



for every child

VOICES OF THE FUTURE: YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICAL INCLUSION

PREPARED FOR UNICEF USA
BY THE HARRIS POLL, MAY 29, 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Research Objectives	3
Methodology and Report Notes	4
Executive Summary	5
▪ Key Findings	7
▪ Key Data Comparisons	12
▪ Scorecards	17
Detailed Findings	19
▪ Young People Are Asking “Can Anyone Hear Us?”	20
▪ Young People Are Making The Effort To Show They Care	41
▪ Listen Up! Young People Are Speaking	49
▪ Deep Dive: Young Women 18–22	60
Audience Profiles	69
Appendix	73

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of this research is to gain understanding to young people's views toward the political process leading up to the 2024 presidential election.



In this research, we explore the following among people ages 14-22:

- Issues of greatest importance and concern
- Attitudes toward and expectations for the future
- Degree to which young people feel represented
- Degree to which young people have engaged in the political process
- How well young people feel their experiences are reflected
- Identifying the ways which system change is needed to be more representative of young people

METHODOLOGY AND REPORT NOTES



Audience

n = 3,194 young people



Field Dates

April 19–May 8, 2024



Mode

Online survey, avg. 15-minutes



Qualification Criteria

Resides in the U.S.

Aged 14–22, with parental consent if ages 14–17

In Tables and Charts:

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to weighting and/or computer rounding.

An asterisk (*) signifies a value of less than one-half percent and a dash (-) represents a value of zero.

Color Labeling:

Dark/Light Blue is used throughout the report to show results by **Total**

Dark/Light Orange is used throughout the report to show results for **Teens 14–17**

Dark/Light Green is used throughout the report to show results by **Young adults 18–22**

Significance Indicators:

Significant subgroup differences at the 95% confidence level are indicated using lettering.

Survey Field Note:

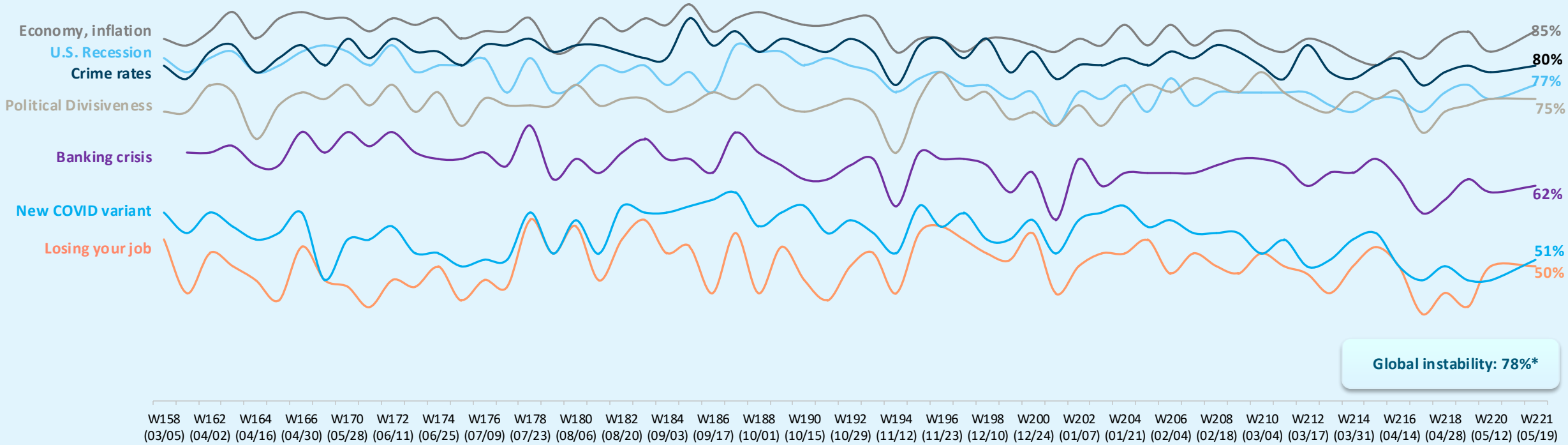
During our field period, many college and high school students participated in protests, sit-ins, and walkouts in direct response to the war in Gaza.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GROWING UP IN A STATE OF STACKED CRISES

How Concerned Are You About The Following Issues?

Among U.S. Adults 18+



YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL INVISIBLE TO PEOPLE IN POWER

- An overwhelming 81% of young people say *people in positions of power don't really care about what young people have to say* and three quarters (73%) say *their opinions don't matter to elected officials*.
- A majority (53%) feel excluded from the U.S. political process. Despite half (52%) of young people making the effort to talk to adults about how they should vote, only a quarter (27%) say adults in their community think about their needs when voting or that local leaders think about the issues impacting them when making decisions (26%).
- Only 2 in 5 young people (38%) feel like people in political power are invested in their future to some degree, and just 3 in 10 (31%) agree that people in power are making decisions with their best interests in mind.
- Young people say issues spanning from cost of living/housing crisis (60%) to immigration and global conflict (39%, 35% respectively) are the most important facing the country today, yet half or more say politicians are not giving enough attention to any of the top problems.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE COUNTRY LEAVES SOMETHING TO BE DESIRED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Over 7 in 10 (72%) say the country is currently on the wrong track and less than 2 in 5 say they have a good outlook on society currently (28%) or in the future (38%).
- Less than a third (29%) report having a positive opinion of people in political power at the federal level.
- A majority (82%) agree that *they wish there were more opportunities to vote for politicians they believed in*.
- Nearly a quarter of young people who say they aren't voting (or wouldn't) in November say it's because they don't think their vote matters, people running don't have their best interest in mind, or they don't trust the people running for office (23% each).

YOUNG PEOPLE SHOW UP POLITICALLY TO BE THE CHANGE THEY WANT TO SEE

- A majority (80%) of young people agree that they think *people their age can make a difference* and that they *wish there were more young people in positions of power* (79%).
- Many young adults plan to vote in the upcoming local (53%), state (57%), and presidential elections (71%). Even higher numbers of teens (14-17) say they would vote in any of these elections in November if they could (67%, 69%, 83% respectively).
- Two thirds (64%) of young people engage politically in some kind of way, with most utilizing social media to be politically active.
- The impetus behind young people's engagement lies in the impact it has on others and their community (53%), while civic duty (55%) and the opportunity to make a difference (39%) are top motivators for wanting to vote.
- Young people are calling for lawmakers to focus on political and social issues around the world and in the U.S. equally (65% agree it's important).
- Almost 9 in 10 (87%) believe in the benefits of elected officials prioritizing their opinions, and most (48%) say political leaders can best support making them feel heard by trying to understand how young people view political and social issues.

YOUNG WOMEN 18-22 FEEL LESS INCLUDED, BUT ARE MORE ENGAGED THAN YOUNG MEN

- Only a quarter of young women (27%) feel included in the U.S. political process, compared to one third (33%) of young men.
- 78% of young women think the country is on the wrong track and 70% have a negative outlook for society in the future (vs. 71% and 64% young men)
- Half (52%) don't think other adults think about people their age when voting and less than 3 in 10 (29%) say local leaders think about issues that impact young people when making decisions (vs. 42%, 35% young men)
- Young women are significantly more likely to find many issues facing the country today important compared to young men, and that may be a reason why they are more likely to engage politically in a variety of ways like supporting causes they believe in (34% vs. 24%), donating to (18% vs. 13%) or volunteering for (16% vs. 11%) charities or advocacy groups
- Young women are also more optimistic of the positive outcomes of being acknowledged by elected officials as they are significantly more likely to think this would yield more young people being encouraged to be politically active (59% vs. 51), feeling more represented (55% vs. 48%), political decisions being more reflective of their community needs (46% vs. 40%), elected officials including more points of view in decision making (45% vs. 37%) and political decisions being more inclusive (44% vs. 37%).

RACE/ETHNICITY NUANCES THE POLITICAL EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Few young people feel included in the U.S. political process, however multiracial respondents are less likely to feel included than any other respondents of a single race/ethnicity (16% multiracial vs. 25% white, 28% Black, 31% Hispanic, 27% Asian).
- Majorities across race/ethnicities believe that their opinions do not matter to elected officials, with significant agreement from Multiracial (80%) and white (76%) respondents compared to 71% Asian, 65% Black, and 64% Hispanic respondents.
- Young white people are most likely to believe that political powers are not invested in their futures (i.e., are invested very little or not at all), and are significantly more likely to believe this compared to young Hispanic people (63% white vs. 57% Hispanic, 58% Black, 60% Asian and Multiracial).
- Most young people say the most important issue facing the country is cost of living/housing crisis (60% white, 54% Hispanic, 64% Asian, 75% Multiracial), however gun violence is the top issue for young Black people (58%). The order of the top issues varies across race/ethnicity, however young Black people are the only group to report identity-based discrimination (45%) in their top 5, while Asian and Hispanic young people note climate change (43%, 50% respectively).
- Young people across all races/ethnicities echo the sentiment that despite feeling overlooked, they think people their age can make a difference (81% white, 82% Black, 80% Hispanic, 76% Asian, 82% Multiracial), and are engaging politically (62% white do any politically focused actions, 64% Black, 67% Hispanic, 61% Asian, 70% Multiracial).
- Regardless of their racial and ethnic backgrounds, most young people think political leaders can help make them feel heard best by making an effort to understand young people's point of view (49% white, 46% Black, 44% Hispanic, 52% Asian), while young multiracial people lean towards engaging in honest dialogue with younger generations (51%).
- Political leaders listening to young people would yield more engagement (58% white, 53% Hispanic, 60% Asian) and feeling more represented (55% Black, 63% Multiracial).

KEY DATA COMPARISON: TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

	Total	Teens 14–17 (B)	Young Adults 18–22 (C)
Feel Included in U.S. Political Process % Yes	26%	23%	29% B
<i>My opinion doesn't matter to elected officials.</i> % Agree	73%	75% C	71%
Those in Political Power Are Invested in Their Futures % Very Little/Not At All	62%	56%	67% B
<i>I think people my age can make a difference.</i> % Agree	80%	82%	79%
% Do Any Politically Focused Actions	64%	55%	71% B
Top Way Political Leaders Can Make Young People Feel Heard	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (48%)	Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations (48%)	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (49%)
Top Benefit of Being Heard by Political Leaders	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (55%)	I would feel more represented (56%)	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (55%)

KEY DATA COMPARISON: YOUNG ADULTS BY GENDER

	Young Adult Women 18–22 (A)	Young Adults Men 18–22 (B)
Feel Included in U.S. Political Process % Yes	27%	33% A
<i>My opinion doesn't matter to elected officials.</i> % Agree	72%	69%
Those in Political Power Are Invested in Their Futures % Very Little/Not At All	69%	64%
<i>I think people my age can make a difference.</i> % Agree	79%	77%
% Do Any Politically Focused Actions	72%	70%
Top Way Political Leaders Can Make Young People Feel Heard	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (52% B)	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (44%)
Top Benefit of Being Heard by Political Leaders	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (59% B)	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (51%)

KEY DATA COMPARISON: TEENS BY GENDER

	Teen Girls 14–17 (A)	Teen Boys 14–17 (B)
Feel Included in U.S. Political Process % Yes	23%	23%
<i>My opinion doesn't matter to elected officials.</i> % Agree	74%	75%
Those in Political Power Are Invested in Their Futures % Very Little/Not At All	56%	56%
<i>I think people my age can make a difference.</i> % Agree	83%	80%
% Do Any Politically Focused Actions	58%	53%
Top Way Political Leaders Can Make Young People Feel Heard	Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations (49%)	Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations (47%)
Top Benefit of Being Heard by Political Leaders	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (57%)	I would feel more represented (57%)

KEY DATA COMPARISON: RACE/ETHNICITY

	White Respondents (A)	Black Respondents (B)	Hispanic Respondents (C)	Asian Respondents (D)	Multiracial Respondents (E)
Feel Included in U.S. Political Process % Yes	25% E	28% E	31% AE	27% E	16%
<i>My opinion doesn't matter to elected officials.</i> % Agree	76% BC	65%	64%	71%	80% BC
Those in Political Power Are Invested in Their Futures % Very Little/Not At All	63% C	58%	57%	60%	60%
<i>I think people my age can make a difference.</i> % Agree	81%	82%	80%	76%	82%
% Do Any Politically Focused Actions	62%	64%	67%	61%	70%
Top Way Political Leaders Can Make Young People Feel Heard	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues; Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations; Consider how young people are impacted by legislation (49% each)	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (46%)	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (44%)	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (52%)	Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations (51%)
Top Benefit of Being Heard by Political Leaders	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (58%)	I would feel more represented (55%)	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (53%)	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (60%)	I would feel more represented (63%)

KEY DATA COMPARISON: URBANICITY

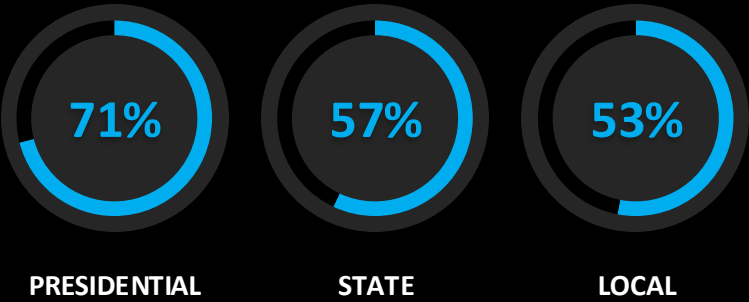
	Urban (A)	Suburban (B)	Rural (C)
Feel Included in U.S. Political Process % Yes	37% BC	24% C	17%
<i>My opinion doesn't matter to elected officials.</i> % Agree	62%	75% A	80% AB
Those in Political Power Are Invested in Their Futures % Very Little/Not At All	54%	64% A	67%A
<i>I think people my age can make a difference.</i> % Agree	82%	79%	79%
% Do Any Politically Focused Actions	69% C	65% C	57%
Top Way Political Leaders Can Make Young People Feel Heard	Make room for younger people to be in political power (45%)	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (51%)	Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues (45%)
Top Benefit of Being Heard by Political Leaders	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (54%)	I would feel more represented (58%)	More people my age would be encouraged to become more politically active or engaged (52%)

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT SCORECARD

Most Important Issues Facing The Country (Top 3)

1	Cost of Living & Housing Crisis	60%
2	Homelessness	53%
3	Gun Violence	49%

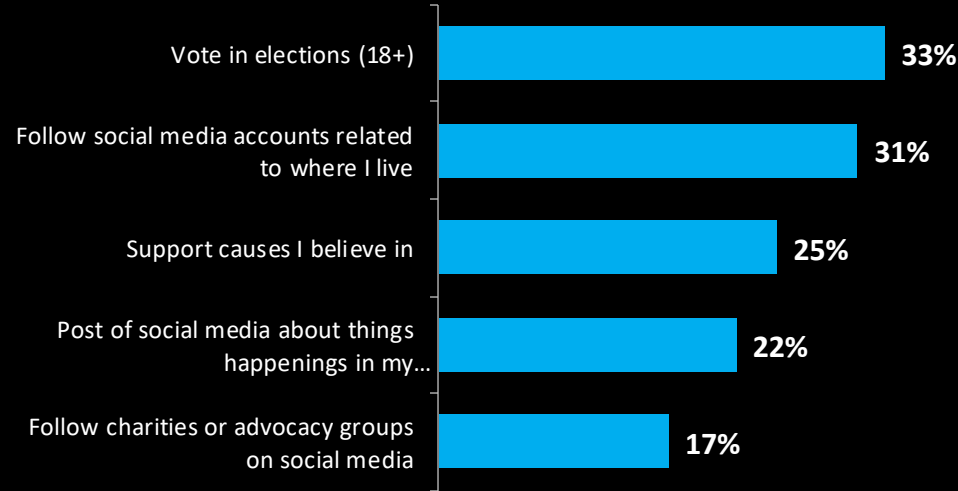
% Plan to/Would Vote In 2024 Elections



Actions For Those In Power (Top 5)

Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues	48%
Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations	46%
Consider how young people are impacted by legislation	45%
Make room for younger people to be in political power	44%
Allow younger people to be a key part of decision-making and developing solutions	43%

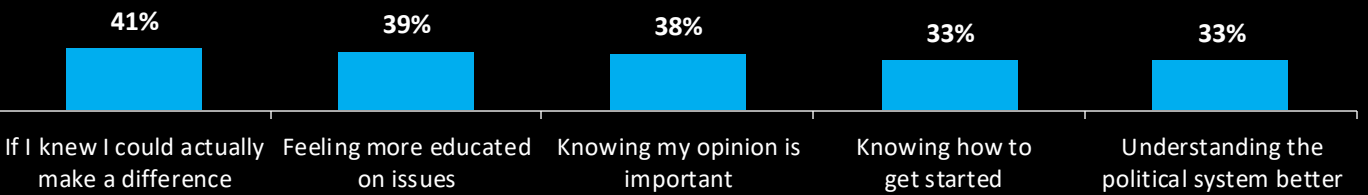
Actions Engaged In (Top 5)



Ease/Difficulty in Engaging Politically

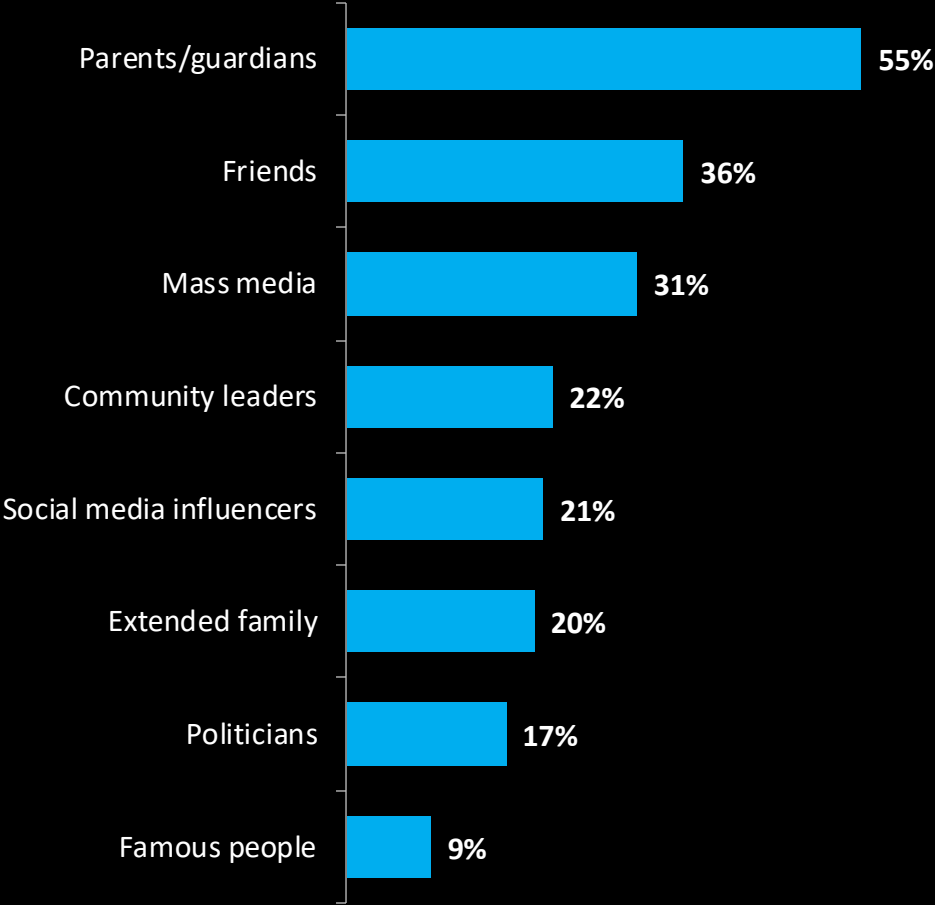


What Would Make It Easier To Engage? (Top 5)



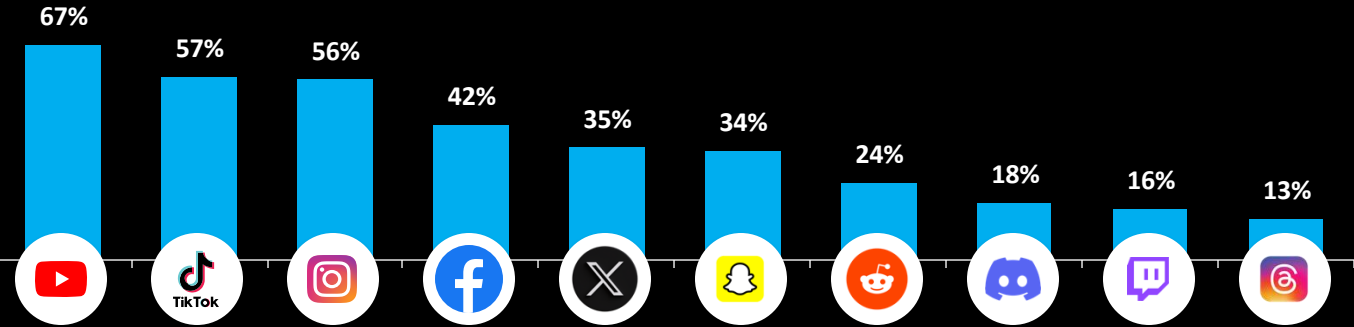
INFORMATION SOURCES & MEDIA ENGAGEMENT SCORECARD

Who/What Influences Your Opinions?

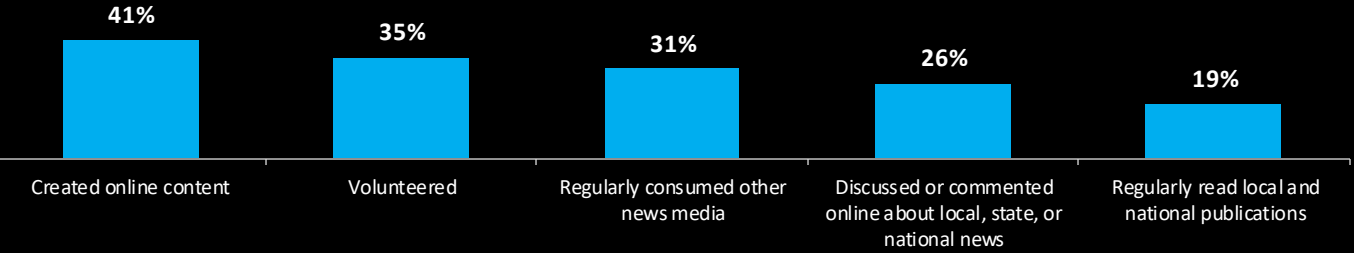


Social Media Platforms Used To Learn About Issues (Some or All of the Time)

PROPRIETARY, FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY



Actions in Past 12 Months (Top 5)



DETAILED FINDINGS

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ASKING
“CAN ANYONE HEAR US?”



for every child

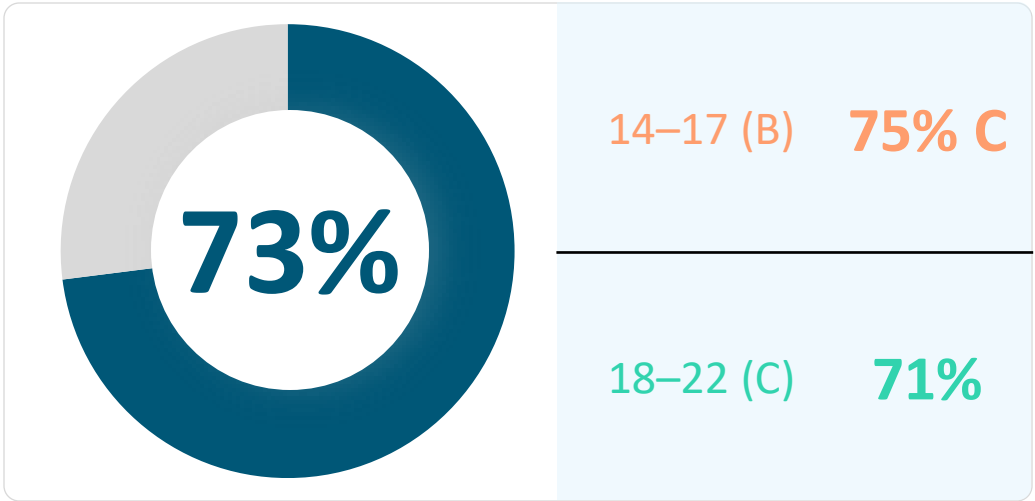
**YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL INVISIBLE
TO THOSE IN POWER.**



for every child

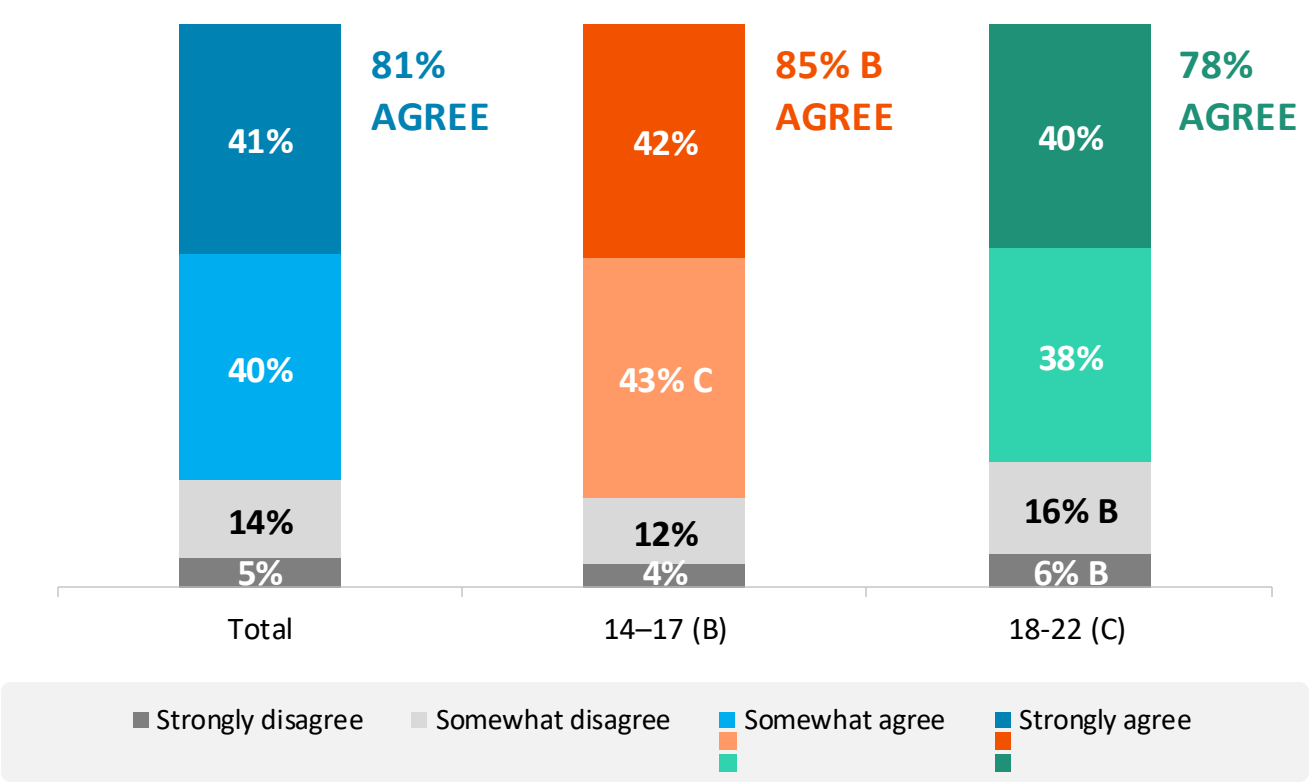
YOUNG PEOPLE OVERWHELMING AGREE THAT THEIR VOICES ARE NOT BEING HEARD

“My opinion doesn’t matter to elected officials.”
% Agree



Food for thought: 85% of the US public say *most elected officials don’t care what people like them think*, according to a [2023 survey conducted by Pew](#).

“The people in positions of power don’t really care about what people my age have to say.”

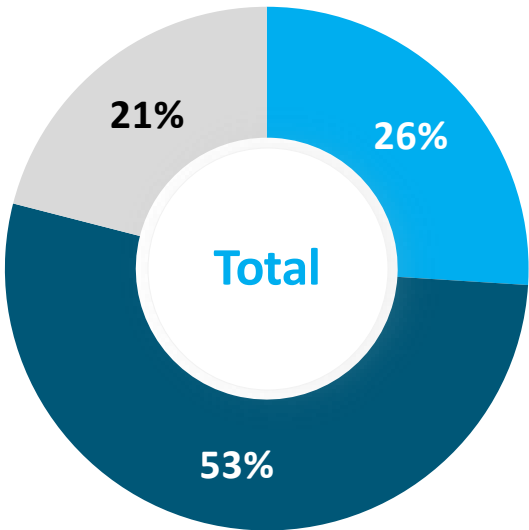


HALF DON'T FEEL INCLUDED, ESPECIALLY THOSE AGES 14-17

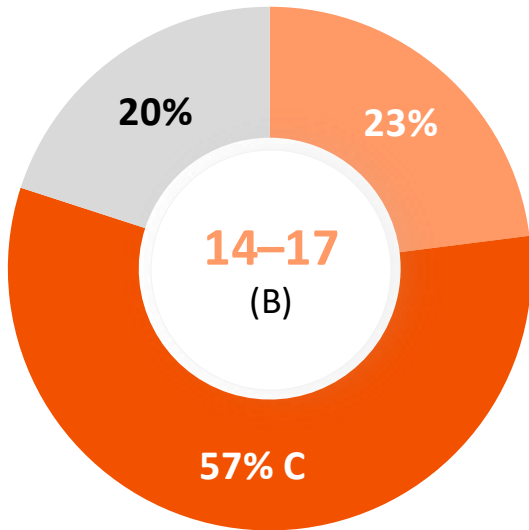
Overall, Do You Feel Included In The Political Process In The U.S.?

Food for thought:

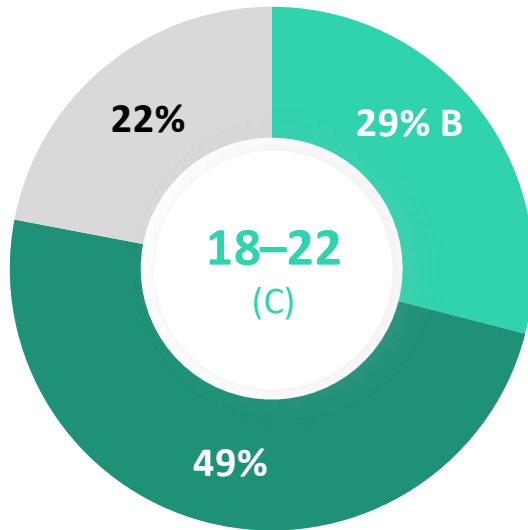
Our previous UNICEF work, conducted in 2019, found that **36%** of 14–17-year-olds felt included in the political process in the U.S. (vs. 64% no or not sure)



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

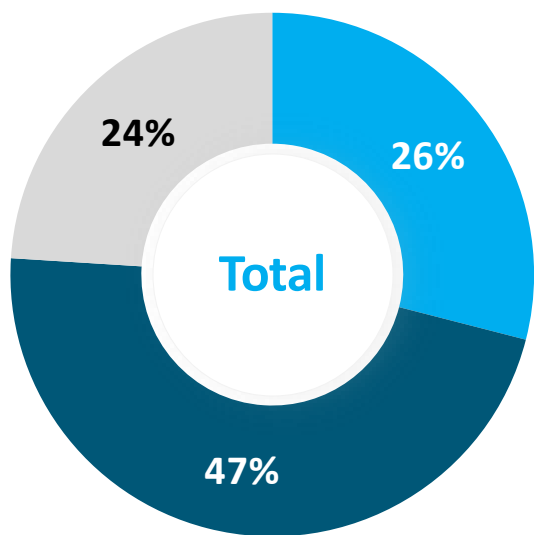


■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

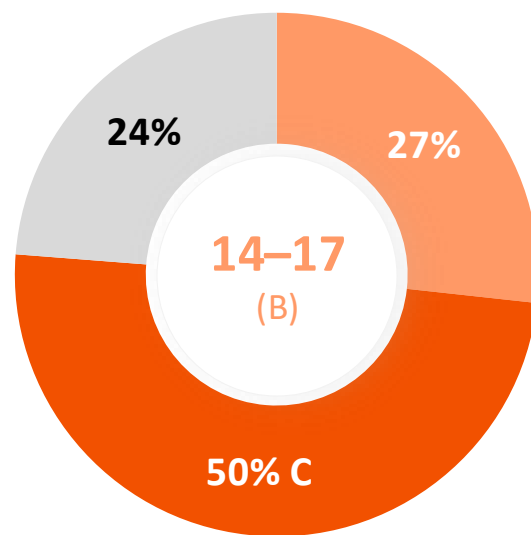
AND HALF DON'T FEEL CONSIDERED BY LOCAL LEADERS

Teens feel more strongly than young adults that local leaders aren't thinking about issues that impact young people when making decisions.

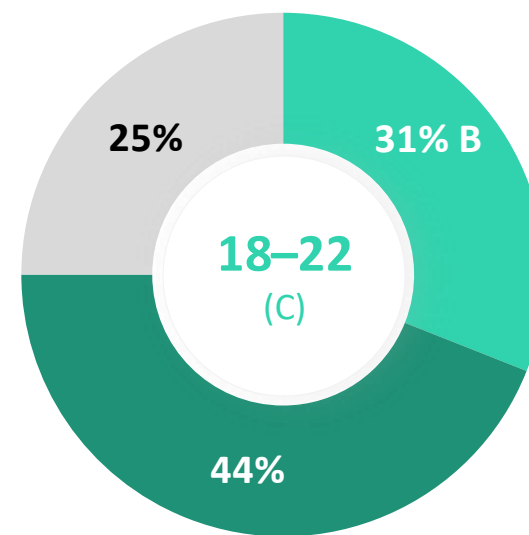
Do Local Leaders Think About Issues That Impact Young People When Making Decisions?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure



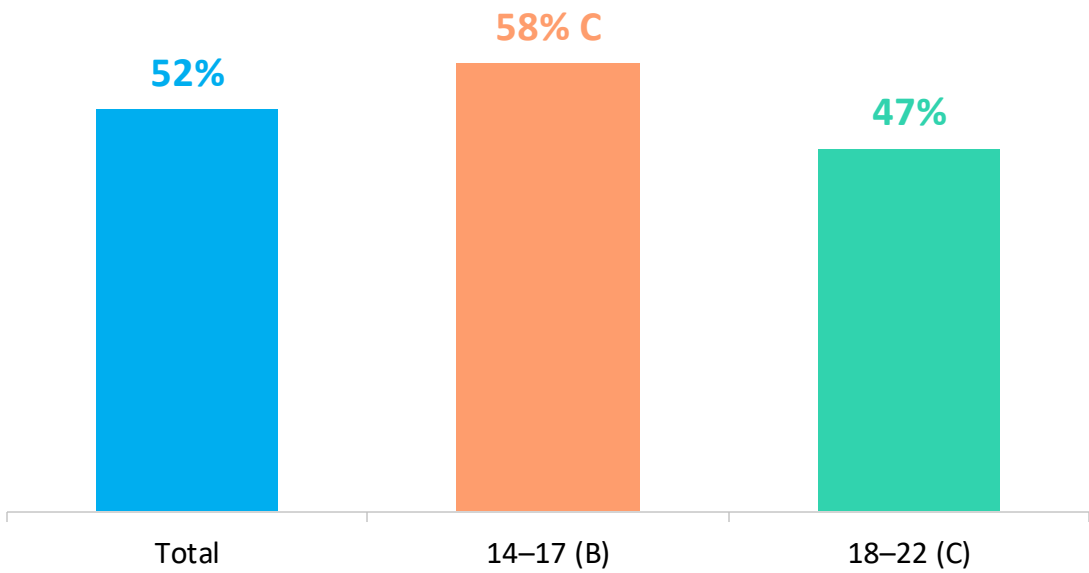
■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

Food for thought:

Our previous UNICEF work found that **46%** of 14–17-year-olds believed that people in charge of making decisions locally think about issues that impact kids when making their decisions (vs. 54% no or not sure).

WHILE MANY TALK TO ADULTS ABOUT VOTING, FEW FEEL THAT THEIR NEEDS ARE CONSIDERED

Do You Talk With Adults In You Life About How You Think They Should Vote?
% Yes



Do Adults In Your Community Think About The Needs Of People Your Age When Voting?

	Total	14-17 (B)	18-22 (C)
Yes	27%	30% C	25%
No	45%	42%	48% B
Not Sure	28%	28%	27%

Food for thought: Our previous UNICEF work found that 50% of 14-17-year-olds believed that adults in their community would think about their needs and opinions when deciding how to vote in the 2020 election (vs. 50% no or not sure).

**POLITICIANS AREN'T FOCUSING
ON THE ISSUES THAT MATTER
TO YOUNG PEOPLE.**

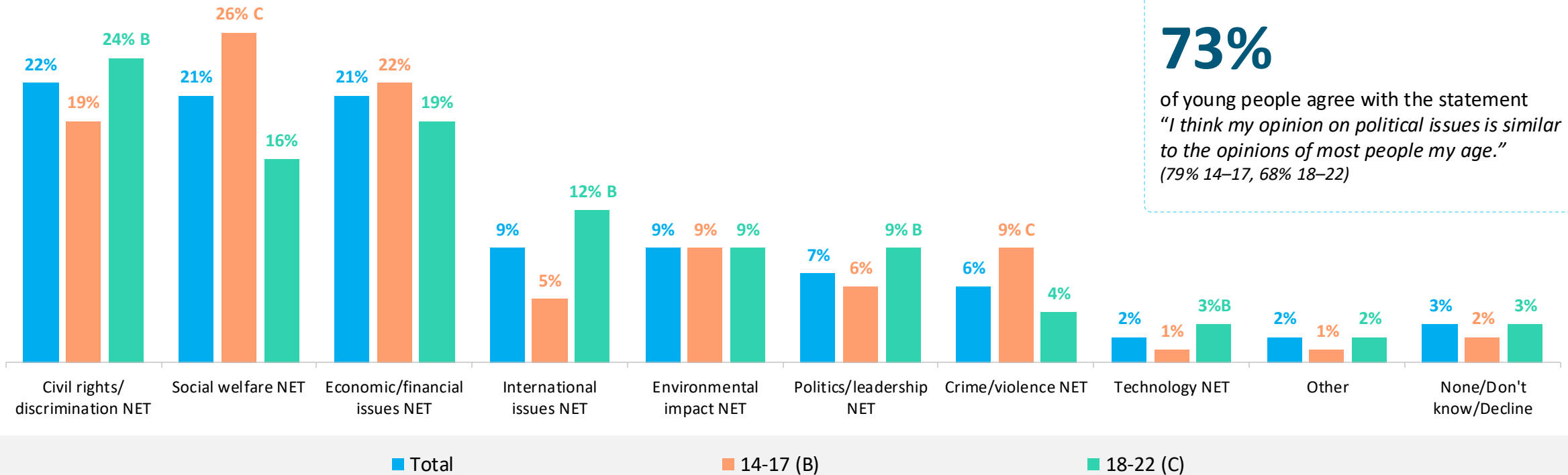


for every child

CIVIL RIGHTS, SOCIAL WELFARE, AND THE ECONOMY RISE TO THE TOP OF ISSUES THAT MATTER MOST

If You Were To Pick One Political Or Social Issue That Matters Most To You Right Now, What Would That Issue Be?

Unaided



TOP OF MIND CONCERNS RANGE ACROSS A NUMBER OF AREAS, INCLUDING CIVIL RIGHTS AND ECONOMICS

If You Were To Pick One Political Or Social Issue That Matters Most To You Right Now, What Would That Issue Be?

Civil rights/discrimination

- Reproductive rights
- Identity-based discrimination
- LGBTQ+ rights



Social welfare

- Access to basic needs/healthcare/education
- Immigration
- Homelessness



Economic/financial issues

- Inflation
- The state of the economy
- Cost of living/housing crisis



International issues

- War/conflict
 - Israel-Palestine/Gaza
- International relations



Environmental impact

- Climate change
- Eco friendly/sustainability



Politics/leadership

- Corruption/poor leadership
- Elections
- Government issues



Crime/violence

- Gun violence
- Crime
- Bullying



Technology

- Social media policy & usage
- AI
- Online safety & misinformation



Green text represents top 10 most important issues, by Total

While those ages 14–17 and 18–22 align on a majority of issues that matter most to them, there are a few unique differences

14–17

- Education (e.g., Access to, Quality of, student loans, etc.)
- Homelessness
- Gun violence

18–22

- Israel-Palestine/Gaza
- LGBTQ rights
- Cost of living/the housing crisis

YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLAIN WHY THESE ISSUES MATTER MOST

Civil Rights/Discrimination



"Because what is happening right now [with abortion] is just to control women. People making these pro-life laws don't care about the children. If they did, we would focus more on helping the ones already here."

– 20-year-old Hispanic woman, Reproductive rights

"Transgender athletes are taking spaces away from biological females; females are being forced to be in unsafe spaces due to the current culture."

– 16-year-old white girl, LGBTQ rights

Environmental Impact



"I don't want my future child and their children to deal with the consequences that we can fix now."

– 21-year-old white man, Climate change

"Because I don't want to live on a dying planet because previous generations didn't care or do anything to help."

– 16-year-old Hispanic boy, Climate change

Social Welfare



"I'm starting to look into colleges and universities. Trying to figure out how I'm going to pay."

– 15-year-old white boy, Access to education

"There are way too many illegal immigrants committing crimes and getting away with it. It should be a national security issue."

– 20-year-old white man, Immigration

Politics/Leadership



"Our president is incompetent, and we need a new leader but currently don't have anyone qualified running."

– 16-year-old American Indian/Alaskan Native girl, Poor leadership

"Every state is a different size, and so they are worth different points. The fact that the entire state's college is forced into a collective vote does not seem accurate."

– 18-year-old white man, Elections

AND WHY THESE ISSUES ARE TOP OF MIND

Economic/Financial Issues



"I'm a new young adult and want to be able to actually survive on a paycheck."

– 22-year-old Black woman, Inflation

"My mom and dad both have to work just to pay the bills and it's hard on me and my sisters."

– 14-year-old white girl, Cost of living

Crime/Violence



"No constitutional right should be restricted and it's a problem that gun rights are being restricted."

– 19-year-old white man, Gun violence

"Because every time you turn on the TV all you hear about is somebody getting shot or killed."

– 14-year-old Black boy, Crime

International Issues



"We are funding wars when we should be boosting our own economy."

– 22-year-old white woman, War/conflict

"My brother is going to college next year to a campus where there are a lot of protests and where many Jewish students don't feel safe."

– 15-year-old white boy, War/conflict

Technology



"The most important issue is that the government is trying to censor us by banning TikTok because I believe young people are using it as a political tool."

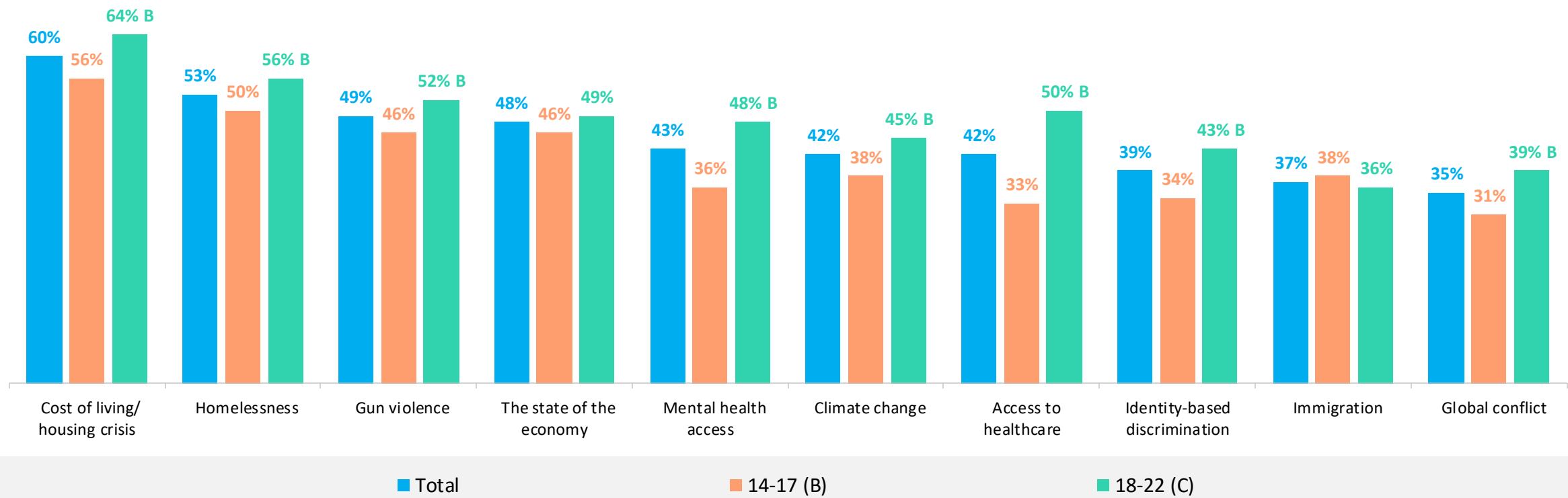
– 22-year-old Black non-binary/GNC adult, Social Media

"People rely far too heavily on [technology], and it is impacting society's ability to communicate and think effectively."

– 18-year-old white woman, Technology

COST OF LIVING AND HOMELESSNESS TOP THE LIST AS MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE COUNTRY

Top 10 Most Important Issues Facing The Country Today



MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES BY GENDER

	Gender 14–17		Gender 18–22	
	Girls	Boys	Women	Men
1	Cost of living/Housing crisis (59%)	Cost of living/Housing crisis (54%)	Cost of living/Housing crisis (69%)	Cost of living/Housing crisis (58%)
2	Homelessness (52%)	Homelessness (48%)	Homelessness (61%)	The state of the economy (51%)
3	The state of the economy (47%)	Gun violence (46%)	Gun violence (58%)	Homelessness (50%)
4	Gun violence (46%)	The state of the economy (45%)	Access to healthcare (56%)	Gun violence (45%)
5	Mental health access (40%)	Immigration (39%)	Mental health access (53%)	Mental health access (41%)

Shading denotes similarities in issue rankings within each demographic group

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES BY RACE AND URBANICITY

	Race					Urbanicity		
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Multiracial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
1	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (60%)	Gun violence (58%)	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (54%)	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (64%)	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (75%)	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (57%)	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (60%)	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (66%)
2	The state of the economy (52%)	Cost of living/ Housing crisis (57%)	Homelessness (49%)	Gun violence (61%)	Homelessness (70%)	Homelessness (55%)	Homelessness (52%)	Homelessness (52%)
3	Homelessness (51%)	Homelessness (51%)	Gun violence (48%)	Homelessness (51%)	Gun violence (59%)	Gun violence (49%)	Gun violence (51%)	The state of the economy (50%)
4	Gun violence (45%)	Identity-based discrimination (45%)	The state of the economy (45%)	Climate change (50%)	Access to healthcare (57%)	The state of the economy (46%)	The state of the economy (47%)	Gun violence (44%)
5	Access to healthcare (43%)	Mental health access (42%)	Climate change (43%)	The state of the economy (49%)	The state of the economy (51%)	Climate change (42%)	Climate change (45%)	Access to healthcare (44%)

Shading denotes similarities in issue rankings within each demographic group

**73% OF YOUNG
PEOPLE AGREE**

***"I THINK WHAT HAPPENS IN
OTHER COUNTRIES HAS OR WILL
HAVE AN IMPACT ON MY LIFE."***

**65% OF YOUNG
PEOPLE AGREE**

***"IT'S IMPORTANT FOR
LAWMAKERS TO FOCUS ON
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
ISSUES AROUND THE WORLD
AND IN THE U.S. EQUALLY."***

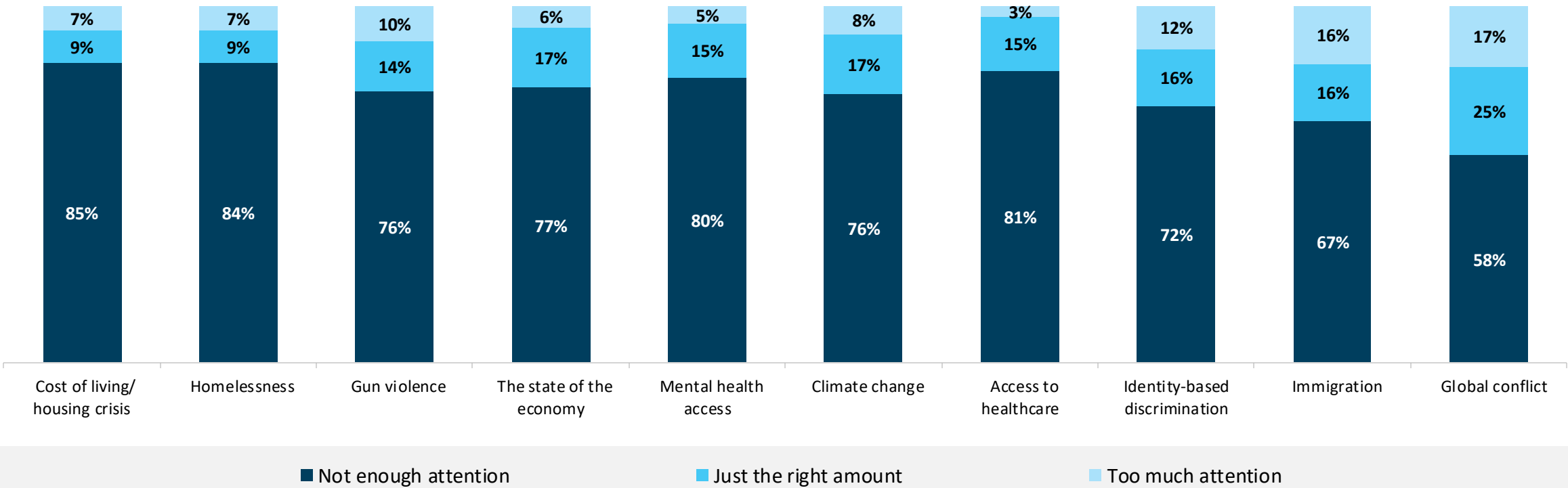


for every child

MAJORITIES BELIEVE THAT NOT ENOUGH ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO ISSUES OF HIGHEST IMPORTANCE

How Much Attention Do You Think Elected Officials Give To These Issues?

Top 10 issues, among those who find them important



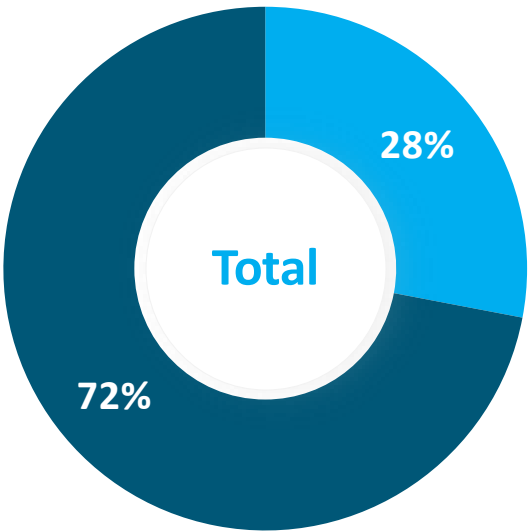
THE RESULT? DISILLUSIONMENT TOWARDS POLITICIANS.



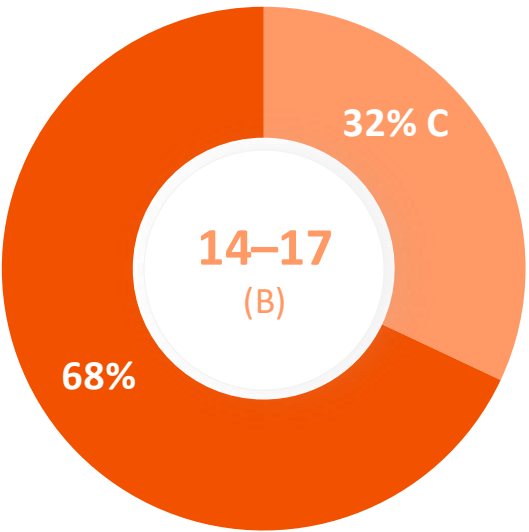
for every child

7-IN-10 YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL THE COUNTRY IS CURRENTLY ON THE WRONG TRACK

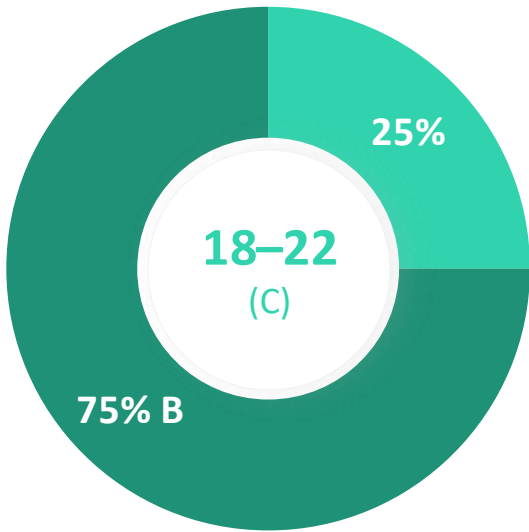
Would You Say The Country Is Currently On The Right Track Or The Wrong Track?



■ Right track ■ Wrong track



■ Right track ■ Wrong track



■ Right track ■ Wrong track

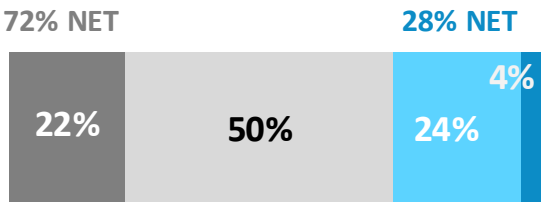
Food for thought:
58% of registered voters say the country is on *the wrong track*, according to the April 2024 Harvard CAPS-Harris Poll survey.

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A POOR OUTLOOK ON SOCIETY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

What Is Your Overall Outlook On Society...?

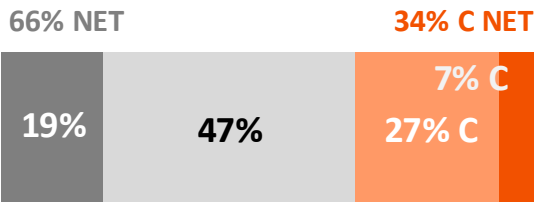
Total

■ Very bad ■ Somewhat bad ■ Somewhat good ■ Very good



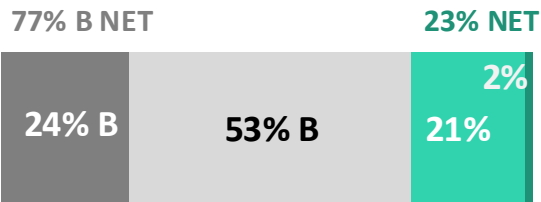
14–17(B)

■ Very bad ■ Somewhat bad ■ Somewhat good ■ Very good



18–22(C)

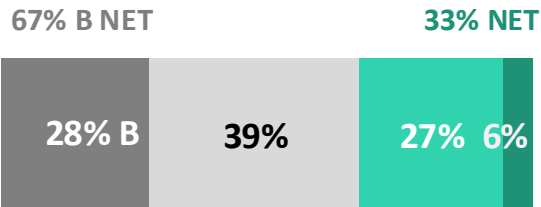
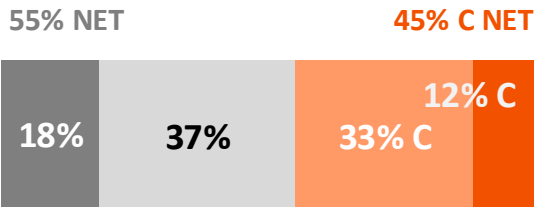
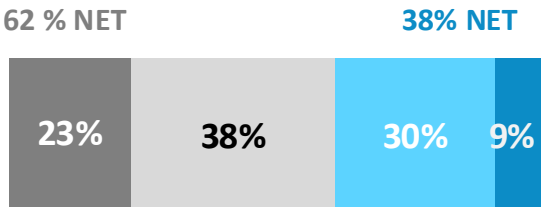
■ Very bad ■ Somewhat bad ■ Somewhat good ■ Very good



Currently



In The Future

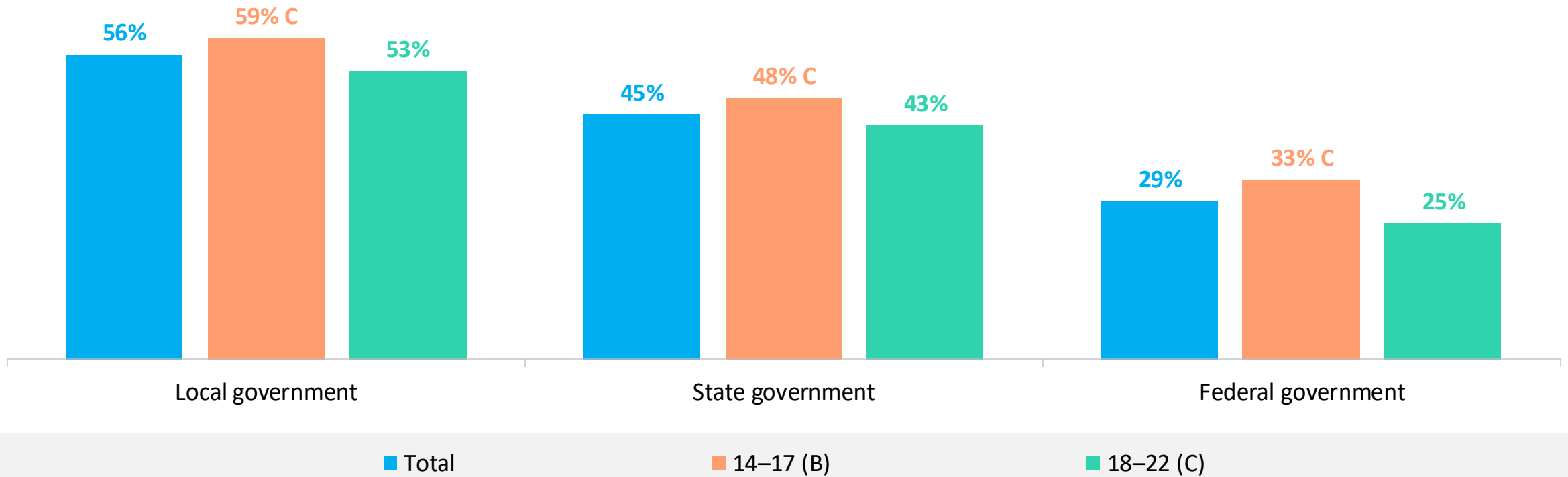


YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL LESS POSITIVE ABOUT PEOPLE IN POWER AT LARGER GOVERNMENT LEVELS

But teens are more likely than young adults to have a positive view of people in power at any level.

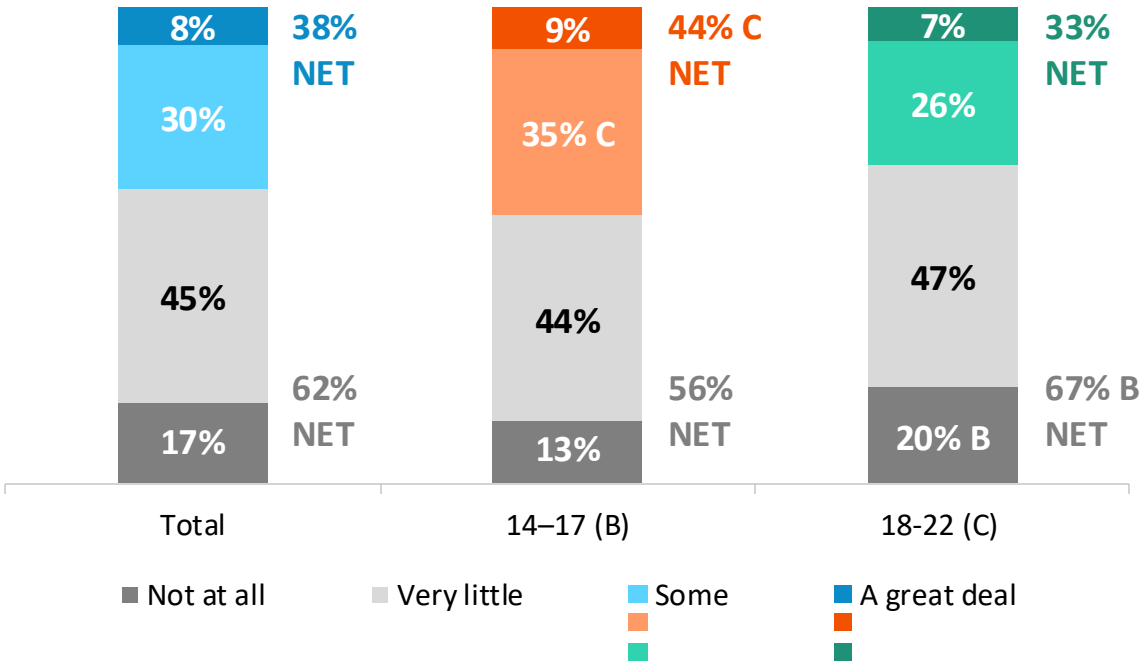
Do You Have A Positive Or Negative Opinion About The People In Political Power At Each Of These Government Levels?

% Positive opinion

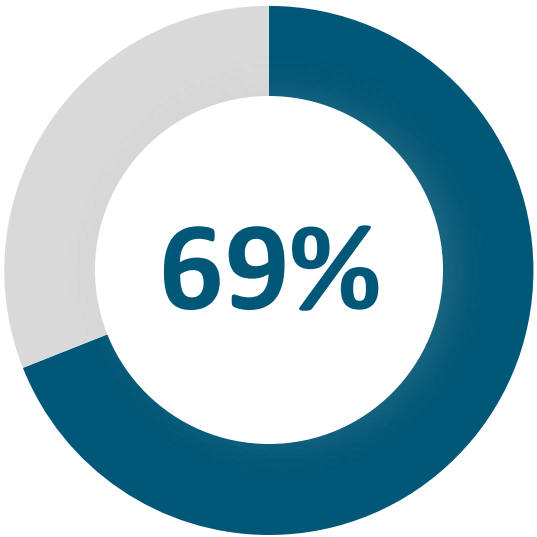


FEW BELIEVE PEOPLE IN POWER ARE INVESTED IN THEIR FUTURES

To What Degree Do You Think People in Positions of Political Power are Invested in Your Future?



“People in Positions of Power Are Making Decisions with my Best Interests in Mind.”
% Disagree



14-17 (B)	68%
18-22 (C)	71%

**YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MAKING THE
EFFORT TO SHOW THEY CARE**

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ISN'T SCARCE.

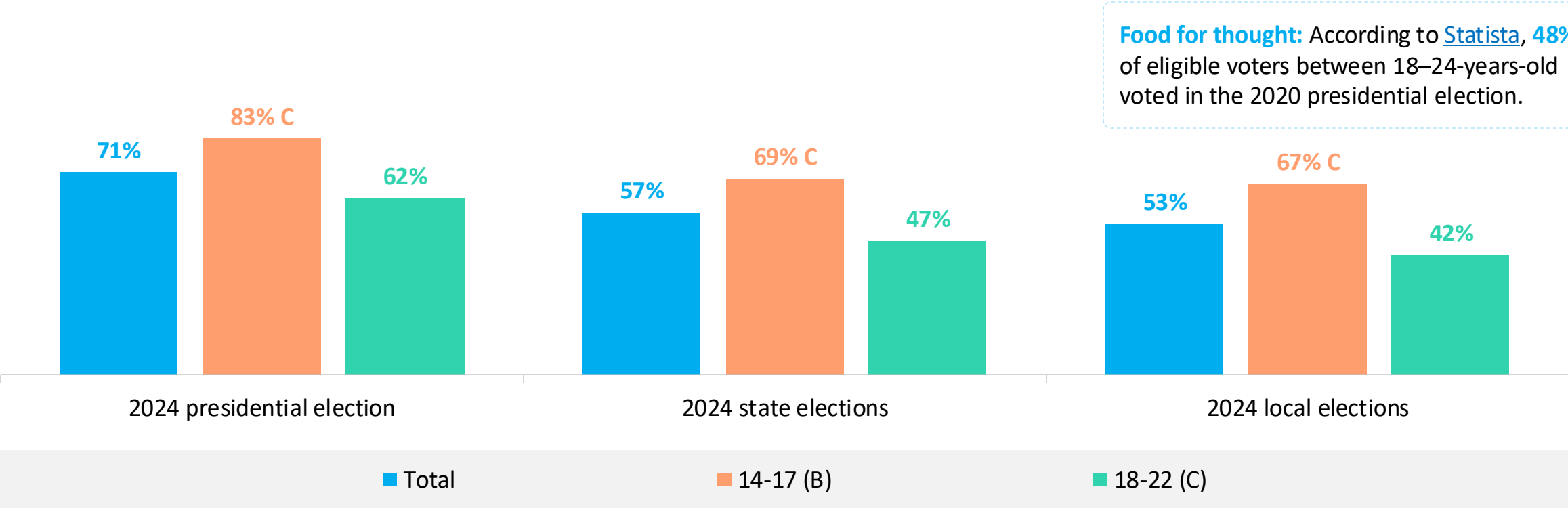


for every child

MAJORITIES PLAN TO, OR WOULD, VOTE IN NEARLY ALL LEVELS OF ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER

Although ineligible, teens are eager for their chance to cast a vote.

Do You Plan To/Would You Vote In The Following Elections This November?
% Yes



ENGAGEMENT VARIES ACROSS POLITICAL ACTIONS, WITH SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIONS LEADING

Do You Currently Do Any Of These Politically Focused Actions?

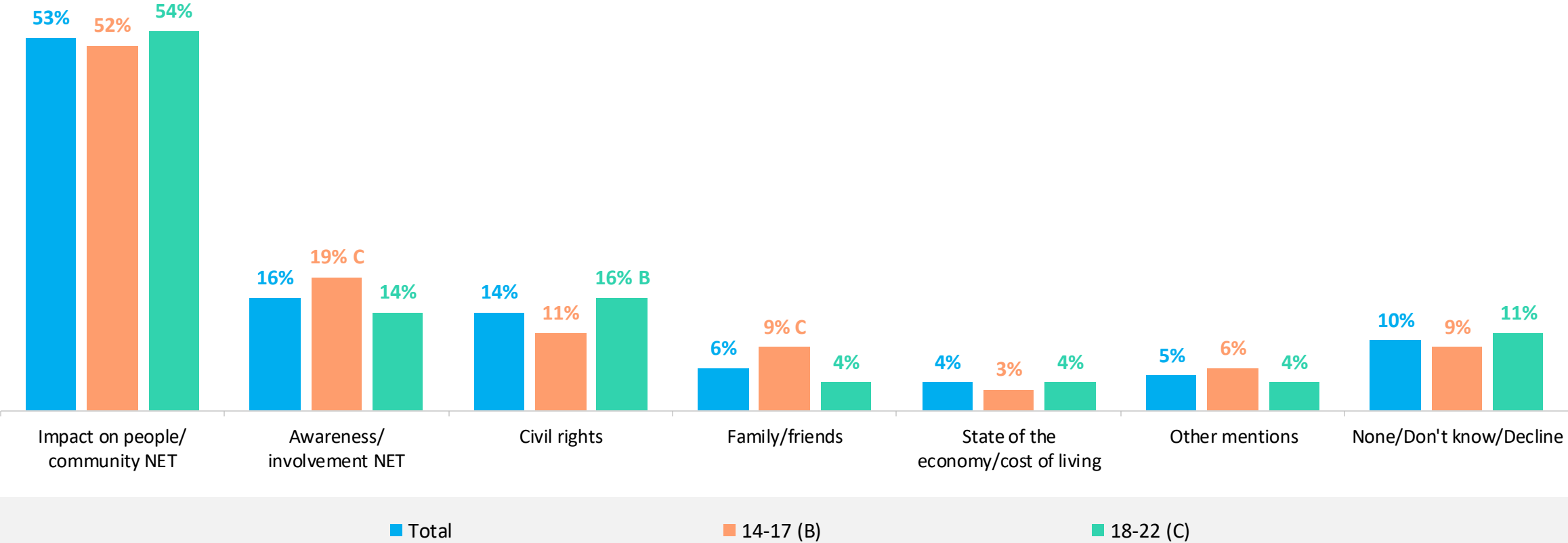
	Total	14–17 (B)	18–22 (C)
ANY	64%	55%	71% B
Vote in election*	33%	-	33%
Follow social media accounts related to where I live	31%	31%	32%
Support causes I believe in	25%	20%	30% B
Post on social media about things happening in my community or around the country	22%	22%	22%
Follow charities or advocacy groups on social media	17%	15%	19% B
Follow government officials on social media	16%	13%	18% B
Volunteer for charities or advocacy groups	15%	17% C	14%
Donate to charities or advocacy groups	14%	12%	15% B
Engage in political protests	7%	4%	9% B
Belong to a political or community group	7%	3%	9% B
Volunteer for political campaigns	5%	4%	6% B
Organize or host community events	5%	3%	6% B
Other	1%	1%	2% B
None	36%	45% C	29%

43%

of young people agree with the statement “I spend a lot of time thinking about and talking with my friends about political issues.”
(39% 14-17, 45% 18-22)

IMPACT TO OTHERS MOTIVATES YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE POLITICALLY ENGAGED

What Motivates You To Be Politically Engaged?
Unaided



Note: Chart shows categories with 3% mentions or higher.

YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLAIN WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO BE POLITICALLY ENGAGED

Awareness/Involvement



"I think when I read the news and see all of the power that elected officials have, it inspires me to get involved at the very least by voting because nothing is ever going to change unless constituents make it known what they want."

– 22-year-old white woman

"Political challenges will soon have an effect on me especially when I become an adult. It is important to know what is going on since some of the motives of politicians will soon directly be part of me."

– 16-year-old Hispanic boy

If you aren't aware of what's going on in the world, then it's easier for the bad people to get away with things like genocides. If I had a way to get to protests I would. Bringing large groups together informs the public about what's happening."

– 22-year-old white non-binary/GNC adult

Impact on People/Community



"Politics directly affect my life and the lives of those around me. I like to see progress."

– 22-year-old white woman

"People think if you aren't old enough to vote then what you think doesn't matter. I'm politically engaged because it's important to know what's going on in the world and my own country. It's important to know who's trying to help us and who's trying to hurt us. It affects us too and one day soon we will be old enough to vote."

– 15-year-old white girl

"I am motivated to be politically engaged because every law affects me in some way. Laws may be passed that affect my family, my friends. It's good to be aware of what's going to happen in the future."

– 18-year-old Asian man

"When I see that certain issues are really affecting our nation, I want to become involved."

– 16-year-old white boy

"My proximity to certain issues and the ways that they affect those around me motivates me to be engaged."

– 18-year-old Black woman

YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLAIN WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO BE POLITICALLY ENGAGED

Civil Rights



"The basic human rights for everyone regardless of who they are."

– 19-year-old white woman

"I'm motivated by the inequity and exclusion that continues to occur today."

– 20-year-old white non-binary/GNC adult

"I am a person who advocates for human rights. I cannot stand to see another person be treated less fairly than others."

– 19-year-old Asian man

"I was motivated to be politically engaged by a desire for societal change, the defense of their rights and values, and the belief in their ability to make a difference in shaping the future."

– 14-year-old Hispanic girl

"I am a person who advocates for human rights. I cannot stand to see another person be treated less fairly than others."

– 19-year-old Asian man

"I see the problems within my community, country and around the world. As a biracial female I sometimes am a victim of inequalities."

– 17-year-old white girl

Family/Friends



"My parents, they believe that we must be aware of what's happening so when I am able to vote I make the right choices."

– 17-year-old white girl

"I am motivated to be engaged politically because my family has always included me in political issues as well as national issues."

– 15-year-old white boy

"I would say it's mainly the people around me that help me be more engaged in my community."

– 22-year-old Hispanic woman

Economy/Cost of Living



"Keeping our rights and keeping this country safe and affordable for our people."

– 21-year-old Black man

"The state of economy is regressing, and I believe I'm part of the future of this great nation. I need to be aware of what's really going on and be part of solutions in any area I can be of help."

– 16-year-old white boy

RESPONSIBILITY IS A MAIN DRIVER BEHIND WANTING TO VOTE

What Motivates You To Want To Vote In The Upcoming Elections?

	Total	14–17 (B)	18–22 (C)
It's my responsibility to vote	55%	54%	55%
I feel like I'm making a difference	39%	44% C	35%
My opportunity to support those who will best represent me	38%	38%	37%
I believe in American democracy	38%	44% C	31%
I feel proud that I have the opportunity to vote	37%	39%	35%
I feel passionate about the issues	34%	31%	37% B
I want to set an example for others	28%	30%	27%
Voting has the most impact on politics compared to other activities	27%	27%	27%
I want to be as politically engaged as possible	26%	22%	31% B
I want to prove that our political system works	17%	19% C	15%
Other	2%	1%	2%
Not Sure	3%	3%	3%

LISTEN UP!
YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SPEAKING.



for every child
















**BARRIERS STILL HINDER BEST
EFFORTS TO ENGAGE.**



for every child

YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T TRUST THAT THEIR VOTE MATTERS OR THAT THE PEOPLE RUNNING REPRESENT THEM

Why Aren't You Planning On Voting In Upcoming Elections?

	Total	14–17 (B)	18–22 (C)
I don't think my vote matters	 23%	24%	23%
People running for office don't have my best interest in mind	 23%	24%	23%
I don't trust any of the people running for office	 23%	21%	24%
I don't think the people running for office understand my generation	 19%	20%	19%
I don't think the political system is effective	 19%	15%	20% B
I don't feel passionate about the issues	 16%	13%	17%
I don't agree with the way our voting system is organized	 15%	12%	16%
I don't think voting impacts politics as much as other activities	 13%	10%	14%
I don't have enough time	 12%	6%	15% B
There are too many barriers to voting	 11%	9%	12%
It's not easy to get to my polling place	 9%	5%	11% B
I want to vote for a 3rd party candidate, but don't feel like I can	 8%	4%	10% B
I don't believe in American democracy	 7%	5%	8%
Other	 10%	15% C	8%
Not sure	 16%	15%	16%

**"I WISH THERE
WERE MORE
OPPORTUNITIES
TO VOTE FOR
POLITICIANS
I BELIEVE IN."**

**82% OF
YOUNG PEOPLE
AGREE.**

87% 14-17, 79% 18-22



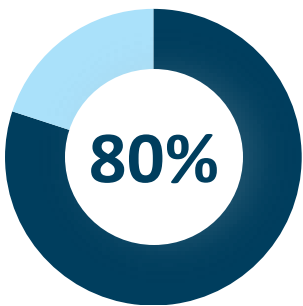
for every child

MOST FEEL CERTAIN ABOUT THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN POWER

Though half recognize barriers to engagement.

"I think people my age can make a difference in America."

% Agree

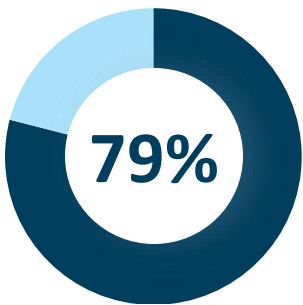


14-17 (B) 82%

18-22 (C) 79%

"I wish there were more young people in positions of power."

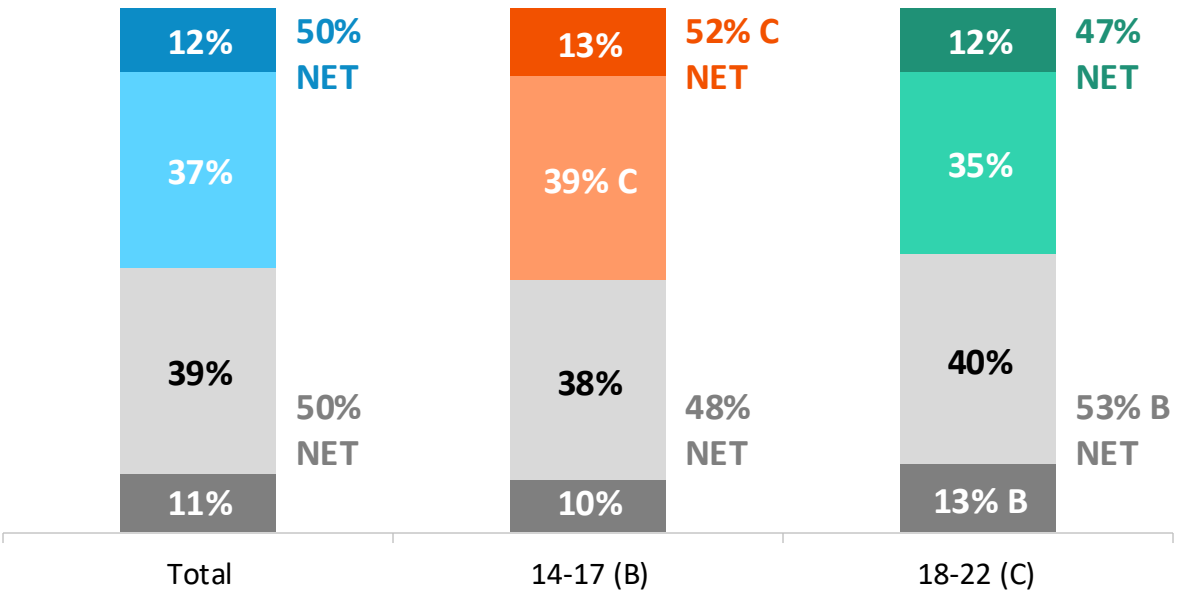
% Agree



14-17 (B) 82% C

18-22 (C) 76%

How Easy Or Difficult Is It To Be Engaged In The Issues That Matter To You?



Very difficult Somewhat difficult Somewhat easy Very easy

YOUNG AMERICANS OUTLINE STEPS TO RECOGNITION AND INCLUSION.



for every child

YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD BE MORE DRIVEN TO ENGAGE IF THEY KNEW THEY COULD ACTUALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

What Would Make It Easier For You To Be Engaged In Political And Social Issues That Matter To You?

Among those who find engaging difficult

	Total	14–17 (B)	18–22 (C)
ANY	90%	91%	90%
If I knew I could actually make a difference	41%	38%	43% B
Feeling more educated on the issues	39%	36%	41% B
Knowing my opinion is important	38%	42% C	34%
Knowing how to get started	33%	32%	34%
Understanding the political system better	33%	32%	34%
Finding more people who think like me	29%	26%	32% B
Feeling safer in my community	28%	24%	31% B
Knowing my friends were also involved	27%	31% C	24%
If it was easier to find ways to get involved	27%	25%	28%
Having more time to focus on political issues	23%	19%	27% B
Knowing who my elected officials are	17%	16%	18%
Having more support from my family	16%	14%	17% B
Having greater access to transportation	14%	12%	16% B
Being asked to participate by advocacy organizations	11%	10%	12%
Other	1%	1%	1%
Nothing would make it easier	10%	9%	10%

AND IF IT WERE UP TO THEM, YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD MAKE THESE CHANGES TO THE CURRENT STATE OF POLITICS IN THE U.S.

Age/Term Limits



"I would place limits on the age one can be as an elected official. Its important to have someone who is able to represent and empathize with those they lead."

– 18-year-old white non-binary/GNC adult

"Set term limits so that everyone in politics wasn't allowed to make a career out of it and stay there for their entire life and become millionaires."

– 20-year-old white woman

Change The Two-Party System



"Get rid of the two-party system and work together to fix our national debt."

– 15-year-old white girl

"Get rid of the two-party system so people vote based on the qualities and policies of an individual instead of party."

– 18-year-old Asian man

Focus on Unity



"Stop fighting about red and blue and start making policies together that will make a better country, go back to the times where both parties work together."

– 16-year-old white boy

"I'd get the Democrats and Republicans to work together and stop making everything impossible because all they do is tear each other apart."

– 16-year-old white girl

Move Away From The Electoral College



"I would change voting from the electoral college to popular vote. The state of politics in America is no longer for 'we the people'. It seems to be now driven by money."

– 18-year-old Asian woman

"Lose the electoral college and use popular vote, don't let people buy the politicians."

– 17-year-old white boy

A Complete Overhaul



"I think an entire overhaul of the U.S. political system is needed; however, I think a great first step is removing/revising the electoral college so that the individual vote has more of an impact so that everyday Americans' voices actually mattered at least a little."

– 22-year-old white non-binary/GNC adult

"I don't even know where to start...but a complete overhaul is in order."

– 16-year-old Multiracial boy

IN ORDER TO FEEL HEARD, YOUNG PEOPLE WANT THEIR OWN SEAT AT THE TABLE

How Can Political Leaders Best Support Young People In Making You Feel Heard?

	Total	14–17 (B)	18–22 (C)
ANY	89%	91% C	87%
Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues	48%	46%	49%
Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations	46%	48%	45%
Consider how young people are impacted by legislation	45%	45%	44%
Make room for younger people to be in political power	44%	39%	47% B
Allow younger people to be a key part of decision-making and developing solutions	43%	40%	45% B
Create youth advisory boards for young people to voice their opinions	38%	41% C	35%
Be transparent about how much money is invested in programs or policies for young people	36%	34%	37%
Create strategies for change based on issues that matter to younger people	34%	33%	35%
Fund programs aimed at focusing on unique issues experienced by young people	31%	33%	30%
Draft policies that address unique issues experienced by young people	26%	26%	26%
Other	1%	1%	1%
I'm not sure	11%	9%	13% B

CAN INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLICY MAKING MAKE AMERICA BETTER?

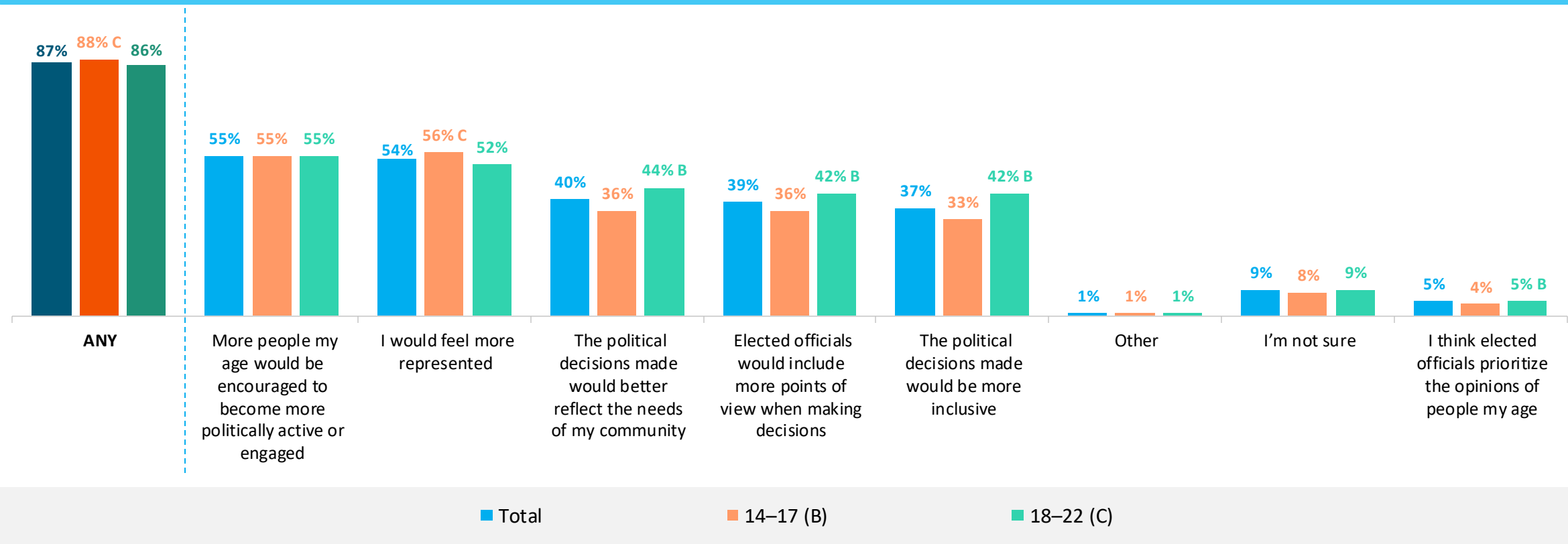


71% OF YOUNG
PEOPLE SAY YES

Food for thought: Our previous UNICEF work found that **77%** of 14–17-year-olds believed that kids could help make America better if lawmakers worked more closely with young people.

YOUNG PEOPLE THINK BEING PRIORITIZED WILL INCREASE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION

What Benefits Would You See If Elected Officials Prioritized The Opinions Of Young People?



DEEP DIVE:

YOUNG ADULT WOMEN 18-22

YOUNG WOMEN ARE LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN MEN ABOUT THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY, NOW OR IN THE FUTURE



78% OF YOUNG WOMEN THINK
THE COUNTRY IS ON THE WRONG
TRACK

(vs. 71% Young Men)

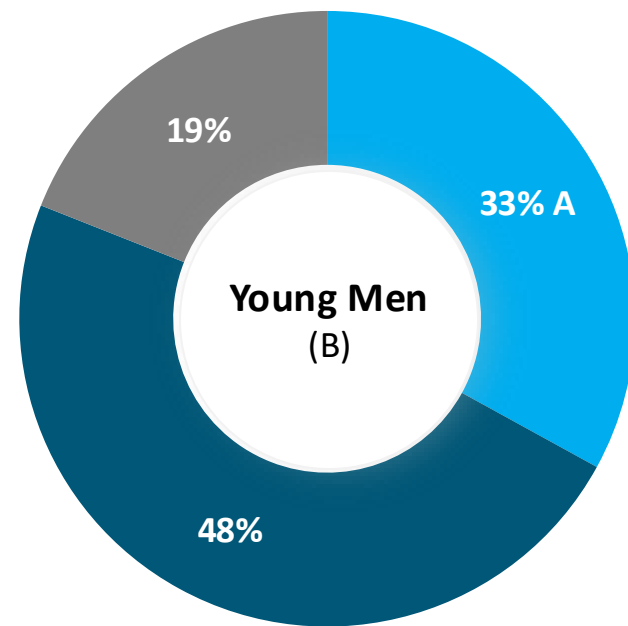
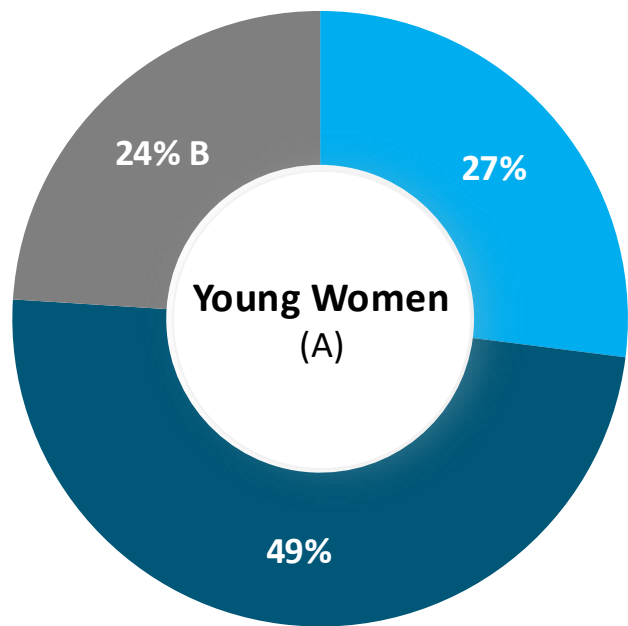


AND **70%** HAVE A NEGATIVE
OUTLOOK FOR SOCIETY IN THE
FUTURE

(vs. 64% Young Men)

THEY DON'T FEEL AS ACKNOWLEDGED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Overall, Do You Feel Included In The Political Process In The U.S.?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

AND THEY DON'T THINK PEOPLE ARE THINKING ABOUT THEM WHEN VOTING OR MAKING DECISIONS



52% OF YOUNG WOMEN DO NOT
THINK OTHER ADULTS THINK
ABOUT THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE
THEIR AGE WHEN VOTING.

(vs. 42% Young Men)



AND JUST **29%** SAY LOCAL
LEADERS THINK ABOUT ISSUES
THAT IMPACT YOUNG PEOPLE
WHEN MAKING DECISIONS.

(vs. 35% Young Men)

YET YOUNG WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE POLITICALLY IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

Do You Currently Do Any Of These Politically Focused Actions?

	Young Women (A)	Young Men (B)
ANY	72%	70%
Follow social media accounts related to where I live	37% B	27%
Vote in election	34%	31%
Support causes I believe in	34% B	24%
Post on social media about things happening in my community or around the country	24%	20%
Follow charities or advocacy groups on social media	23% B	13%
Follow government officials on social media	20%	17%
Donate to charities or advocacy groups	18% B	13%
Volunteer for charities or advocacy groups	16% B	11%
Engage in political protests	9%	8%
Belong to a political or community group	9%	10%
Volunteer for political campaigns	5%	7%
Organize or host community events	5%	7%
Other	1%	3% A
None	28%	30%

IN THEIR OWN WORDS, YOUNG WOMEN SHOW UP POLITICALLY BECAUSE...

"Equality and just moral justice. What is being a human if you are not moral?"

– 18-year-old American Indian or Alaska Native woman

"It's a want to see a change in the world. My parents are immigrants and have bent over backwards their entire life to get me where I am today. I'd like to change happen so that other parents don't have to suffer nearly as much. My parents motivate me."

– 18-year-old white woman

"The evidence of how little government officials listen to the people, and trying to get them to see the people are upset. I also know many people are not as educated as me, so I try to educate them myself. There also are many people who can not speak for themselves and knowing I can act as a voice for them is very motivating."

– 19-year-old white woman

"I want to be able to give my son the best life and give him anything he wants but I can't even afford my bills."

– 19-year-old white woman

"I don't want to sit around and wait for a change to be made. Groupthink is a scary thing and if we all think we can't make a change then that will reign true."

– 20-year-old white woman

"[I'm motivated by] the fact that so many people in our country struggle to support themselves or their families although we are 'the greatest country in the world.'"

– 20-year-old Hispanic woman

"My generation grew up knowing in the current system we would have no future, so our only choice is to rebuild the system from scratch."

– 21-year-old white woman

"I really care about the future because I'm young. I have to live in the world for a long time and I want to shape it so it can be better for myself and for my community. I'm scared about the future and tired of the present."

– 21-year-old Black woman

"I'm young so [I'm motivated by] my future and the future of those after me. Right now, the world is insanely grim. My generation has little to no hope for ourselves and that is what drives me to advocate for change."

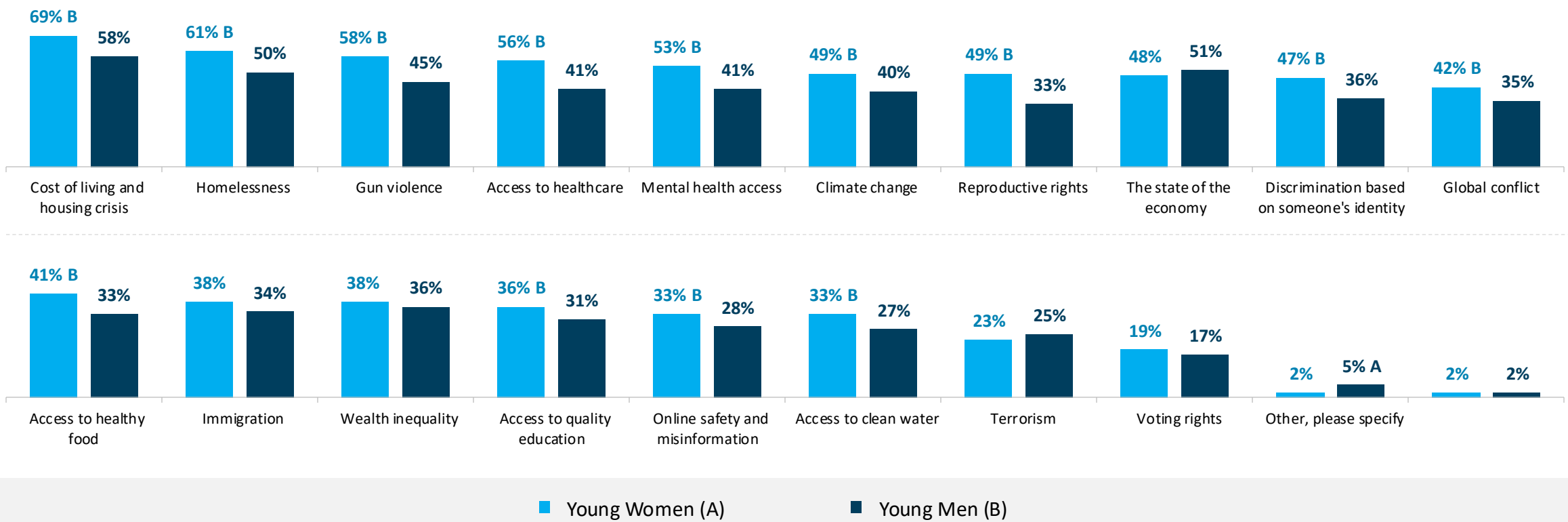
– 22-year-old white woman

"Truthfully there is a lot that motivates me to not be politically engaged but I believe when we turn a blind eye, we are part of the problem."

– 22-year-old white woman

THEY FIND MANY ISSUES FACING THE COUNTRY TO BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUNG MEN

What Would You Say Are The Most Important Issues Facing The Country Today?



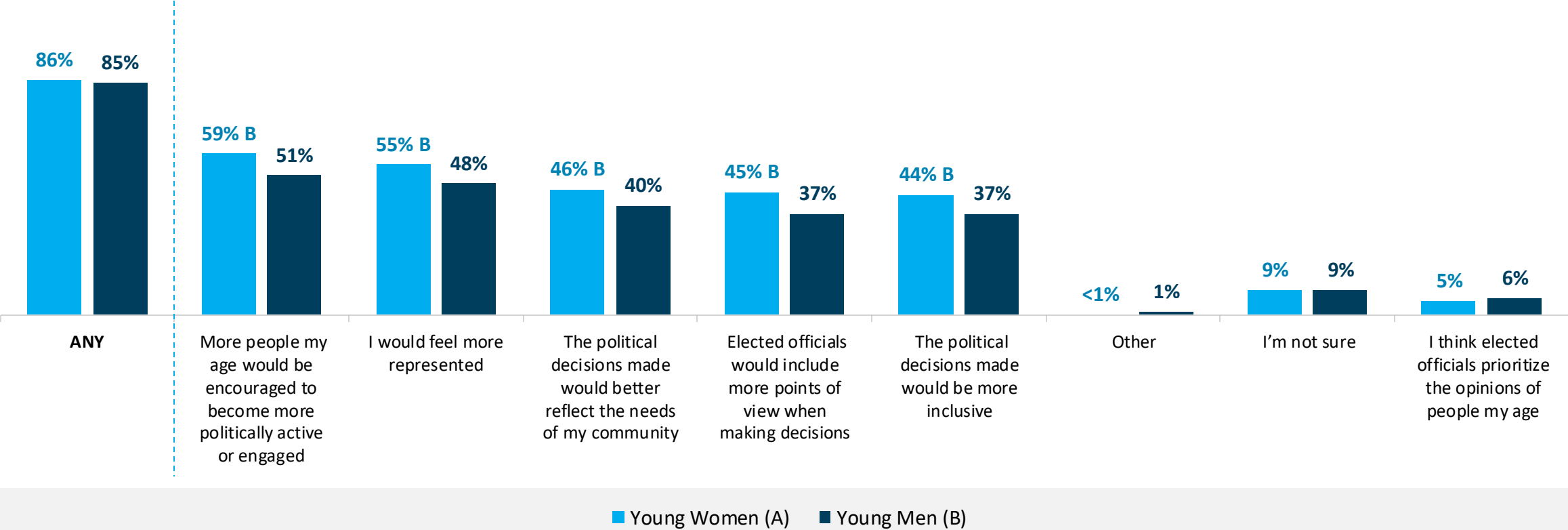
YOUNG WOMEN BELIEVE MORE STRONGLY IN DIFFERENT WAYS THAT POLITICAL LEADERS CAN MAKE PEOPLE THEIR AGE FEEL HEARD

How Can Political Leaders Best Support Young People In Making You Feel Heard?

	Young Women (A)	Young Men (B)
ANY	87%	86%
Make an effort to understand how young people view political and social issues	52% B	44%
Make room for younger people to be in political power	52% B	41%
Allow younger people to be a key part of decision-making and developing solutions	51% B	39%
Engage in honest dialogue with younger generations	47% B	41%
Consider how young people are impacted by legislation	47% B	40%
Be transparent about how much money is invested in programs or policies for young people	39%	34%
Create strategies for change based on issues that matter to younger people	39% B	31%
Create youth advisory boards for young people to voice their opinions	38% B	29%
Fund programs aimed at focusing on unique issues experienced by young people	33% B	26%
Draft policies that address unique issues experienced by young people	29% B	23%
Other	<1%	2% A
I'm not sure	13%	14%

AND TRUST IN THEIR POWER OF BEING ACKNOWLEDGED

What Benefits Would You See If Elected Officials Prioritized The Opinions Of Young People?



AUDIENCE PROFILES

DEMOGRAPHICS

Race/Ethnicity			
	Total	14–17	18–22
White	50%	53%	47%
Hispanic	25%	25%	25%
Black	14%	14%	14%
Asian	6%	5%	6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	1%	1%
Another Race or Multi-Race	5%	2%	7%

Household Size			
	Total	14–17	18–22
1	6%	-	11%
2	13%	6%	18%
3	21%	20%	22%
4	28%	33%	23%
5+	33%	41%	25%

Gender			
	Total	14–17	18–22
Man/Boy	50%	50%	49%
Woman/Girl	48%	49%	47%
Other	2%	1%	4%

LGBTQ+ Status			
	Total	14–17	18–22
Member of LGBTQ+ community	18%	7%	27%
An ally	38%	39%	37%
Neither	44%	54%	37%

Importance of Religion			
	Total	14–17	18–22
Somewhat/Very Important	65%	72%	59%
Not Too/Not Very Important	35%	28%	41%

Engagement			
	Total	14–17	18–22
Engaged Youth	19%	18%	20%
Unengaged Youth	81%	82%	80%

Urbanicity			
	Total	14–17	18–22
Urban	29%	28%	29%
Suburban	48%	46%	50%
Rural	23%	26%	20%

Political Lean			
	Total	14–17	18–22
Democrat	29%	31%	28%
Independent	28%	25%	30%
Republican	23%	25%	22%
Other	4%	1%	6%
I'm not sure	16%	18%	14%

Political Philosophy			
	Total	14–17	18–22
Conservative	23%	25%	21%
Liberal	28%	25%	31%
Moderate	34%	35%	33%
Not Sure	15%	15%	15%

14-17 ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Age

14	24%
15	25%
16	25%
17	26%

School Location

Urban/City	31%
Suburban	39%
Small town/Rural	30%

Academic Grade

8 th	13%
9 th	23%
10 th	22%
11 th	25%
12 th	14%
Graduated	3%

Type of School Attended

Homeschool	8%
Public school	81%
Private school	9%
Religious school	2%
Not sure	<1%

Plan After Graduation

Work	18%
Vocational/trade school	12%
2/4-year university	62%
Military	3%
Something else	5%

Parent's Education

Less than high school degree	5%
HS degree to less than 4-year college degree	46%
4-year college degree or more	48%

18-22 ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

Age

18	21%
19	18%
20	21%
21	20%
22	20%

Work Status

Employed	54%
Not employed but looking for work	13%
Not employed and not looking for work	1%
Unable to work	2%
Student	27%
Stay-at-home partner	2%

Household Income

Less than \$15K	21%
\$15K to \$24,999	11%
\$25K to \$34,999	11%
\$35K to \$49,999	10%
\$50K to \$74,999	15%
\$75K to \$99,999	12%
\$100K or more	20%

Education Type

Undergrad	62%
Graduate	16%
Doctoral	2%
Vocational	1%
Technical	2%
Professional	2%
Seminary	<1%
None	15%

APPENDIX

METHOD STATEMENT

To be included in all materials for public release

The research was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf UNICEF USA among 3,194 teens/young adults, including 1,598 ages 14–17 who were recruited and given permission to participate by their parent or legal guardian and 1,596 ages 18–22, with 466 Black, 581 Hispanic, and an oversample of Asian for a total of 305. The survey was conducted April 19-May 8, 2024.

Data for ages 14–17 are weighted where necessary by the parent's/legal guardian's education, race/ethnicity, region, and the child's age by gender, school location, and internet usage to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Data for ages 18–22 are weighted where necessary by age by gender, race/ethnicity, region, employment status, and education to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. To ensure the total sample was representative, the data were initially weighted separately by cohort (14–17 and 18–22) and then combined into a total age 14–22 group.

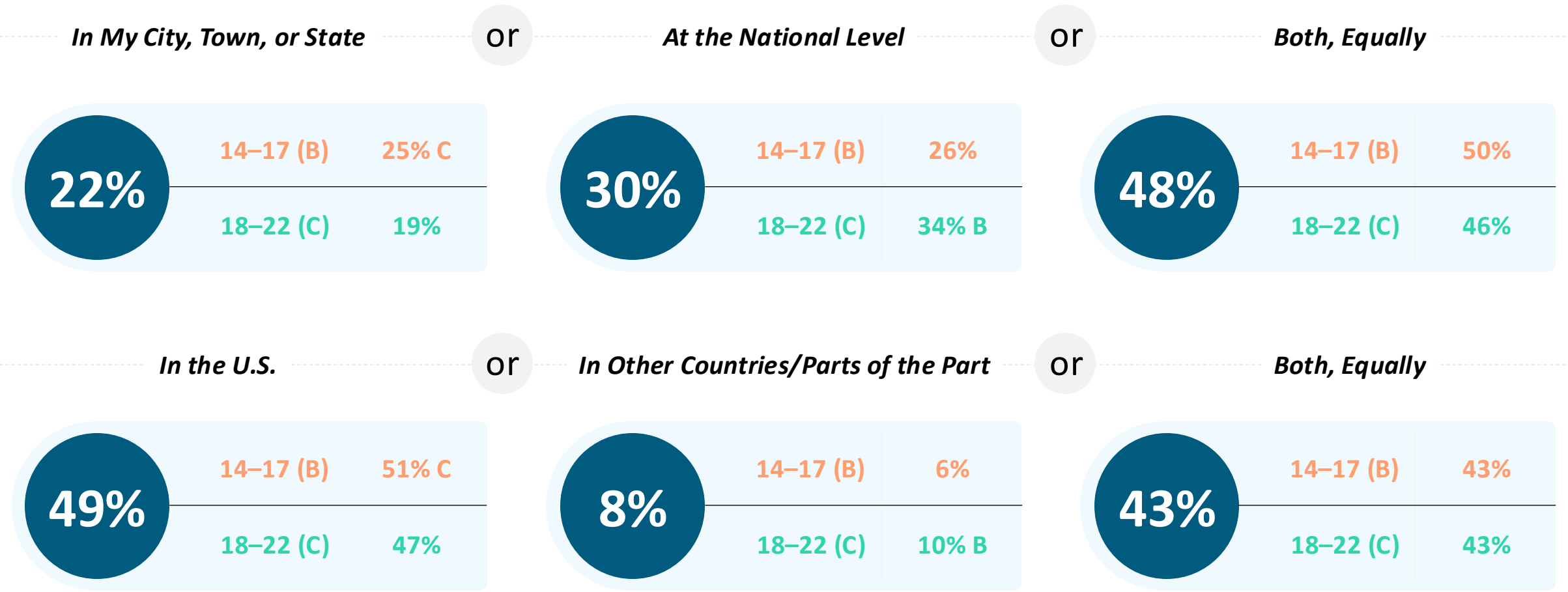
- Data for Black, Hispanic, and Asian ages 14–22 were weighted as needed by age by gender, region, education, and employment status.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within +2.0 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

- The sample data for the Black sample is accurate to within +4.8 percentage points, the Hispanic sample to within +4.5 percentage points, and the Asian sample within +6.3 percentage points using a 95% confidence level.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

I Am More Focused On Political Issues...



APPENDIX



61% OF YOUNG
PEOPLE AGREE.

***THE U.S. SHOULD HAVE A
ROLE IN SUPPORTING
OTHER COUNTRIES***

Do You Know Who Your Elected Or Appointed Officials Are?
% Yes

