CIRCLE Growing Voters: Community Organizations and Local Institutions

Community groups, organizations, and local institutions are a key part of the ecosystems that can grow voters. Both overtly political nonprofits or issue-advocacy organizations as well as student clubs, local museums, health centers, libraries, art spaces, and more can directly reach and engage young people—and often serve as a political home that nurtures their civic development.

THE FACTS

80%

of 18 to 29-year-olds agreed with the statement "It is my responsibility to get |involved and make things better for society;" they're ready for opportunities to engage in community efforts. 46%

of young Black people
were contacted about the election
by a youth-serving organization
in 2020, highlighting the key
role these groups can
play in reaching otherwise
underserved youth.

65%

vs. 36% of youth ages 18-21 with a
Bachelor's or Associate's degree
were almost twice as likely as youth without
a degree to be contacted by community
organizations. They must redouble
efforts to reach young people who
aren't in college.

The CIRCLE Growing Voters is a paradigm shift to transform how policymakers and many other stakeholders can strengthen young people's equitable engagement in democracy. Learn more, engage in this work, and share it with others at: circle.tufts.edu/circlegrowingvoters



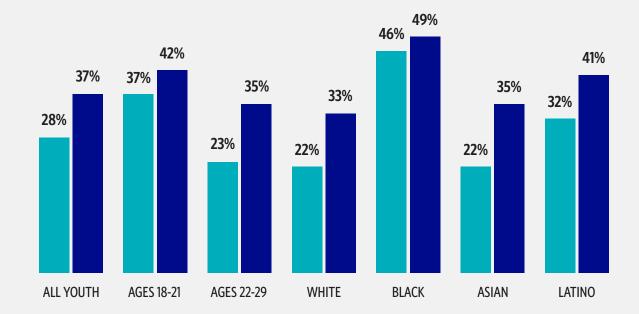


Youth-Focused Organizations Must Do More:

Young people were more likely to be contacted about the 2020 election by a community group that doesn't focus on youth than by a youth-focused organization. The latter must further embrace their role in growing voters among their core constituency.

YOUNG PEOPLE CONTACTED BY YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS. BY GROUP

By age and by race/ethnicity, youth-focused organizations lag behind other community organizations in reaching out to young people about elections



- Percentage Contacted at Least Once by Youth Organization
- Percentage Contacted at Least Once by Community Organizations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION: HOW COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS CAN GROW VOTERS

WHAT

WHY

HOW

Engage in nonpartisan political outreach and engagement.

While most nonprofit organizations must remain nonpartisan and comply with rules preventing some political activities, they can still educate the public about elections.

Consult resources in order to effectively disseminate accurate information about voting, and expose teens and other youth to elections—while complying with restrictions on political activity.

Leverage your relationships with young people.

Engaging young people who are already in your networks can increase youth voice in your organization while expanding your outreach.

Institute a youth advisory group or create other structures to facilitate youth input, or hire young people as staff members to help design programs for their peers.

Diversify your outreach.

The opportunities provided by local organizations can be especially important for youth who don't have other pathways to participation.

Explicitly focus on reaching youth who are not currently in school, young people from marginalized communities, and others who are likely to benefit most from your institution's support.

Start young.

It is never too early to start building civic responsibility. Civic habits build over the time and can help ensure youth are ready to vote when they turn 18.

Talk about voting and elections in children's and teen programs. Explain that electoral engagement is one of the tools people use to improve our communities.

Build community.

Social connections and a sense of belonging are foundational to civic engagement.

Create free spaces by and for teens
where they can learn about issues and create
intergenerational connections with
older community members through artistic
expression, media creation, and discourse in ways
that equalize power dynamics.
Libraries have been pioneering this work!

Embrace the role of social media and help youth navigate it.

Social networks can be a valuable source of information about issues and elections, a way for youth to use their voice by creating and sharing media, and pathways to additional civic engagement opportunities.

Acknowledge the valuable role social media can play in young people's development as voters and help them navigate its complex information landscape so they can use it effectively as a resource.



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