

18BY VOTE'S EYE RESEARCH  
COLLECTIVE PRESENTS



# EXPLORING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

UNDERSTANDING WHO AND  
WHAT IMPACTS GEN Z'S CIVIC  
ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY



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UNDERSTANDING WHO AND WHAT IMPACTS  
GEN Z'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY

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**Exploring Youth Engagement: Understanding Who and What  
Impacts Gen Z's Civic Engagement Journey**



# ABSTRACT

Young people have historically lacked institutional power in the civic and political spheres. Most studies of youth civic engagement have failed to involve young people as researchers of their own demographic. To better center young people's perspectives, the 18by Vote Research Collective implemented a youth-led research project to understand who influences Gen Z's civic engagement, and how their identities impact their involvement. Research fellows carried out a nationwide survey (n = 402) and conducted interviews and small group discussions in their home states (n = 36). Participants shed insight on how interactions with the people in their lives encouraged and discouraged their engagement, and explained how multiple aspects of their identities motivated and/or blocked their involvement. In conducting the research, the fellows came to the conclusion that every young person has their own path to civic engagement or disengagement. Along that path, young people have interactions or reckonings with aspects of their identity that can initiate, block, accelerate, and/or interrupt them.

Key takeaways include:

- I) Participants often lacked adequate spaces to lead or inter-generationally co-create community projects that developed civic skills.
- II) Civic spaces often fail to center marginalized people and don't provide the necessary resources for spaces to be accessible and welcoming to youth with intersecting identities.
- III) Youth resonated with the message that everyone is an expert on their own experiences, and wants their communities to understand how young people's identities can motivate and/or inhibit their engagement.
- IV) Youth shared that open communication and spaces that allow young people to show up as their genuine selves supports their sustained engagement.

Uplifting the words of Gen Z participants, this report provides recommendations as to how various groups – from families and friends to educators and community organizations – can support youths' sustained civic engagement.

# POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

The 2023 Exploring Youth Engagement Research Collective represents six fellows between the ages of 17–20 who hail from Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, Utah, and Washington, along with the 18by Vote staff who supported them during the research process. 18by Vote is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit that helps Gen Z voters understand how, when, and why to vote, providing them with resources to be civic leaders in their own communities.

As experts in their own lived experiences and communities, the EYE Research Collective allowed Gen Z to lead research on their peers and communities and to describe findings and create recommendations that would directly affect them. Often a lack of youth researchers leads to oversights when designing and conducting research, which the Collective hoped to rectify. With a team of Gen Z researchers and support staff, this unique perspective allowed for greater insight on the topic of youth civic engagement and a greater understanding of the Gen Z survey and interview respondents. Each fellow has lived experience as young organizers in their own communities and bring their expertise on civic organizing to this research project. Additionally, the fellows represent a diversity of experiences spanning different geographical regions, racial identities, sexualities, and more. The Collective hopes to set a precedent of what can be accomplished when youth study youth and the benefits of inclusion within research teams.

## BACKGROUND

Prior research surrounding youth civic engagement has revealed the many benefits of civic engagement at a young age despite the fact that youth efforts often go under-appreciated. Findings indicate that early civic engagement is correlated with positive outcomes, such as better mental health, greater educational attainment, and higher incomes (Hope, 2022). Additionally, studies reveal how modern young adults often participate in politics in ways that do not always fit within current methods of participatory engagement. This indicates a need to broaden the definition of civic engagement, especially when researching youth. Moreover, young people may begin with the belief that they can create change in their communities, but they face barriers to civic action from adults, peers' reluctance, social-emotional factors, and a lack of resources (Bauml et al., 2022). Existing literature has also considered the influence of relationships and identity on young people's civic engagement. Scholars note how groups and institutions like family, schools, clubs, etc. politically socialize young people and can provide them with the resources and skills to be civically engaged (Andolina et al., 2003; Holecz et al., 2022). Moreover, scholars have investigated how identity— including race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, etc.— influences how young people approach and engage in certain forms of political and civic action (Gordon, 2008; Phan & Kloos, 2023).

While much research has been done on youth civic engagement, most studies have been conducted without the leadership or meaningful participation of youth. Rather than following precedent, 18by Vote's Exploring Youth Engagement Research Fellowship put youth at the forefront of research. Over the course of three months, the EYE Research Collective designed and conducted research on young people's relationship to and views on civic engagement.

The EYE Research Collective was motivated by the following research questions:

- What is the impact of different sociopolitical influencers,<sup>1</sup> such as friends, parents, teachers, and community members, on youth civic engagement?
- What is the relationship between personal identity and youth civic engagement?

From over 36 hours of interviews and over 400 survey responses, this research culminated in an overarching understanding that: **Every young person has their own path to civic engagement or disengagement. Along that path, young people have interactions or reckonings with aspects of their identity that can initiate, block, accelerate, and/or interrupt them on that path.**

## Research Questions

What is the impact of different sociopolitical influencers, such as friends, parents, teachers, and community members, on youth civic engagement?

What is the relationship between personal identity, gender, sexuality, race, SES, etc, and youth civic engagement?

# METHODOLOGY

EYE research fellows utilized **mixed methods** to understand the scope and depth of young people's civic engagement. The three methodologies the fellows used were a **survey**, **interviews**, and civic assemblies. **Civic assemblies**<sup>2</sup> are 18by Vote's spin on citizens' assemblies<sup>3</sup> and focus groups. Civic assemblies engage stakeholders in a facilitated and collaborative dialogue about an issue of interest. EYE fellows convened civic assemblies of young people to discuss their experiences with civic engagement and consider how civic spaces could encourage young people's sustained participation. As moderators, EYE fellows were able to uphold a **peer-to-peer dynamic** that was less hierarchical than what is present in a traditional focus group of young people with an older researcher. For each of the methodologies, the fellows collectively developed the research instrument with guidance and support from 18by Vote staff and Innovative Research Mentors.

The EYE Research Fellowship was founded on the idea that research on young people should be done by fellow young people, and as such, the research fellows defined the target population for study participants as members of Gen Z (those born between 1996–2012). While the survey was open to young people across the country, the interviews and civic assemblies were only conducted within the fellows' home states (FL, GA, KY, NY, UT, and WA).

The fellows used convenience and snowball sampling for surveys, interviews, and civic assemblies, by utilizing their personal networks and reaching out to organizations and individuals through social media, email, and in-person interactions. To incentivize and reward participation, the fellows held a raffle for a \$100 gift card for civic assembly and interview participants, and a raffle for \$25 gift cards for those who took the survey.



For more information on the roles of 18by Vote staff and Innovative Research Mentors, go to pg. 22

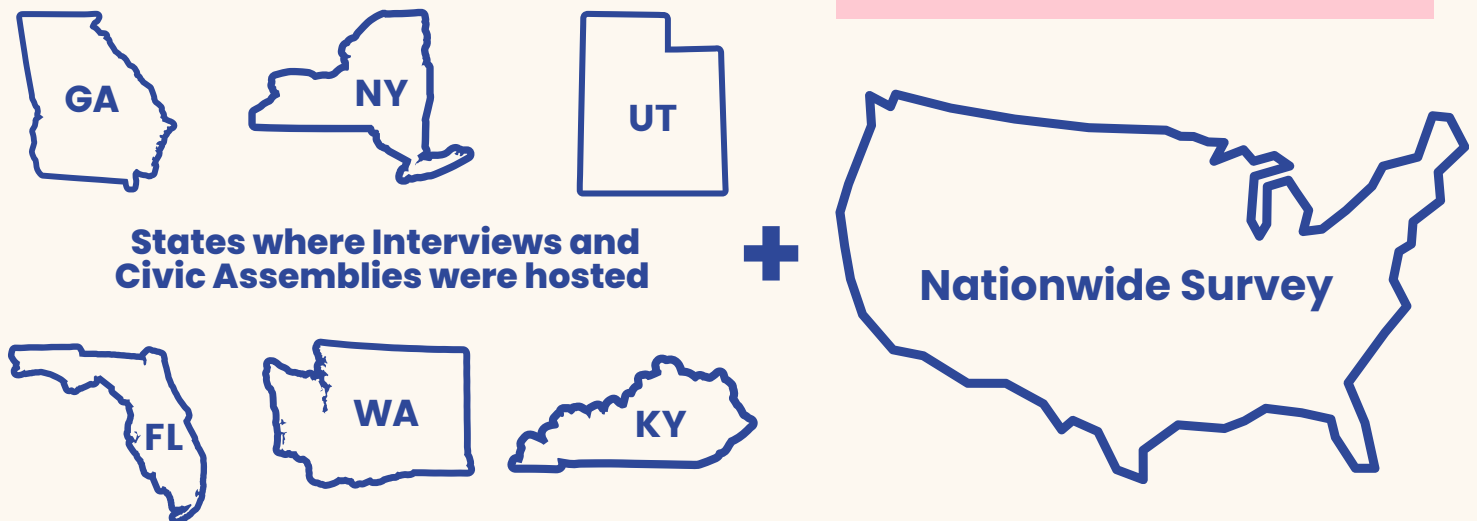
- 1** Sociopolitical influencers are people who have the power to influence social and political perspectives and behaviors at an individual or community level because of their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with the influenced individual(s).
- 2** Civic assemblies are 18by Vote's spin on citizens' assemblies and focus groups. Civic assemblies engage stakeholders in a facilitated and collaborative dialogue about an issue of interest.
- 3** A citizens' assembly is a representative group of citizens who are gathered to deliberate on public issues and provide recommended courses of action (Participedia 2021).

The survey collected 1000+ responses over three weeks in July of 2023, however after cleaning the data the Collective accepted 402 responses. The 18by Vote staff were also diligent about cleaning the data by removing suspicious responses, which were defined by the time spent on the survey and any evidence of bot responses. The civic assemblies and interviews were held over four weeks between mid-July and mid-August with 36 total participants.

Reducing bias in research on young people's civic habits was a motivation for the research. Having the research done by and for youth removed some of the ageist bias implicit in traditional researcher-to-researched dynamics in studies of young people. The Collective acknowledged that bias cannot be fully eliminated, but attempted to minimize it to the best of their abilities throughout the research process. For example, the fellows and research mentors made sure to review the wording of the questions in each research instrument to ensure participants would not be led to any particular answer. Along the same lines, the fellows tried to avoid moralistic feedback after participants' responses in interviews and civic assemblies, to not steer their responses or show bias.

### Research by Youth on Youth

**Target Population:**  
**Gen Z youth born between**  
**1996 – 2012**



Research participants were provided protections. The Collective required civic assembly and interview participants, or their guardians in the case that they were under 18, to sign an informed consent form before our meeting. To ensure informed consent was obtained, fellows reviewed the main points of the consent form before beginning the civic assemblies. Those points included a reminder that the meeting would be recorded with cameras on, although the participants would remain anonymous in the distribution of research findings. The fellows also explained that they would not be asking for sensitive and intimate information directly but some topics may arise in conversation. Additionally, the fellows highlighted that participation is voluntary and they could stop or revoke their participation at any time without penalty. Survey participants and/or their guardians were not required to fill out a full informed consent form because sensitive questions were not asked, the Collective did not want to discourage the participation of youth whose guardians disapprove of civic engagement, and because the survey was kept anonymous. Survey participants were required to give consent for their survey data to be analyzed.

**402**

survey respondents

**46**

states surveyed

**36**

discussion participants

**14**

interviews

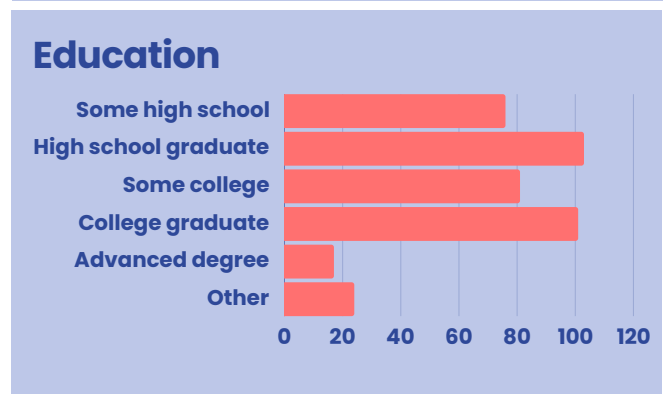
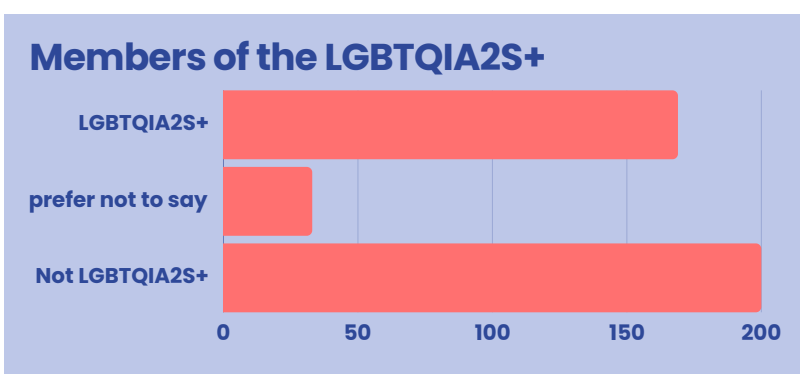
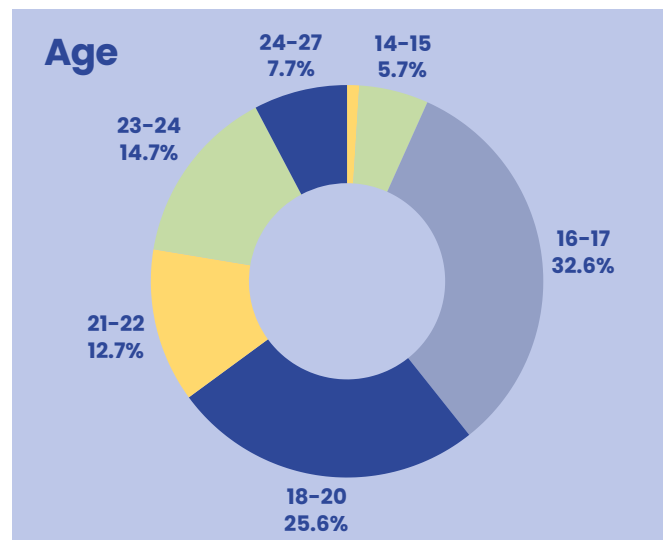
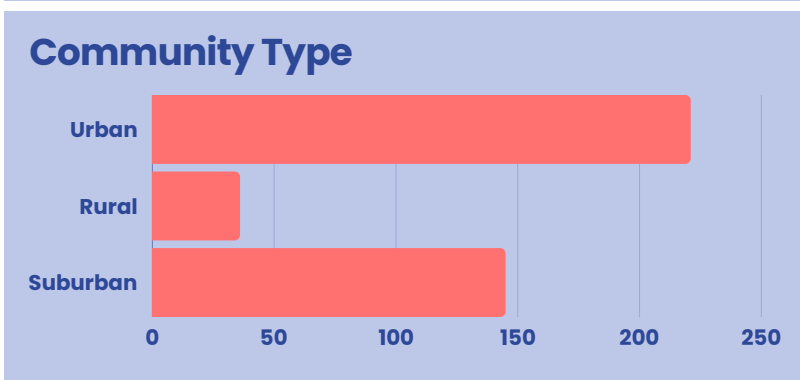
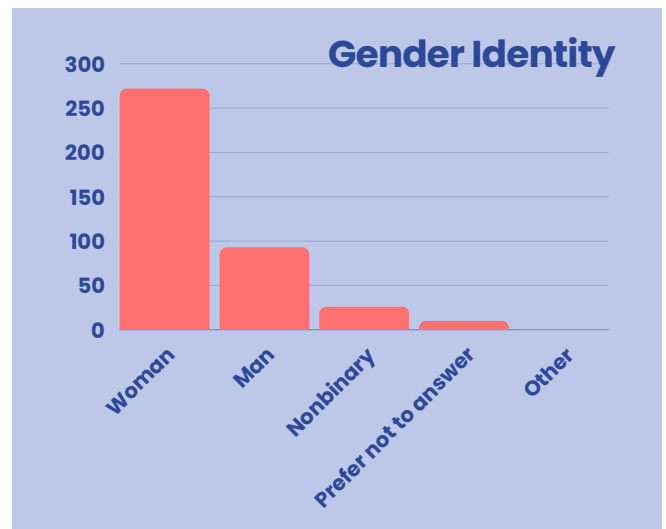
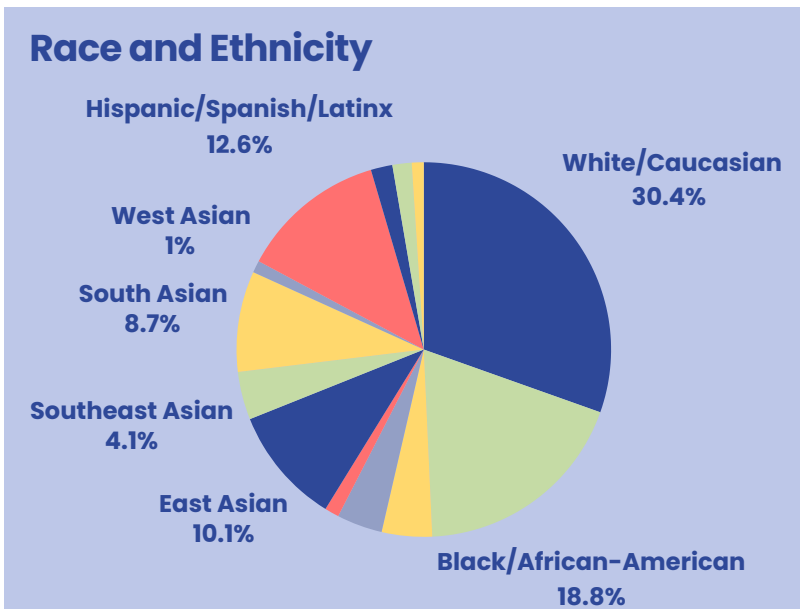
**8**

civic assemblies

# FINDINGS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The survey gathered 402 responses from 46 states. Ninety-nine percent of survey participants indicated that they had previously participated in at least one civic or political activity (e.g. voting, GOTV activities, lobbying, protesting, participating in an advocacy organization, etc.). About 68% of survey respondents were women and 6.5% were nonbinary, 50.6% identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and 39.1% identified as economically disadvantaged. The fellows hosted 36 participants from across six states in eight civic assemblies and 14 interviews.

## SURVEY PARTICIPANTS





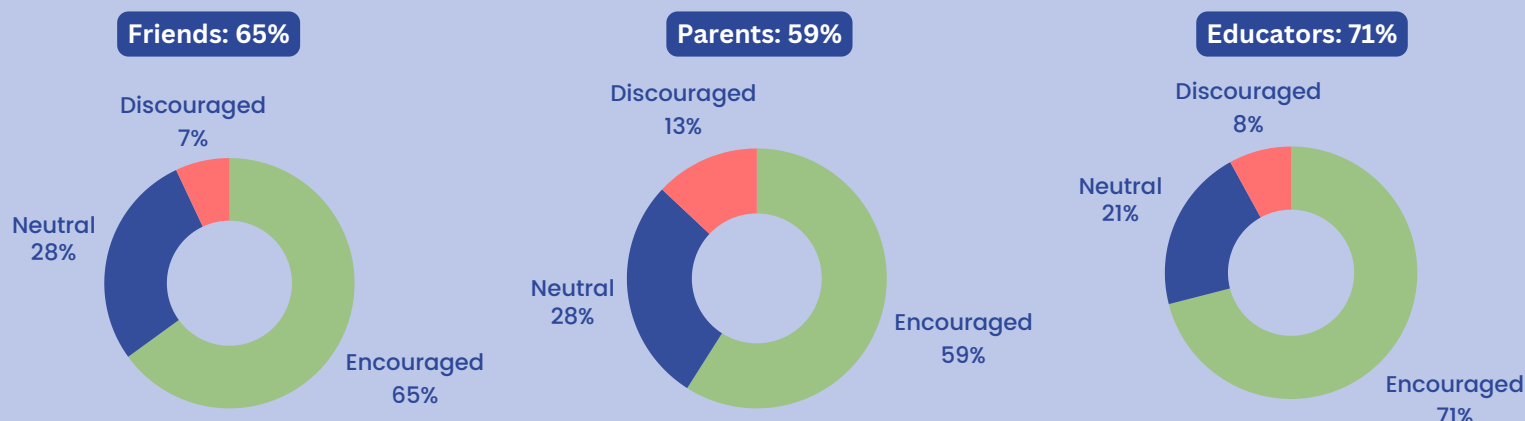
Following the civic assemblies and interviews, the fellow began unanimously coding the data and information provided. The fellows started by drafting and analyzing key statements and quotes directly made by participating youth. The fellows then jointly defined the statements and created categories and subcategories that were turned into key insights. These categories included key attributes that contributed to youths' civic participation such as motivators and de-motivators. After defining and creating the insights the fellows began categorizing them into different themes and concepts that were conclusively turned into the key takeaways and findings.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT SOCIOPOLITICAL INFLUENCERS SUCH AS FRIENDS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

To understand the impact of different sociopolitical influencers on youth civic engagement, the Collective reviewed the broader perspectives illustrated by the survey data as well as the deeper and richer insights shared by interview and civic assembly participants. Regarding survey data, many respondents felt like the people in their lives were encouraging their civic engagement: 65% of respondents said their friends were encouraging of their engagement; 59% of them said their parents were; and 71% said the same of their educators. Another 53% and 69% were encouraged by their elected representatives and community/political organizers, respectively. Still, there was plenty of diversity in the nature of young people's relationships with sociopolitical influencers. The young people who participated in civic assemblies and interviews provided further perspective on how sociopolitical influencers have either encouraged or discouraged their engagement. The following section will explore how interactions with friends, family, educators, communities, and politicians impacted Gen Z participants' outlook on civic engagement.

### Encouragers of Youth Engagement

The percentage of survey respondents who responded \_\_\_\_\_ encouraged their engagement



### Friends and Peers

With the agency and decision to select who they're surrounded by, young people tend to befriend people who share their values, and with whom they can get along with. While some participants shared that politics was not a common topic of conversation in their friend groups, others explained that their peers were instrumental in introducing them to civic action or reinforcing their dedication to community engagement. One participant explained that their peers got civically engaged, "largely through other peers. It's kind of a social network... that makes people aware of the issues in their community, and

## Friends and Peers

the things that they care about and that their friends care about.” As young people interact with one another, and especially with their trusted peers, they are empowered in the “social network” to pursue the issues or causes where they feel they have the existing support systems from friends. These findings speak to the influence friends can have through **social pressure and supportive actions** (Pancer 2014).

**“ [my peers] got engaged largely through other peers. It's kind of a social network... that makes people aware of the issues in their community, and the things that they care about and that their friends care about”**

## Family

Families can **transmit their values and behaviors of civic engagement** or disengagement, foster political interest or disinterest, and **mediate young people's access to civic spaces** (Andolina et al. 2003; Pancer 2014). They also set the tone for how comfortable young people feel sharing their political views at home. In this research, survey respondents overwhelmingly felt comfortable expressing their political opinions at home, with 69% reporting they felt comfortable compared to 16% who felt uncomfortable. Interview and civic assembly respondents shared a range of perspectives. Some young people explained that their parents' interest in politics transferred to them— one participant shared that their “parents and I bring [politics] up to each other pretty regularly”— and were supportive of their engagement.

Other participants shared that they clashed with their parents over political stances, and were on different pages regarding concerns over safety and the public nature of their engagement. In some cases, these disagreements led to a silencing effect, in which the participants stopped bringing up politics around their parents. For example, one participant shared that “there are like a few things I just disagree [with my family] on that I will pretty much never bring up until I'm financially independent.” As a dependent who is financially reliant on their family, the participant worried that expressing their views would clash with their family's values and positions, resulting in the discontinuation of their family's support and provision—in this way, they are effectively repressing their political expression at home.

**“My parents and I bring [politics] up to each other pretty regularly”**

## Educators

Educators are tasked with helping young people develop civic skills such as communication and collaboration (Andolina et al. 2003). As students learn about the larger world, educators – both in the school setting or as mentors – play a role in shaping the lens through which young people begin to understand the world. Indeed, many participants considered educators to be in a **well-suited position to communicate the significance of civic engagement**.

Beyond their institutional role, educators still influence young people's outlook on civic engagement through their personal interactions. Some youths recounted educators who have advocated, supported, and connected them to civic engagement opportunities, with one participant explaining that “I'm part of the Youth Advisory Board... mainly because of my geometry teacher... she was like, ‘I think you'd benefit from being around other students who share the same ideals as you.’” This participant's statement exemplifies the importance of educators gaining the trust of their students and helping them in their journey with civic engagement. Other participants, however, recalled



remember my history teacher literally saying 'no one will take you [a teenage girl] seriously.'" Being dismissed by a teacher claiming others would not treat a young person's perspective as deserving of respect can deter youth from freely speaking their mind and reduce their confidence in themselves. **As authority figures on civic topics, educators' words and actions inform young people's understanding of the role they can play in social and political spaces.**

**"I can remember my history teacher literally saying 'no one will take you [a teenage girl] seriously'"**

Beyond individual educators, young people had **critiques for larger educational institutions and civics curriculums**, as one participant argued, "I feel that our education system does a bad job of explaining how there are many ways to be civically engaged." This participant expresses that the broader American education system neglects to teach and demonstrate a more expansive view of civic engagement. With the understanding that civic education is vastly different from state to state, school district to school district, or even school to school within the same district, the participant poignantly noted that the current system of civic education is inadequate.

## Communities

As there are different communities young people are a part of, there are varying experiences that speak to the impact community sociopolitical influencers have on youth. Among survey respondents, 55% perceived that their cultural community views civic engagement somewhat or very favorably, and several interview and civic assembly participants expressed that they are encouraged to further engage through the support of their community. Discussing their experience with a community group, one participant shared that "knowing that there's a Black Student Union at my district helps a lot, because we kind of team up to actively help others who also share the same identity as us." The affinity group empowered this youth to become active in community engagement. **As these affinity spaces often facilitate conversations around larger societal issues, they can help address communal problems.**

Yet, there are also aspects of some communities that make young folks feel uncomfortable. Some participants described how they had to be more cautious and conscious of how they express their views in ideologically or politically diverse communities, as one participant expressed, "That definitely does make me uncomfortable like living around people who think that way and it does make me more conscious when I do meet people in my community."

**"knowing that there's a Black Student Union at my district helps a lot, because we kind of team up to actively help others who also share the same identity as us."**

This participant felt uneasy when interacting with members of their neighborhood community. In politically homogeneous communities, where divergent viewpoints can be suppressed or ostracized, young people may be dissuaded from civically engaging.

**Young people are sensitive to the political climate within their communities and are aware of the community's receptivity to their views and engagement.** On one hand, in the most hostile environments to a young person's view, they may be deterred from political expression. On the other end, when young people align with the values of their community, they can feel empowered by their community to be civically engaged.

## Politicians

Young participants had mixed experiences with politicians. **While some interactions boosted the young person's motivation and provided further guidance as to how to be civically engaged, other interactions revealed how some politicians are dismissive of their young constituents.** One participant shared how a politician they worked with has been dedicated to encouraging youth engagement, noting, "She's a huge reason as to why I've been able to kind of stay consistent through my political involvement, cause she kind of makes a mission to recruit young people ... I can name five people in my grade that she has helped in that are more politically involved just because she reached out to them and asked about canvassing and other stuff like that." This is a powerful example of a public official not only recruiting young people as a one-time effort but also sustaining youth engagement through continuing to seek out young people to stay involved with their office.

**"I told him what motivated me was being, you know, a low-income first-generation student, and he kind of... he kind of like dismissed it, saying, like, 'that shouldn't motivate you. Like, why is that big deal.' Like he just kind of didn't care"**

On the other hand, politicians can be disrespectful of young people's engagement in civic and political spaces. One participant discussed an interaction with a politician where, "I told him what motivated me was being, you know, a low-income first-generation student, and he kind of... he kind of like dismissed it, saying, like, 'that shouldn't motivate you. Like, why is that a big deal.' Like he just kind of didn't care. And that... made me feel ashamed in a way.... I felt

very like... my identity didn't matter." Considering the power dynamics underlying this interaction of a politician dismissing the young person's identity, despite their courage to share about a vulnerable, marginalized part of their identity, this insensitive response can demoralize the young person from pursuing civic engagement, yet more harmful to their self-perception feeling like their identity does not matter. **How politicians respond to young people's concerns, and the extent to which they show sustained dedication to young people's engagement framed Gen Z's assessment of whether they could count on support from politicians.**

## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL IDENTITY AND YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

The second research question considered how young people's social identities motivated and discouraged their civic engagement. Survey respondents identified age, race, and socioeconomic status as dual motivators and discouragers of their civic engagement. The following section will explore the influence of these identities, and the intersecting nature of identities, shape young people's outlook on civic engagement.

### Age

**Young people face legal barriers and social attitudes that discourage their engagement, and yet many of them continue to fight for their inclusion in civic and political spaces.** Many participants were motivated by the chance to create the change they wanted to see and by seeing other young people's activism. One participant shared how their perspective on young people's engagement changed, explaining that, "before COVID happened or the Black Lives Movement, I didn't really know that being an activist was possible or achievable for a young person. But then when I saw everyday on social media like new young people were doing it. I sort of woke up and I was like, oh, I guess this is something that I could do too and then after that just started wanting to become more engaged."

The activating moment for this young person was when they saw other young people politically engaged. **Representation and belief in their power to affect change as young people can kickstart and sustain their civic engagement path.**

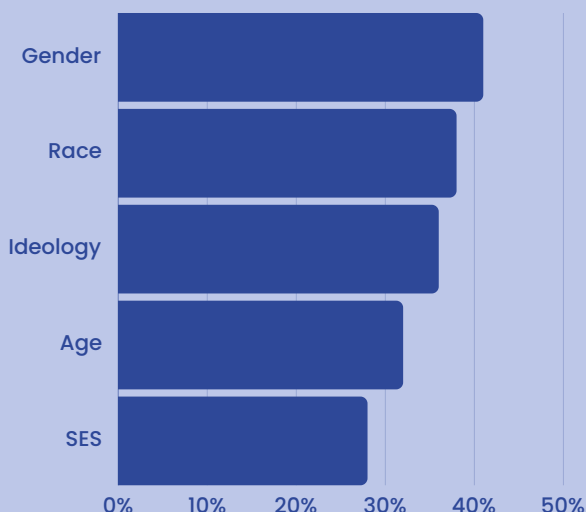
Nevertheless, age limitations on young people's access to certain forms of participation (e.g. voting), as well as ageism perpetuated by older community members, challenge young people's place in civic and political spaces. Several middle- and high-school-aged participants viewed voting as the standard of political engagement, and comparatively dismissed the significance of their other means of being civically involved. Apart from critiquing their own involvement, young people also face the judgment of older community members. One participant explained, "as a young person, I feel like when I talk about my views and my opinions to an older person, they belittle me and think since I'm young, I shouldn't have my own thoughts and opinions on things because I haven't lived a life." Based on their past experiences of feeling belittled for their age, young respondents were discouraged from opening up about their views to an older person in fear of being dismissed.

**Young people constantly face structural and social ageism that can block or dissuade their engagement in civic and political life.** Dismissals of young people's engagement before they are of voting age may encourage apathy or disenchantment towards voting and other forms of political involvement once they are eligible to vote. As members of a marginalized age group, young people expressed how critical it is for them to see examples of fellow young people challenging the notions that politics is solely an arena for adults, and to have **intergenerational allies who recognize the value of their perspectives and understand that politics affects people of all ages.**

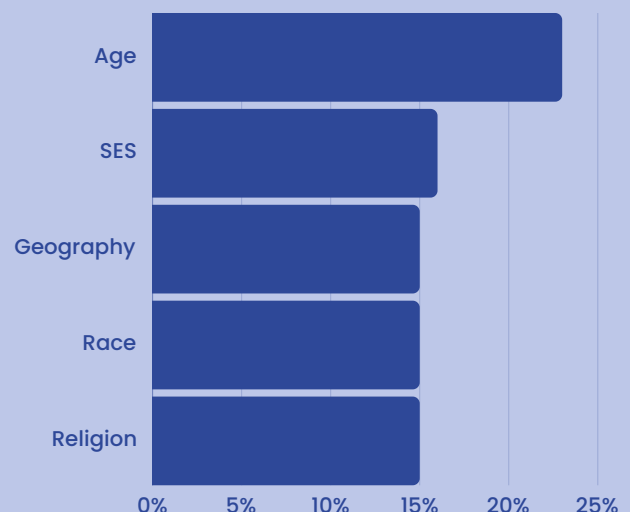
**"as a young person, I feel like when I talk about my views and my opinions to an older person, they belittle me and think since I'm young, I shouldn't have my own thoughts and opinions on things because I haven't lived a life"**

## Identity Motivators & Discouragers

Most common identities respondents reported as **motivating** their engagement



Most common identities respondents reported as **discouraging** their engagement







## Socioeconomic Status

**Young people in this study shared their understanding of how socioeconomic status affects every individual's outlook on civic engagement.** In the case of participants who have a socioeconomically, disadvantaged background, that status contributed to their awareness of and motivation to fix political issues— as one participant reflected, “being lower-income, having like this [reckoning of] ‘oh, why am I different from others? Why is this a different class? What’s the root of that?’ And a lot of it is politics. And so I think like that’s has motivated me.” Having lived experiences of being socioeconomically disadvantaged, this youth is acutely aware of how intertwined political and economic systems stratify everyday life. Even youth participants from economically privileged backgrounds showed an understanding of the role economics plays in an individual's ability to civically engage. In explaining that “Having the time, the resources to finances, to be in these places where you're able to take that time to advocate, or even vote everything takes time. Time is something that often people with less money just don't have, and people with more money have

**"Having the time, the resources to finances, to be in these places where you're able to take that time to advocate, or even vote everything takes time. Time is something that often people with less money just don't have, and people with more money have plenty of."**

plenty of,” this economically privileged young person acknowledges that civic engagement often requires resources like time and money, which make civic engagement sometimes inaccessible to people with less economic privilege. **Young people's understanding of the intersecting nature of economic and political systems, and how they affect people's lives and ability to civically engage, motivated and framed their approach to civic engagement.**

## Race and Ethnicity

Being a member of a marginalized racial or ethnic group can force a young person to reckon with political systems. **While racialized experiences can initiate or motivate young people's civic engagement, civic spaces that are discriminatory or discourteous toward their racial or ethnic identity can pose a threat to youth's sustained involvement.** For the motivating cases, one participant describes, “those experiences [of being a racial minority in the community] shape why I'm striving to do this, and so I always try to consider that struggle and kind of use it as motivation to engage and help others who are struggling in that same boat.” Similar to the point of affinity communities as sociopolitical influencers, racial minorities are systematically and disproportionately negatively impacted by certain political and social issues such as poverty (Lin & Harris, 2019). Often these are quality of life issues that necessitate political action to address.

Even with a desire to address discrimination, racial and ethnic dynamics can affect a young person's outlook, even within a racial community. Speaking to this issue, a participant poignantly noted, “I didn't really resonate so much with the API [Asian-Pacific Islander] community because I am API, but being Mongolian American, you're kind of like a minority within a minority...it's very weird and how to navigate those spaces because a lot of the time they're made by East Asians for East Asians.” Contending with the inauthentic representation of

**"those experiences [of being a racial minority in the community] shape why I'm striving to do this, and so I always try to consider that struggle and kind of use it as motivation to engage and help others who are struggling in that same boat."**

diversity within racial groups, the participant was reluctant to engage when they felt their perspective was neglected in the larger narrative of race. Although young people's radicalized experiences or ethnic identities can catalyze their political interest and engagement, the way their race and/or ethnicity is treated can also make them feel overlooked, invisible, or unwelcome in civic spaces.

## Intersecting Identities

Participants naturally discussed how, **when navigating civic and political spaces, multiple aspects of their identities intersected to inform their positionality.** Speaking to her perspective as a young woman of color, one participant shared that "the opinions of... women of color in politics and then also like the youth, like Gen. Z, [I] feel like they're not taken as seriously as like old white men. So it kind of feels daunting to share, especially me [a young woman of color, to] share [my] political beliefs." While it can be understood that young people, women, and people of color independently have historically been afforded less political power than middle- and older- age individuals, men, and white people, this participant explains how the intersection of age, gender, and race inform her unique perspective and comfort-level in political spaces. Moreover, another participant shared how they reckoned with the coexistence of marginalized and privileged aspects of their identity when they shared that, "my race was like a part of my identity that I struggled with in the community, but I wasn't economically [disadvantaged] so I thought maybe focusing on also creating a positive impact, and focusing on how I can help people as a whole, and not just a specific type of thing, knowing that I have my own privileges." Having both sets of lived experiences of being in a marginalized racial group and not having to live with socioeconomic disadvantage, this young person still aspires to create a positive impact more generally, even leveraging their privileges to push for those impacts. The insights from the young people in this study show how **civic engagement is influenced by a complex interplay of identities.**

**"the opinions of... women of color in politics and then also like the youth, like Gen. Z, [I] feel like they're not taken as seriously as like old white men. So it kind of feels daunting to share, especially me [a young woman of color, to] share [my] political beliefs"**

**"my race was like a part of my identity that I struggled with in the community, but I wasn't economically [disadvantaged] so I thought maybe focusing on also creating a positive impact, and focusing on how I can help people as a whole, and not just a specific type of thing, knowing that I have my own privileges."**

## Summary Findings

Overall, in evaluating the responses to the main research questions, the Collective found that young people's interactions with sociopolitical influencers can either encourage or undermine the development of a civic habit. Moreover, identity shapes how they understand their relationship to others and informs young people's path to civic engagement. Interactions in which a common identity is used as solidarity can encourage young people's participation, while identity-based discrimination or dismissals of the significance of a part of their identity threaten their sustained engagement.



For more information on other personal identities not mentioned above, go to [Limitations and Future Pathways](#) on pg. 19



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

Following the civic assemblies and interviews, the fellows began unanimously coding the data and information provided. The fellows started by drafting and analyzing key statements and quotes directly made by participating youth. The fellows then jointly defined the statements and created categories and subcategories that turned into key insights. These categories included key attributes that contributed to youths' civic participation such as motivators and de-motivators. After defining and creating the insights the fellows began categorizing them into different themes and concepts that conclusively turned into the key takeaways and findings. Apart from the findings directly related to the main research questions, young people's testimonies also informed the following key takeaways:

## **Participants often lacked adequate spaces to lead or intergenerationally co-create community projects that develop civic skills.**

Many youth expressed how they hesitate to civically and politically engage when they do not feel competent, informed, or qualified. Youth desire more training and want to gain experience. Further, youth expressed that when they feel meaningfully engaged in civic and political contexts, they can contribute with their skills and experiences. Youth also indicated that they experienced ageism and alienation, which caused them to become disengaged with civics. Moreover, youth were also wary of tokenization; they lacked leadership opportunities and power or influence, and oftentimes felt dismissed when they used their voice.

## **Civic spaces often fail to center marginalized people and don't provide the necessary resources to be accessible and welcoming to youth with intersecting identities.**

In order to facilitate intersectional and welcoming civic spaces, those spaces must allow young people to not feel judged by things like family, friends, educators, etc. Youth also described the mental health difficulties of accessing and maintaining civic engagement due to high high rates of burnout, inability to take breaks and anxiety about current events. While youth with marginalized identities often discuss their identity and experiences related to their identity being their preeminent motivator and entry point into civic action, civic engagement efforts should encourage safety and comfort in these motivations through intersectionality.

## **Youth resonated with the message that everyone is an expert on their own experiences, and want their communities to understand how their identities can motivate and/or inhibit their engagement.**

## **Youth shared that open communication and spaces that allow young people to show up as their genuine selves supported their sustained engagement.**

The ability for civic and political leaders to embrace different identities and experiences allows for youth to positively, confidently, and sustainability engage in civic spaces. Many youth experience prejudice related to their social identities and as a result see civic spaces as hostile, which leads to less youth civic participation.



# FELLOW SPECIFIC TAKEAWAYS

Our fellows also have insights based on their own experiences with civic engagement and geographic representation.

State	Region where majority of Fellow's participants hail	Insight
Utah	Salt Lake County metropolitan area	Be more mindful of differing opinions and allow youth to participate in local elections, campaigns, and leadership. Be aware that civic engagement and politics can be mentally draining.
New York	Metropolitan New York City, Upstate suburban areas	<p>Capitalize on youth networks to keep young folks engaged from one organizations to another; host intergenerational convenings</p> <p>CITYWIDE orgs: accessible central location for youth across the city to reach (bonus provide transportation accommodations and transit fares for students in need)</p> <p>COMMUNITY based orgs: more local community based location (thinking about limited participation for youths living in the area)</p>
Washington	Metropolitan Seattle and surrounding suburbs	Young people are keenly aware of when they're being patronized; treating us as the valuable community members we are is fundamental when it comes to building the intergenerational cooperation we need to address pressing community issues.
Florida	Orlando and Miami metro areas along with their surrounding suburbs	<p>Youth who have been affected, either directly or indirectly, by gun violence may find motivation for civic engagement or apathy depending on their surrounding support structure.</p> <p>Unconventional vehicles for civic engagement, like synagogues, often motivated the most civic engagement in young people by simply providing an opportunity to volunteer or join in on a protest</p>
Kentucky	Appalachia, lower-income rural areas	<p>Youth with physical barriers to engaging in civic processes will inevitably need more support in getting involved, and may experience discomfort or guilt when asking for accommodations like rides to/from civic engagement events, or to/from areas with stable WIFI to engage in youth leadership events remotely. Setting aside funding for resources like WIFI extenders and mobile hotspots will also make initiatives more accessible to youth with less access to WIFI and less access to public places like libraries that can provide free WIFI.</p> <p>There are often fewer rural and Appalachian youth in civic engagement spaces because many regions haven't developed the same level of civic infrastructures seen in more urban areas, or could simply be located hours away from the spaces in which inclusive conversations about youth are being had. If you plan on offering youth leadership opportunities, consider offering a remote-friendly version of programming for youth, to ensure that everyone who wants to participate is able to.</p>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following section, the Research Collective provides universal and sociopolitical influencer-specific recommendations that are based on a synthesis of participant responses, or provided by participants themselves.

## Universal Recommendations

Throughout the study, respondents communicated key components of creating meaningful and long-lasting youth civic engagement. The universal recommendations listed are to be applied in broad capacities to encourage and sustain youth civic engagement. By doing so, youth will feel empowered to positively engage in their communities. The following recommendations are to:

I	II	III	IV
Prevent and seek to understand the negative commentary, criticisms, or obstacles that emerge among those participating in and engineering civic engagement opportunities.	Compensate and credit youth applying skills, talents, and time. Support their agency by allowing them to playing an active part in decision-making, guiding, and leadership. Understand that efforts made by youth often rival the efforts that are monetized in other settings. You wouldn't expect a graphic designer to work for free nor would you expect an analyst to provide insights for free. Many youth do not have the privilege to invest time in something that cannot provide for their means.	Design communities of trust and mutual support where vocalizing disagreement, and alleviating stress and harm, is structurally encouraged and not sanctioned.	Promote a culture of voting and civic participation by educating youth on electoral and political systems. This will reduce apprehensions about participating in democracy.

## Recommendations for Socio-Political Influencers

Study participants highlighted how interactions with groups and individuals affected their path to civic engagement or disengagement. The following recommendations are based on participants' insights on how groups and individuals can bring young people into civic spaces and sustain their engagement:

I	II	III	IV
Allow youth to engage in youth-friendly civic spaces. Throughout the study, many youth expressed fear of being judged for their views and opinions which ultimately pushed many youth away from civic participation.	Hear young people out and offer them a platform, even as you or your organization may have different views and opinions. Accepting and encouraging youth testimonies of their own expert experiences is instrumental in organizing spaces.	Prioritize mental health to help prevent burnout and keep young people engaged. Seek out strategies to help combat disengagement. This includes recognizing that positive change happens incrementally, celebrating progress, and centering hope. Collective efforts that encourage transparency and nuance towards mental health challenges are also helpful.	Emphasize community bonding activities that reinstate the significance of civic participation and engagement. Creating space for peer-to-peer connections as well as formal or informal mentorship is important.

## Recommendations for Educational Spaces

Educators are vital to young people's civic education and often introduce them to their first civic engagement opportunities. Civic learning opportunities not only equip students with civic knowledge but will also enable students to become leaders in their communities. Under greater political scrutiny, and with limited resources, educators are restricted in their individual capacities to support their students' civic development. School administrations and policymakers have a responsibility to aid educators and educational institutions by authorizing educators to engage in civic matters and pursuing greater structural changes that make civic engagement opportunities more accessible. While understanding how certain political environments can challenge educators' ability to safely act as civic leaders, the Collective makes the following recommendations that educators, when possible:

**I**

Advocate and actively maintain schools as a hub for resources that advance educational justice. Educational justice is the goal of making change within educational systems such that academic success and the resources it requires are accessible to all students. This could take the form of mutual aid for school supplies, providing hotspots or laptops, offering need-based fee waivers, or even addressing food insecurity through community fridges or pantries. Providing equitable resources, especially in the classrooms could be an activator for early civic participation.

**II**

Expose students to civic and community-oriented thinking through group activities, assignments, and lessons that consider lived experience safely. These activities and assignments can provide a place for students to learn from each other and examine their own beliefs around community engagement.

**III**

Model active community involvement as a member of the community and invite young people to participate. Become an ally by acknowledging current political realities and helping to guide students. Recognize that school may be the only safe hub for learning about civic engagement without the watch of discouraging family/guardians and community members.

**IV**

Instruct and guide students through the current realities of political processes from electoral mechanisms to lobbying. Educators may consider incentivizing and recognizing civic engagement activities (e.g. diploma seals, volunteer hours, and extra credit points) as a way to motivate community engagement.

## Recommendations for Families

Families are often critical actors in exposing youth to civic engagement. Throughout the study, participants discussed the impacts their family units had on their civic capacities. Recommendations listed below are to be applied to encourage younger family members to implement early civic participation. The recommendations are:

**I**

Recognize that familial influence can be immense on young people and their relationship to civic engagement. The influence of family members often isn't capitalized on to get young people civically engaged.

**II**

Guide younger members toward organizations and opportunities to enrich civic engagement skills. Invite and facilitate discussions regarding current community events affecting your country, state, interest groups, etc.

**III**

Participate in positive community change efforts as a family to develop a culture of engagement.

**IV**

Be open to and encourage discussions about differing perspectives. Proactively work through parental apprehensions directly with children to prevent tension and self-censorship.

## Recommendations for Spiritual Communities

Faith and spiritual communities can substantially impact youths' civic participation, and their influence should not be ignored. The study provides these main recommendations for spiritual and faith communities to encourage youth civic engagement:

I

Empower young people to contextualize civic community engagement within faith contexts.

II

Be accepting of youth's uncertainty or questions about faith in the context of diverse identities and lived experiences.

III

Leverage routine time spent in the community to offer sustained mentorship and guidance in line with youth interests.

IV

Openly discuss how faith and spiritual identity can be a mediator for connection within a community, even through tragedy or sociopolitical conflicts.

## Recommendations for Policy Leaders

Representatives, policymakers, political institutions, and governmental agencies are the pacesetters in civic communities; it is important for policy leaders to actively promote and encourage youth civic engagement. Policy leaders need to further enable youth to join and learn from them. Through the study youth discussed the ways policy leaders can proactively incorporate youth. The following recommendations listed are directly pulled from participating youth:

I

Compensate and credit youth in a way that is accessible to a wide variety of age groups and income levels, so they can gain exposure to the policymaking process.

II

Design campaign strategies that target and spotlight youth concerns and voices in non-patronizing ways, such as highlighting mental health awareness, school gun safety, and college affordability.

III

Actively hold space through town halls and open forums to hear young constituents' testimonies and lived experiences.

IV

Embrace and use youth ideas on non-traditional, disruptive, or innovative approaches for budgeting, policy creation, and implementation at the community level. This can look like engaging with social media in substantive, transparent, and personal ways to make policy messaging accessible to youth.

## DEFINING SOCIO-POLITICAL INFLUENCERS

Inspired by the theory of sociopolitical influence, the EYE Research collective defines **sociopolitical influencers** as people who have the power to influence social and political perspectives and behaviors at an individual or community level because of their authority, knowledge, position, or relationship with the influenced individual(s).

### Who is a socio-political influencer?

A socio-political influencer can be anyone! They can be friends, peers, educators, parents, religious leaders, mentors, political figures, and more. As the EYE Research Collective uncovered, young people are impacted by a variety of socio-political influencers at different levels and for different reasons.

## Recommendations for Cultural Organizations

Cultural organizations are youth-laden organizations that can amplify youth civic engagement. As communities aim to connect similar identifying individuals, culture organizations can become hubs for youth to assemble with like-minded individuals. To encourage this, recommendations for cultural organizations are provided below:

I	II	III	IV	V
Understand the risk of racial tokenism; the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort to integrate.	Understand how disparities in a cultural group are influenced by communities' unique and various perceptions of civic engagement.	Provide opportunities for first- and second-generation immigrants to engage in discourse regarding international identities and the unique challenges facing communities, both domestically and abroad.	Share information on current events within local communities in ways that are accessible to different languages and age groups.	Promote a culture of voting, and provide information to clarify US electoral systems and ease apprehensions about participation. Also understand the value of extra-institutional ways of using your collective power.

## Recommendations for Youth-Led Organizations

Since youth-led organizations are known to be safe spaces for many youth, civically engaging youth can lead to civic empowerment. Youth-led organizations can be catalysts for sustaining and encouraging youth civic engagement by:

I	II	III	IV
Creating structures and safeguards to address burnout and harmful conflicts youth organizers may experience. This could look like highlighting positive results, giving due credit, and celebrating incremental wins to prioritize patience and longevity in organizing work.	Providing training and education in the skills that increase youth confidence and qualification for community organizing.	Building relationships to invest in the power, connectivity, and momentum of youth organizing within and across groups.	Offering mentorship and professional development to advise and help younger organizers develop skills. Youth-led organizations can also start creating opportunities that maximize their impact and build capacity.



# **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE PATHWAYS**

While the study garnered many important findings, it is necessary to acknowledge the study's limitations. While gathering participants, convenience and snowball sampling were both used. This caused a sample that is not entirely representative of American youths in terms of demographics and level of civic engagement.

The sample for civic assemblies and interviews, and likely the survey, was mainly drawn from large metro areas and their surrounding suburbs, so it may lack the nuance that might have come from more geographic diversity. Many of the young people from rural areas who did participate in a civic assembly or interview reported a large discrepancy between the availability of civic opportunities between themselves and their urban counterparts. More in-depth studies on the effect of rural, suburban, and urban environments on political attitudes, specific geographic areas' impact on Gen Z's political ideals, or the different magnitudes of impact that sociopolitical influencers have depending on their location could all be illuminating. More research in these areas could provide a greater understanding of an environment's effects on youth engagement and how to rectify regional disparities.

Moreover, the civic assembly sample only included participants from the fellows' six states of residency. The survey responses from 46 US states in part supplemented this lack of data, although survey responses and qualitative interviews provide different types of insights. Other demographics were also overrepresented in our survey respondents. For example, 67.7% of respondents identified as women, 77.5% of respondents were between lower-middle and upper-middle class, and 57.6% of respondents identified as a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. While these groups may not represent American youth on average, they do provide insightful data on the groups surveyed.

For civic assemblies and interviews, participants were highly civically engaged compared to the average American youth. While these participants may not be representative of the general population, the collected qualitative data still provided key insights into how the civic spaces that youth already occupy can be improved.

As for limitations regarding the organization of this report, the fellows did not cover all salient identities raised by participants. Beyond the identities covered (i.e. age, SES, and race), there are numerous more social and personal identities that can have significant influence over how an individual engages. A family history of immigration were discussed in multiple civic assemblies and interviews but were largely left out of the report due to space constraints and lower frequency in survey responses. Moreover, the effect of other identities that were not– or only briefly– raised by this study's participants (e.g., being in foster care or having a disability) should inspire future research.

Though this research is a stepping stone to helping conceptualize current youth civic behaviors; more research will need to be done to help identify and inform suitable mechanisms for successful youth civic participation. Both the findings and the limitations of this study leave many avenues for this research. Participants had many critiques of civic engagement programming with many finding



programming to be inaccessible or somewhat exploitative. Future research around effective youth civic engagement programming would provide valuable insight into how organizations intentionally or unintentionally exclude youth from their spaces.

Another future pathway for research is to more actively involve young people as leaders within research teams. Through a unique collective of youth researchers, this study was able to be conducted with an emphasis on hearing authentic accounts from youth. Without the power imbalance that is inherent to adult researchers studying youth, the Collective felt as though youth were able to speak authentically without a fear of judgment or misunderstanding. Youth researchers were also able to select the questions they found to be most pressing for their generation. The choice to showcase the findings in accessible ways, through social media posts, an online presentation, and more, was also influenced by the Collective's focus on ensuring that their findings were helpful to a large, multi-generational audience.

Other institutions studying youth could replicate this youth-led model both to make research more accessible to young people and to generate data relevant to their own programs. Additionally, institutions can promote multi-generational involvement through programs like youth advisory boards and accessible research courses to provide more spaces for youth to learn about research.

## We need more youth-led research!

### Avenues for Future Research



**Research on effective  
youth civic  
programming**



**Research on how  
organizations exclude  
youth from their spaces**



**Research on the effect  
of rural, suburban and  
urban environments  
on Gen Z's ideals**



**Research on the  
magnitude of  
sociopolitical influencers  
based on region**



# INSPIRED TO IMPLEMENT A YOUTH-LED RESEARCH COLLECTIVE IN YOUR SPACE?

The 18by Vote Research Collective encourages youth-serving organizations in the political and civic spaces to empower young people in their communities to lead and carry out a research program of their own. Investing in youth-led research collectives is a way for young people to develop leadership, research, and civic skills, and the process allows everyone involved to collaborate with and learn from youth in the community. Here is a model of the 18by Vote EYE Collective's research project timeline:

<b>Week 1</b>	Introduction to Research Methodologies	<b>Week 7</b>	Conducting Research Continued
<b>Week 2</b>	Research Ethics, Developing our Methodologies and Stakeholder Mapping	<b>Week 8</b>	Data Analysis
<b>Week 3</b>	Developing our Research Design and Creating an outreach plan	<b>Week 9</b>	Data Analysis Continued and Begin designing research presentation
<b>Week 4</b>	Finalize research design and outreach plan	<b>Week 10</b>	Share your research through a Presentation to your community
<b>Week 5</b>	Research Recruitment and Survey Launch	<b>Week 11</b>	Begin Writing Reserch Report
<b>Week 6</b>	Research Recruitment, Survey Open, Conducting Civic Assemblies #1 and Interviews	<b>Week 12</b>	Finalize and Share research report

## An Average Week Included

Two 2-hour large group meeting with 18by Vote Staff

One all-fellows 1.5 hour meeting with an occasional Innovative Research Mentor

Approximately 4.5 hours of asynchronous work



# INSPIRED TO IMPLEMENT A YOUTH-LED RESEARCH COLLECTIVE IN YOUR SPACE?

The EYE Research Collective's Research was made possible by the intergenerational and collaborative nature of the fellowship. Fellows, 18by Vote staff, and Innovative Research Mentors worked within their specific roles and in community with each other to mold the research process. The respective roles are outlined below.



## Staff

Identify and collaborate with Innovative Research Mentors, develop a research curriculum, present lectures on research methods and ethics, guide fellows' research project development, aid with research recruitment, design visual presentations for the research



## Fellows

Collaboratively decide on research questions, develop the research instruments, code research findings, and write research presentations; individually carry out research recruitment and conduct interviews and civic assemblies



## Innovative Research Mentor (professionals who conduct civic engagement research)

Coordinate research curriculum with staff; educate and guide fellows on key aspects of research development, ethics, and coding; review and edit research instruments and presentations

- Mentors were recruited via an open call over social media, 18by Vote's existing network, and the program partnership with CIRCLE and Emerson Polling.

# CONNECTING WITH GEN Z

The EYE Research Collective has identified some guiding questions for individuals and collective entities who hope to take it a step further to implement our recommendations for how to civically engage young people.

## Different of Questions to Consider When Engaging Youth

Our questions begin with the “why” so you or your organization can do some reflection. Then, we ask “how” to consider the practical implications of your values.

### What to Consider when Questioning



Importance of Question



Ideas for Next Steps



Ideas to Consider

## QUESTIONS

Why is youth leadership important to your organization?	
How do you enable youth leadership and agency?	
	After deliberating on why youth leadership is important, consider how can you effectively empower young people to take the lead.
	Consider how much initiative and responsibilities young people in your organization are already taking.
	Offer supports and guidance even when youth are leading, check in with them about what they need from organizational adults.
	Involve young people in shaping organizational structure and efforts.
	Grant bonus votes or consideration from youth voices when your organization determines an action.
	Allow young people to create community agreements for the space.





## QUESTIONS CONTINUED

	Create youth advisories or youth boards that have institutional power.
<b>How are you making the space accessible and comfortable for young people to share feedback?</b>	
	When young people feel comfortable sharing constructive feedback, it will benefit the organization in creating a community that draws in more young people—youths' tried and true experiences and insights are so valuable to youth organizations' operations!
	Build in structural feedback opportunities. For example, after programming ends, or offer staff feedback.
	Debrief as a community after organization actions like organizing, lobbying, etc. to address any concerns, glows and grows.
<b>How does your messaging and media build personal connection and bidirectional dialogue?</b>	
	Personal connection is what leaves lasting impact, and dialogue is where young people feel valued in their perspectives.
	Reach people with a purpose message that moves them to action against their scroll of endless content.
	Share interactive social media features: encourage comments, active stories (instagram), polls, resource links (e.g. linktrees, etc.).
	Leverage young people's savviness with social media—get them involved with communications to build their skills upon their intuition as the target users.
<b>How do you connect young people to other opportunities and organizations?</b>	
	Sharing the growing networks and opportunities will keep the young person involved for a long time to come. Directly sharing opportunities with youth— especially ones that build on the young person's existing interests— will encourage them to participate because you have developed their trust.



## QUESTIONS CONTINUED

	Organize opportunities to connect different folks and organizations in a focused space with a shared goal, or for lively social gathering.
	Facilitate youth exchanges between organizations to learn about youth leadership, actions, activities across the organizations.
<b>How are you translating awareness into active engagement and impact in your space?</b>	
	Bridging awareness with action is one of the most important endeavors you can do to empower young people. With Gen Z's and younger generations growing up with access to the news and different perspectives, young people know what's up and they need a way to feel they are contributing or impacting a community or issue.
	Seek out communities who are affected by the issue or are main stakeholders.
	Mobilize direct action, with discretion. This builds camaraderie among active participants who are collectively putting effort towards an issue they have a stake in.
	Engage with power-players (people with high levels influence) to advocate for cause or issue through lobbying, etc.
<b>How do you measure the impact of your efforts?</b>	
	Tracking impact allows you to understand how else you can improve your efforts. Being able to provide data on your actions and accomplishments can help your work to gain more support and resources.
	Create an impact report using quantitative and qualitative measures.
	Sustain relationships with the people you have impacted.
<b>How are you identifying the needs of young people? What data are you using to inform your work?</b>	
	Instead of assuming the needs and issues for young people, systematically understanding youths' lived experiences to inform your work for a more effective, positive outcome for young people. This effort to be conscious and proactive about using data about young people builds the body of knowledge on what young people experience.










## QUESTIONS CONTINUED

	Conduct Participatory Action Research to engage young people as researchers and stakeholders (like the EYE Research Collective! 🌟)
	Create accessible data visualizations to share the research. Consider leveraging data graphics in lobbying meetings.
<b>How do you recognize the value of each role within your community?</b>	
	Everyone has value to bring to the community, it is important to acknowledge it.
	Identify incentives for your target community.
	Compensate with money stipends or volunteer hours
	Celebrate each other. Uplift another one's good work.
<b>How do you support youth mental health and well-being to prevent burnout?</b>	
	Prioritizing mental health is vital, otherwise the work is not sustainable.
	When a community member does experience a burnout, give them breathing space while proactively with reaching out to offer support.
	Host community bonding days where folks can relax and have fun.
	Debrief after events, especially to process experiences that don't go according to expectations.
<b>How do you build long term momentum beyond issue-specific organizing?</b>	
	Playing the long game and building for the future will create lasting change.



## QUESTIONS CONTINUED

	Build mechanisms to minimize the friction from student turnovers when they graduate high school/college or age out.
	Continue the pipeline by offering mentorship opportunities for both mentees and mentors.
<b>How are you connecting youth to a pipeline of mentees and mentors that sustain the goals of your organization across age cohorts?</b>	
	Mentorship enables participants to grow into leaders who will pay it forward.
	Provide professional development and training.
<b>How do you share educational information?</b>	
	Thinking critically about how and why you share certain information and educational content is important and should be receptive to what the audience wants.
	Use peer / popular education.
	Bring in youth to help develop and share content and curriculum.
	Build in feedback after educational session.

# CONCLUSION

This report has explained the EYE Research Collective's approach to youth-led research on youth civic engagement and elaborated on the impact of sociopolitical influencers and identity on Gen Z's civic engagement. Synthesizing the experiences shared and lessons learned from the youth participants, the Collective has offered recommendations as to how various groups and individuals in young people's lives can better support youth sustained engagement and connect with Gen Z. The EYE Research Collective hopes to inspire future youth-led research projects that will build upon our methodologies and findings.

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to end this report by thanking the land in which we all currently reside, the original caretakers of what is now known as the United States of America, and all of their ancestors, elders, and descendants, past, present, and emerging, without whom we would not be here today. As an organization that works nationwide, we are grateful to work as guests on the ancestral and traditional lands of hundreds of tribal nations and indigenous communities, whose relations have existed for thousands of years prior to the colonization of the Americas.

We encourage you to do research on whose land you are currently residing on. If you don't know where to start, you can begin learning more by visiting this website: [www.native-land.ca](http://www.native-land.ca)

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# EXPLORING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

UNDERSTANDING WHO AND WHAT IMPACTS  
GEN Z'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY

**Website**

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