gift\*\*](#)

### **Get in Touch**

Want to discuss opportunities for partnership?  
Email us at [circle@tufts.edu](mailto:circle@tufts.edu)

or scan the QR code!





# Acknowledgments & Gratitude

**This report, and the two decades of work that it chronicles, would not have been possible without the extraordinary contributions and support of hundreds of leaders, collaborators and colleagues—past and present. While we can name only a few here, we express our deepest gratitude to all our partners and friends.**

—  
**The Pew Charitable Trusts**, for the initial grant that established CIRCLE, the **Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation** for its endowment of CIRCLE’s directorship, and all of the individual donors and institutional funders of our work.

—  
 Former and current CIRCLE staff members, especially past directors **William Galston** and **Peter Levine**, as well as the countless research assistants and associates who have contributed to our work

—  
 Leaders and colleagues at CIRCLE’s first institutional home, the **University of Maryland’s School of Public Policy**, and at our current institutional home, **Tufts University’s Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life**. We are fortunate and proud to be part of a unique institution that studies and strengthens civic life at Tufts and beyond. We are especially grateful to current and former Tisch College deans Dayna Cunningham, Ambassador Alan Solomont, Nancy Wilson, and Rob Hollister.

—  
 The **CIRCLE advisory board**, a group of extraordinary leaders who have made invaluable contributions to our work and are poised to be a major part of CIRCLE’s future.



—  
 Finally, we’re grateful to **Elefint Designs** for their work on this report



Jonathan M. Tisch  
College of Civic Life

[circle.tufts.edu](http://circle.tufts.edu)