CIRCLE Growing Voters: Young People and Youth Leadership

The CIRCLE Growing Voters framework focuses on the roles and responsibilities of various institutions in ensuring that all youth are ready and excited to participate in democracy. However, young people themselves are still absolutely essential to this work, and youth must partner with and lead in these institutions in order to expand access and opportunities for themselves and their peers.

THE FACTS

37% of young people (ages 18-29) heard about the 2020 election from friends or roommates.

51% of teens (ages 14-17) would register their peers to vote if given the opportunity.

84% of youth (ages 18-29) believe that their generation has the power to change things in the country.

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

In 2020, more than three quarters of young people said they felt like had the ability and the responsibility to be civically engaged. That belief is a powerful resource for youth and communities to tap into.

**YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People like me should participate in the political activity and decision making of our country</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is my responsibility to get involved and make things better for society</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel part of a group or movement, and our members will vote to express our views</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a group, young people have the power to change things in this country</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The outcomes of the 2020 election will make a significant impact on everyday issues involving my community, such as schools and police</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION: HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN GROW VOTERS**

**WHAT**

- Evaluate your community’s support of young voters.
- Present your findings and push leaders in your community.
- Be a leader in community institutions.
- Get involved with issues that matter to you.
- Support and push your teachers and school to embrace CIRCLE Growing Voters.
- Host a voter registration drive at school or in youth community.
- Bring local politicians to your school or youth organization.

**WHY**

- Understanding where support exists, who is and is not being supported, and how increased support can make a difference is the first step in strengthening youth electoral education and participation.
- Hearing directly from young people about what they need in their community can help to push leaders toward constructive solutions.
- Young people’s voices can be powerful in local community institutions, including ones that may not seem directly linked to youth voting like school clubs or libraries.
- Youth are passionate about, and impacted by, a wide range of issues. Even before voting age, individual or collective issue advocacy can build political power and create change within communities.
- Students are experts on their educational experience and can draw upon their interests and experiences to help educators understand how to better support their electoral learning and engagement.
- Your ideas and leadership will ensure that voter registration is fun, social, and easy for your peers.
- Events in school can push elected officials to view young people as constituents, and can help your peers see the connection between their lives and local policymaking.

**HOW**

- Use the Mapping Your Community Ecosystem tool in the CIRCLE Growing Voters report to ask a wide range of institutions (schools, community groups, nonprofits, local government, etc.) whether and how their offices support youth participation in elections.
- Turn findings from your assessment of your community into a presentation you can share with local stakeholders like election administrators, media outlets, and educators. Make specific recommendations and direct asks, and look to establish strategic relationships in key institutions.
- Leverage leadership opportunities (like school boards, boards of directors, youth commissions, or advisory councils) to internally push for more attention to elections and voting or more strategic action to reach young people.
- Join or start organizations and events that provide you and your peers with a forum to discuss community and school issues (e.g., Urban Debate League); ways to express your views using multiple mediums (e.g., spoken word, visual arts, videos) or a space to report on issues that affect the student body (e.g., a student newspaper).
- Check out the recommendations for educators in the CIRCLE Growing Voters report, and explore how you and your peers can support them. For example, talk to teachers about the kind of teaching you want about elections or what media-making opportunities you find valuable.
- Propose running a student-led voter registration drive and get resources and information from election nonprofits and/or your local election office.
- Ask your local elected officials to hold a town hall with students at your school so you and your peers can learn more about what your government is doing and share your ideas and concerns. You can also ask to meet candidates running for office—especially for school board and other positions that most directly shape education and other youth-centered issues.