



MEMORANDUM

To: Alliance for Youth Organizing
From: Drew Linzer, Civiqs
Date: January 17, 2022
RE: National Survey Results: Young People on the State of the Nation

Major Findings

A Civiqs poll conducted for the Alliance for Youth Organizing finds that young people in America are frustrated with political leaders in Washington, D.C., and pessimistic about the future of the United States. However, there are a range of potential policy actions that would receive broad support from younger Americans, including increasing taxes on corporations and the wealthy, implementing fair redistricting processes, stopping voter suppression, forgiving federal student loans, and taking action on global climate change.

Young people have a negative view of national political figures and Congress as a whole. More than half of young people (56%) say they are frustrated with politicians in Washington, D.C., and another 37% describe themselves as angry. Politicians are seen as prioritizing the interests of wealthy Americans over the middle class and poor.

Only 36% of Americans under age 39 have a favorable view of President Biden. Nearly half of young people do not believe that the Biden administration is even working on policies that would positively impact their life. Vice President Kamala Harris receives a 33% favorable rating. Former President Donald Trump is viewed favorably by 31% of young people in America. Democrats in Congress and Republicans in Congress have favorable ratings of 36% and 23%, respectively.

Young people want to see action on policies to reduce wealth inequality, address the climate crisis by transitioning to clean and renewable energy, replace private insurance with Medicare for All, implement fair redistricting processes, restore protections against racial voter discrimination, cancel student loan debt, and more.

Young People Feel Frustrated and Pessimistic

Thinking about the future of the United States, 66% of Americans aged 17-39 feel pessimistic, versus just 13% who are optimistic. Pessimism is shared by young Democrats (62%), young

Republicans (63%), and young Independents (70%). The youngest Americans are the most pessimistic age group: Among those aged 17-25, 69% are pessimistic about the future of the U.S.

Asked about their feelings towards politicians in Washington, D.C., 56% of young people say they are frustrated, and 37% are angry. Just 1% say they are satisfied, and 1% describe themselves as excited. Democrats are more likely to feel frustrated with Washington (73%), and Republicans are more likely to feel angry (53%).

Young people feel much more positively towards their state and local governments. While 37% of young Americans say they are frustrated with their state and local governments, and 25% are angry, there are also 24% who say they are satisfied and 3% who are excited.

A factor contributing to young peoples' unhappiness with politicians in Washington is a perception that political leaders are not prioritizing their interests. Nearly half (48%) of young people – including 21% of Democrats and 59% of Independents – do not believe that the Biden administration is working on policies that positively impact their lives. Only 5% of young people think that political leaders care the most about young people and students. An overwhelming 75% believe that political leaders care the most about wealthy people; a view shared by 85% of young Democrats, 76% of young Independents, and even 52% of young Republicans.

Unfavorable Views of National Politicians

There are no national politicians or parties in the U.S. Congress that are viewed positively by most young people in America. President Biden has a 36% favorable rating among Americans aged 17-39, with only 11% saying they have a very favorable opinion of him. Vice President Harris has a 33% favorable rating among young Americans. Former President Donald Trump has a lower favorable rating than both Biden and Harris, at 31%. Trump also has a much higher percentage of young people with a very unfavorable opinion of him: 61% of young people have a very unfavorable opinion of Trump, compared to 43% for Biden and 45% for Harris.

Over half of young Americans (55%) have an unfavorable opinion of Democrats in Congress. An even larger percentage of young Americans (69%) have an unfavorable opinion of Republicans in Congress.

The survey asked respondents if their opinions of Democrats in Congress have changed since the Democrats won control of the U.S. House and Senate in the 2020 elections. A majority (54%) say that their opinion has gotten worse, including 32% of Democrats. Only 6% say that their opinion of Democrats in Congress has improved.

Opportunities for Policy Impact

There are a wide range of policies that young Americans say are the most important for elected officials to work on right now. One in three young Americans (30%) say that one of their top

priorities is increasing taxes on corporations and the wealthy. The second-most mentioned priority, by 25% of young people, is transitioning to 100% clean and renewable energy. Another one-in-four (23%) prioritize replacing private insurance with Medicare for All, and 21% say that a top-three policy priority is to restore protections against racial voter discrimination. Other policies that receive support include cancelling student loan debt, protecting access to abortion, and reducing prescription drug costs.

A large majority, 64% of young people, approve of the Biden Administration's decision to extend the pause on student loan payments until May 1st. There is broad-based support for this decision among those aged 17-25 (66%) as well as within the 26-32 age group (61%), and the 33-39 age group (63%). More than one in three young people (35%) – and fully 50% of young Democrats – want the Biden administration to cancel all student loan debt immediately. Another 27% of young Americans support loan forgiveness of up to \$50,000 (18%) or up to \$10,000 (9%). About a third of young people (31%) oppose any action on canceling student loan debt.

There is a widespread recognition that global climate change is happening – and young people say that it is impacting them now. Half (49%) of young Americans, including 73% of young Democrats, say that the effects of climate change are already being felt. Another quarter (27%) expect climate change to impact them in their lifetimes (17%), or over a longer time frame (10%). Only 10% of young Americans say that climate change is not happening.

In light of recent court decisions regarding access to abortion, most young Americans (61%) say that it is either very important (50%) or somewhat important (11%) to them for there to be abortion services available in their area for those who need it.

Young people are concerned about fair elections and the state of democracy in America. Nearly half (47%) say that ending partisan gerrymandering and implementing fair redistricting processes is one of the two most important issues for elected officials to address around voting and elections today. Another 39% want officials to take action to stop voter suppression and protect voters from racial discrimination. Over half of young Americans (53%) believe that Congress should be doing more to investigate and hold people accountable for the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol building. Just 11% are content that Congress is doing the right amount now.

As the coronavirus pandemic stretches into 2022, young Americans' top pandemic-related concerns are their health and economic security. More than half (55%) say that the health of themselves, their family, and loved ones is in their top three concerns. Another 54% place their economic stability and the stability of their family in their top three coronavirus-related concerns. One in three (33%) are concerned about the safety of returning to in-person activities such as work and social events.

Political Efficacy

To increase the political impact of young people in America, the approach supported by the most young people (32%) is simply getting more young people to run for elected office. The next-most

supported idea (22%) is increasing voter turnout among young people. Other traditional forms of political organizing and activism are not seen as being as effective. Just 8% say that community organizing is the best way to get politicians to do more to benefit young people in America. Even fewer (6%) believe that directly contacting representatives is the best option, and just 3% feel that attending town halls or public protests, respectively, is the most effective way to produce change.

Despite their poor opinion of national political figures, interest among young people in voting in the November 2022 elections is high. Many say they currently intend to vote (89%), donate to a campaign or non-profit organization (40%), or volunteer (22%) or contact voters (16%) for a campaign or nonprofit organization.

Methodology

Civiqs interviewed 1,936 Americans aged 17-39 from January 2-6, 2022. The survey was conducted online, among selected members of the Civiqs research panel. Sampled individuals were emailed by Civiqs and responded using a personalized link to the survey at civiqs.com. The survey results are weighted by age, gender, race, education, and party identification to be representative of the population of Americans aged 17-39. Respondents include an oversample of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) to increase the precision of survey results for that subgroup. The general design effect due to weighting is 1.28. The survey has a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$ at the 95% confidence level, accounting for the design effect. All survey results in this report are reported as percentages. More information about Civiqs can be found online at civiqs.com/methodology.