

Getting Younger Demographics To Vote:

The Most Effective Way To Increase Voter Turnout In 18 to
30 Year Olds

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Introduction And Approach:

18-30-year-olds have been criticized for the lackluster turnout in previous elections; only 26.96% voted in 2014 and 46.65% in 2018. Even as the amount of young eligible voters increased, voter turnouts have stayed low for this age group. One of the main issues with this current trend is the cycle of non-participation it creates. Voting is habitual (9), meaning the longer an eligible voter does not vote, the harder it is to get them to vote later in life. We believe that by building a habit of voting, we can increase voter turnout over time.

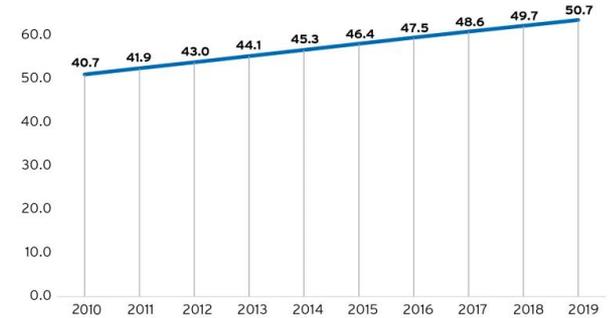
Our Approach:

Our project will focus on finding the most common reasons for why the young population is not registering to vote and why they are not voting. We will be using statistical evidence to back up our proposed solutions to build a voting habit in younger voters.

We will:

1. Identify the main reasons why 18-30-year-olds are not voting and not registering to vote.
2. Use available data to hypothesize about the root causes of said reasons.
3. Use statistical methods to test our hypotheses.
4. Come up with a solution to address the issues previously identified.

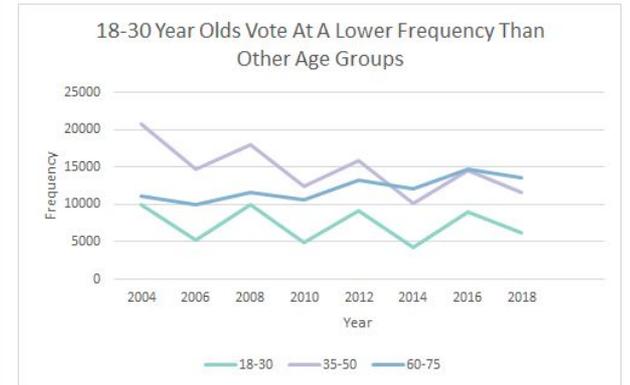
Figure 1: (Source- Brookings.edu)
Percent of population: Millennials, Gen Z, and younger



Source: William H. Frey analysis of Census Bureau population estimates released June 25, 2020.

B Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS

Figure 2:



Figures 1 and 2: Even though younger demographics are becoming a larger share of the population, their voter turnout is not increasing significantly.

Current Trends in Non-Voters Aged 18-30

Many trends stick out concerning 18-30-year-olds who are not voting from 2004-2018.

- 35.36% of males voted compared to 32.98% of females
- 34.3% of nonvoters lived outside of a central city compared to 23.9% that lived in a city.
- Nonvoters tend to have a high school education or less.

Other Demographic Information Includes (10):

- 46% of nonvoters have family incomes that are less than \$30,000 a year.
- 47% of nonvoters identify with a particular party- 45% are independent.

These trends show limitations of “get out the vote” initiatives targeting these demographics. For organizations targeting college campuses, their efforts would not be as effective because many nonvoters are not on college campuses. For city-wide efforts, fewer nonvoters live in cities. While these efforts are still useful at getting youth voters to vote, they could improve to better target nonvoters.

Figure 3:

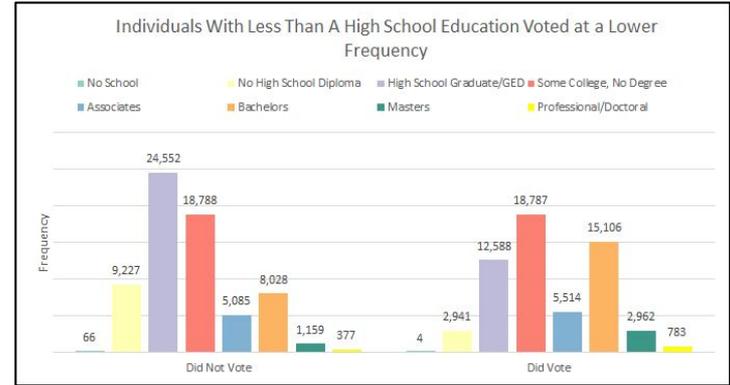
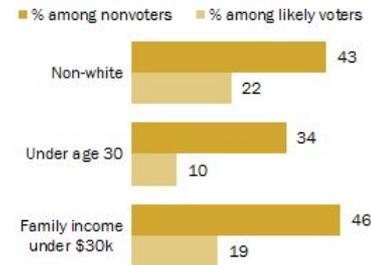


Figure 4:

Wide Demographic Divides Between Nonvoters and Likely Voters



Survey conducted Oct. 15-20, 2014.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figures 3 and 4: Show demographic differences in voters and nonvoters. Fig. 3 shows the difference in frequency between education level in nonvoters and voters. Fig 4 shows differences across all nonvoters, which still emphasizes the demographic contrast among voters and nonvoters.

Most Common Reason For Not Registering

The Reason:

- The most common reason why young people did not register as they were not interested in politics.
- The second most common reason was the individual felt like their vote would not make a difference.
- Another common reason was not meeting registration deadlines.
- One of the major trends that we noticed influencing the reason for not registering was the education level of the individual.

Data Analysis

- There appears to be an association between education level and reason for not registering. To analyze the statistical significance of this association, we will conduct a chi-square test. We will be analyzing the relationship between the educational background and reasons for not registering:

Figure 5: This graph shows that percent of 18-19 year olds who registered and voted increase as the level of education received increases.

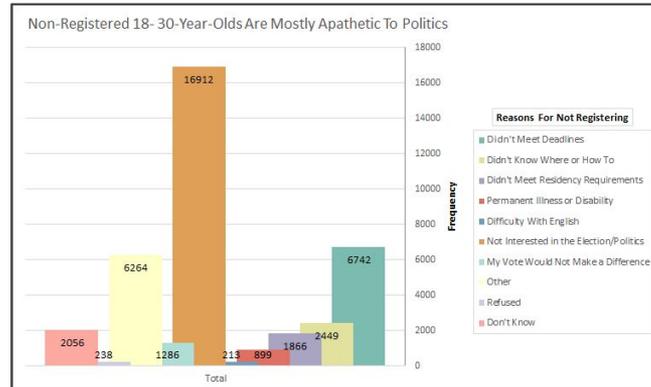
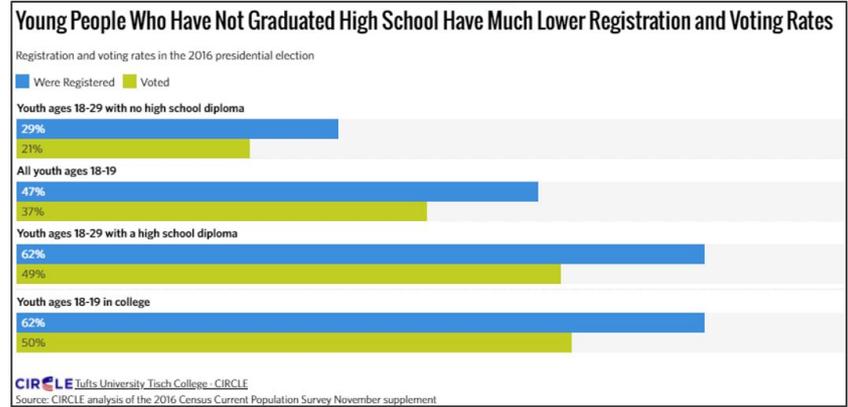


Figure 6 This graph shows the frequency of reasons for not registering. We chose to test if the data in Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 were associated.

Statistical Analysis Between Education Level and Not Registering:

H_0 = The reason for not registering to vote O_i , is not dependent on whether an eligible voters education level.

H_a = The reason for not registering to vote O_i , is dependent on whether an eligible voters education level.

Results:

$\chi^2_{(63, N = 38925)} = 2494.001, p = < .001$.

Since $p = < .001$, we can conclude that there is a strong association between the two variables.

Based on the data, there is significant statistical evidence that the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternate hypothesis can be accepted. We can conclude that reason for not registering and an individual's education level is strongly associated with each other.

One example of a large disparity between observed and expected values includes the difference between the expected values of high school graduates who were not interested in politics and the observed values. This is a possible indicator of dependence.

Qualifications for Using a Chi Square Test:

- ✓- Qualitative Data
- ✓- The expected value of each observation is at least 5.
- ✓- Large Sample Size
- ✓- Two or More Categories for Each Variable
- ✓- Representative of population

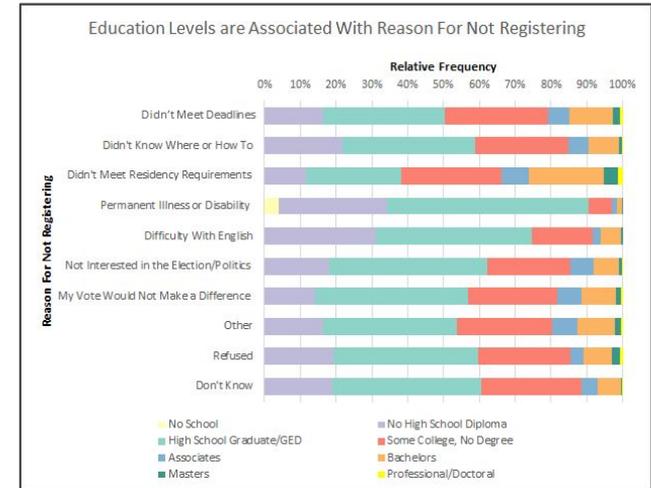


Figure 7: This chart illustrates the association between education levels and reason for not registering.

Most Common Reason For Not Voting:

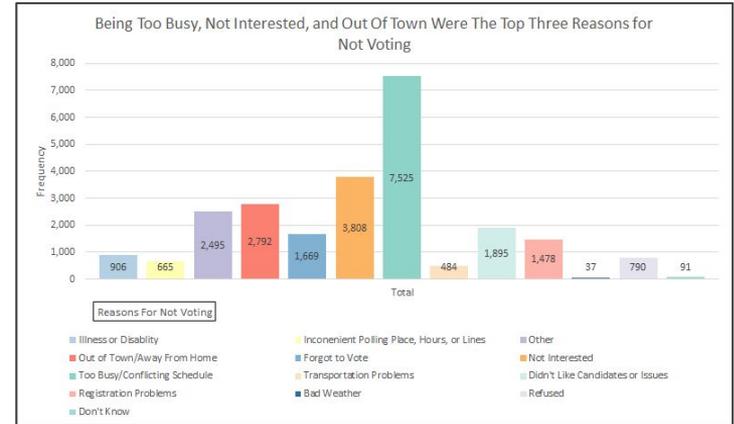
The Reason:

- One common misconception about the lack of voter turnout for younger demographics is that they don't care about politics, which is why they are not voting. After analyzing the available data, we found that this was not the case. The most common listed reason for why 18-30-year-olds did not vote was that they were too busy.

Analyzing Data:

- We wanted to dig deeper into this reason, so we used data about the number of 18-30-year-olds in the labor force to determine if there was a significant association between being too busy to vote and whether or not the individual was working.

Figure 8: This graph depicts the frequency of given reasons for not voting over time without any other variables factored into the data. It also shows that being too busy, not being interested, and being out of town were the most common reasons.



FiveThirtyEight
Why Younger Americans Don't Vote More Often (*No, It's Not Apathy)

HUFFPOST
Young Voters Are More Likely To Skip Voting Because They Say They're Too Busy

Figure 9: These headlines from news sources illustrate the coverage of why young voters are not voting. Despite information on why young voters are not voting, there have not been significant increases in young voter turnout.

Statistical Analysis Between Not Voting and Working

H_0 = The reason a non voter gave for not voting is not dependent on whether or not they were in the labor force.

H_a = The reason a non voter gave for not voting is dependent on whether or not they were in the labor force.

Results of the Chi-Square Test:

$$\chi^2(10, N = 18683) = 250.791, p = <.001$$

Since $p = <.001$, we can conclude that there is a strong association between the two variables.

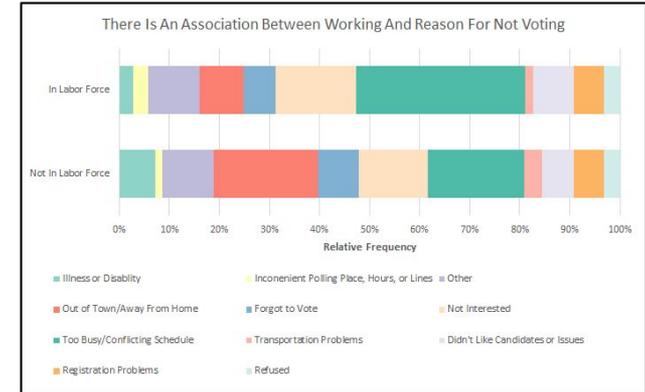
Based on the data, there is significant statistical evidence that the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternate hypothesis can be accepted. We can conclude that reason for not voting, and a nonvoter working in the labor force are strongly associated with each other.

The most significant differences between observed and expected values are between illness/disability, too busy, and out of town/away from home, which is a possible indicator of dependence.

Qualifications for Using a Chi Square Test:

- ✓ - Qualitative Data
- ✓ - The expected value of each observation is at least 5.
- ✓ - Large Sample Size
- ✓ - Two or More Categories for Each Variable
- ✓ - Representative of population

Figure 10: This chart is an illustration of the association between working or not and the reason for not voting. It shows possible indicators of dependence because the size of the segmented bar corresponds to the greatest observed differences between expected and observed values.



What Needs To Be Done:

Statistical evidence suggests that education level and being in the labor force are influential in determining whether 18-30-year-old votes. We believe that there a two-phase solution focused on building a voting habit in young people would be significantly effective in increasing voter turnout.

Phase 1: Implement Voter Registration Programs In High Schools

Outside Evidence:

- 26 states allow individuals to pre-register to vote if they turn 18 by the next election. (1)
- Youth voter turnout increased by 5.7 percentage points after students were taught how to vote. (2,3)
- Survey respondents who were encouraged to vote in high school, 79% are paying “some” or “a lot” of attention to the 2020 election and 54% tried to convince others to vote. (4)
- In 2008, 84% of 18-29-year-olds who were registered to vote cast a ballot. (7)

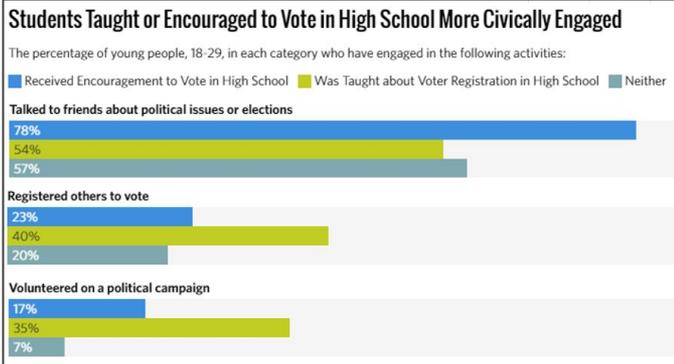


Figure 11: High school students who were taught about voting and registering were more likely to talk about political issues, help others register, and volunteer politically. (5)

By making registering (or pre registering) to vote a community service or graduation requirement, schools would be making it easy for high school students to learn how to register and ask questions about the process. Also, by integrating registration and voting lessons into the curriculum, high schools would be encouraging youth to vote, which increases voter turnout.

What A High-School Voter Registration Programs Looks Like:

1. Schools explain what students need to do to register to vote in their 12th-grade social studies class. They demonstrate how to complete the necessary forms both online and on paper.
2. Make it easy for students to turn in their registration forms by collecting any paperwork or by allocating time during lunch or after school to provide computers where students can register online.
3. Give students a deadline to complete their registration. Provide an incentive for completing the registration, such as extra credit or community service hours. OR make it a graduation requirement.

Other Resources:

- [League of Women Voters](#)
- [Best Practices for High School Registration Drives](#)
- [My School Votes- When We All Vote](#)
- [High School Registration Toolkit](#)

Phase 2: Make Information on Voting Easy To Access

Outside Evidence:

- Young people are more likely to not know where to vote. (6)
- 7 out of the 10 top youth turnout states offered Election Day registration, voting by mail, or even not requiring registration to vote (North Dakota) (7)
- The majority of young people don't think voting is effective in changing society. (7)

Voting intentions vs. actual voting by young US citizens

A much bigger share of Americans between 18 and 30 intend to cast a ballot than carry through with it.

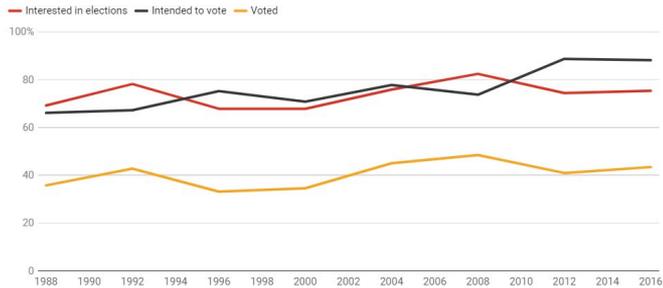


Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND · Source: American National Election Studies · Get the data

Figure 12: There is a greater amount of 18-30-year-olds that are interested in voting and want to vote than there are that do vote.

One of the main ways to increase voter turnout is to increase access to information that would help young voters. Once young demographics are registered to vote (Phase 1), the next step is making sure they know when, where, and how to vote.

How To Increase Access To Information:

1. Support organizations dedicated to reaching out to voters would be able to help inform youth voters about nearby polling locations, deadlines, and poll hours.
2. Strengthening voter education in schools (Phase 1) would allow youth voters would be more informed about alternative ways to vote, like mail-in voting.
 - a. For example, revamping the civics curriculum. Schools that actively engage students in the voting process and encourage can significantly increase the voter turnout levels of their students. Ex: Democracy Prep Public Schools (8)
3. Demonstrating how voting has changed society throughout history could motivate young voters who are civically engaged in other ways to vote.

Other Resources:

- [Democracy Prep Public Schools](#)
- [Alliance For Youth Action](#)
- [Youth Voter Movement](#)
- [When We All Vote](#)
- [Rock The Vote](#)
- [Campus Election Engagement Project](#)

Conclusion

By implementing voting registration drives and education into high schools (Phase 1 of our solution), more young voters would vote because registering to vote increases the chances that a person will vote. Also, teaching and helping students register would address the top three reasons for not registering to vote; not interested in politics, missing deadlines, and not knowing where or how to. By having schools improve civics education, high school students would be able to see why their political voice matters, thus increasing interest in voting. Furthermore, schools educating and guiding students through registration would remind them of deadlines and show them where/how to register. Students would be able to take these skills and apply them later in their lives. Finally, more young unregistered individuals did not pursue education beyond high school. So, by focusing on registration education in high school, efforts would reach more potential voters than only focusing on college students.

Next, making information on how to vote easy to access would also increase voter turnout. The most common reasons for not voting include being too busy and being away from home. Providing easy-to-access information on alternatives to voting at the polls could help nonvoters navigate voting and their changing lifestyles. A final reason that Phase 2 would be effective at increasing voter turnout would be that consistently providing up to date information on how to vote would remind young voters about deadlines and requirements. This would drastically reduce the amount of nonvoters who forget to send in their ballots or show up at the polling place.

We believe that our two-phase solution would be effective at increasing voter turnout in young demographics. By focusing on building a voting habit early in a person's life, the voter turnout of young demographics would improve over time as more generations graduate and begin voting.

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