

LAKE SNELL PERRY & ASSOCIATES
THE TARRANCE GROUP, INC.

present

SHORT-TERM IMPACTS, LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

THE POLITICAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG ADULTS IN AMERICA

**Results and Strategic Recommendations
from a National Survey of
1,500 young adults ages 15-25
conducted January 6-17, 2002**

**Analysis and Report for
The Center for Information and Research in Civic Learning &
Engagement (CIRCLE)
and**

**The Center for Democracy & Citizenship
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at the Council for Excellence in Government**

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METHODOLOGY

Lake Snell Perry & Associates, with The Tarrance Group, designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers from January 6 through January 17, 2002. The survey reached a total of 1,500 young people between the ages 15 and 25 nationwide, including 1,200 randomly distributed interviews, and oversamples of 150 African American and 150 Hispanic young people.

Telephone numbers for the survey were drawn from a random digit dial sample (RDD). The data were weighted by age and race to reflect actual distribution of the national population of young people. The oversamples were weighted into the base sample to reflect the racial distribution of the national population of young people.

In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. For example, in Question 13, which all respondents answered, 53% said that generally speaking, you can't be too careful in dealing with people; we can therefore be 95% confident that the true percentage will fall within 2.8% of this percentage, or between 55.8% and 50.2%. The table below represents the estimated sampling error for different percentage distributions of responses. The margin of sampling error for subgroups is greater than the margin of error for the entire sample.

Sampling Error by Percentage
(at 95 in 100 confidence level)

PERCENTAGES NEAR									
SAMPLE SIZE	<u>10</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>90</u>
1500	1.5	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.0	1.5
1200	1.7	2.3	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.3	1.7
1000	1.9	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.5	1.9
900	2.0	2.6	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.0	2.6	2.0
800	2.1	2.8	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.2	2.8	2.1
700	2.2	3.0	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.0	2.2
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.5	2.6
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9
300	3.4	4.5	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.5	3.4
200	4.2	5.5	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.5	4.2
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.0	7.8	5.9

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Just as President John F. Kennedy's assassination is a critical moment for the baby boomer generation, the terrorist attacks of September 11th are likely to be a defining moment for today's young adults. On the heels of September 11th and another momentous national event – the election controversy of 2000 – social scientists, political practitioners, and others who have long been concerned with the civic and political engagement of young adults could not help but wonder how recent events would affect the political attitudes and beliefs of young adults. The results of this survey provide some of the answers about the impact of current events, as well as highlight trends and issues in young adults' attitudes towards political and community engagement, and offer recommendations for candidates who want to engage young adults.

Overall, the terrorist attacks and the war appear to have influenced the way young adults *feel* – about the government, their communities, and – in theory – about their own civic and political involvement. Young adults are now more trusting of government and institutions like their older counterparts since 9/11. We also see important upsurges in reported interest in community and issue organization involvement. However, these tragic recent events have not yet impacted young adults' community or political *behavior*. Relative to two, four, and six years ago, levels of voter registration and volunteering are down, and young adults show no change in their likelihood to think of voting as important. Yet, with young adults evaluating their views of government and politics, there is hope that more positive feelings and political actors' and institutions' subsequent actions may cause further shifts in the future.

This data, like so many studies before, point to the significance of parents' political behaviors in shaping the attitudes and engagement level of young adults, the critical role played by feelings of efficacy, and the importance of demographic factors like education, age, partisanship and church attendance in influencing levels of political and volunteer activity.

As with the cohorts that have immediately preceded them, young adults today perceive distance between government, politics, politicians and themselves. The word "politics" conjures up – first – process-oriented words like "government," "laws," "voting," "elections," and "campaigns;" second, the word "politics" triggers mentions of key players like the "President," and "candidates and politicians;" third, "politics" reminds young adults of things like "corruption, lying, cheating, and lack of trust." At a time of overall record trust, only slim majorities think political institutions and actors address the needs and concerns of young adults. And, while nearly all young adults say they think their votes count as much as anyone else's, they also believe that candidates would rather talk to older and wealthier people than to them. While nearly all believe that candidates want their vote, fewer believe that candidates *ask* for their vote. This view of candidates and politicians comes perhaps from years of neglect. Young adults have the same concerns as older voters and want to be treated with respect.

As the Center for Democracy and Citizenship's 2000 Candidate Toolkit first suggested, young adults want candidates to ask them to vote, to treat them as important audiences worthy of addressing, and to discuss serious issues of concern to all adults. Like most voters, young adults say they are more influenced by candidates' substance than their style – candidates who stand up to powerful interests and do what is right, who have issue positions worth supporting, whose record and experience merit reward, and whose character is admirable. Indeed, throughout the survey, we found a serious

mindedness among young adults. There are opportunities for both parties here and though the Republican youth are more politically engaged, this cohort even at this time has equal numbers of Republicans (28 percent) and Democrats (30 percent).

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

Far more than other recent public events, young adults describe September 11th and the war on terrorism as having a significant positive impact on their attitudes about political participation and government. Clearly, September 11th has created unprecedented opportunities for engaging a new generation of activists and public servants who – even before the attacks in New York and Washington – have a strong sense that community involvement is an important core value.

While significant minorities of young adults express at least moderate interest in choosing a public service career, young adults do not appear to have become more engaged in their communities or to have changed their attitudes about the importance of voting. Thus, it remains to be seen whether those who seek to engage youth and youth themselves will realize long-term opportunities presented by 9/11 and the ensuing war, although this data suggests that in some trends we are headed in the right direction.

- **September 11th and the war fuel positive feelings towards political participation and government for significant majorities of young adults.** Seventy percent of young adults say the war on terrorism makes them at least somewhat more likely to participate in politics and voting, including a full third (34%) who say they are now *much* more likely to participate. Similarly, youth say the war has made them more favorable towards government (72% at least somewhat more favorable, including 33% much more favorable). Fewer than ten percent say the war has made them less likely to participate, and just 12% say they feel less favorable towards the government as a result of the war.

When asked specifically about the September 11th attacks, two-thirds of young adults (67%) say they are at least somewhat more likely to participate in politics and voting (29% much more likely to participate) because of the attacks, and an equal share (69%) say they feel more favorable towards government (30% much more favorable). Just sixteen percent say they feel less favorable towards government as a result of September 11th.

Other recent political events – the election controversy of 2000, the third party presidential candidacies of John McCain and Ralph Nader, Bill Clinton’s Presidency, protests over globalization – and the recession have either been more polarizing in their impact or have had very little impact at all.

- **As is true among adults in national polling data, young adults show remarkable levels of trust in government in the wake of the terrorist attacks.** Six in ten young adults (62%) say they trust the government to do what it right for the country, while just over a third (37%) say they have little or no trust in government. However, this trust has yet to result in increased attachment to or involvement in political and civic activities.

- **Sizable shares of young adults say September 11th has made them more likely to consider pursuing careers in community and issue-focused organizations.** More than half of all young adults (56%) say they would be at least somewhat likely to consider working for a community service organization, and just under half (49%) say they would be at least somewhat likely to work for an organization that focuses on a particular issue; a minority say they are extremely likely or very likely to consider these careers (30% and 25%, respectively). Interest in these occupations has increased in the wake of the terrorist attacks – a plurality of young adults (44%) say they are *more likely* to work for a community service organization as a result of 9/11, and a significant minority say they are *more likely* to work for an issue-focused organization (36%).
 - **However, fewer young adults are willing to serve actively in either the civilian or military service roles that have been more directly involved in fighting terrorism, though slightly more are interested in law enforcement and firefighting careers.** Young adults report a slight increase in their willingness to choose law enforcement or firefighting as careers (+9 net more likely to choose), but there is an overall decline in willingness to join the military (-3 net less likely to choose). In all, under half of young adults say they would be even somewhat likely to consider careers in law enforcement (43% at least somewhat likely, including 22% very/extremely likely) or the military (36% at least somewhat likely, including 20% very/extremely likely).
 - **The visibility of government leaders and politicians throughout the war has not resulted in youth desiring to run for office themselves.** Few young adults (24%) express even moderate interest in running for political office (just 12% say they are extremely or very likely to run for office), and the terrorist attacks had no impact for half of young adults and a dampening effect on that impulse for the rest (-11 net less likely to run). Similarly, careers in local or federal government are of moderate interest to just over four in ten young adults, and 9/11 had no impact on most young adults' desire to serve in government.

- **Despite their stated intention to participate more vigorously in politics and community life, young adults' civic and political involvement has not increased in recent months.** Voter registration and volunteerism rates are lower in this survey than in previous national surveys.
 - **Despite the fact that three-quarters of young adults continue to insist that neither registering to vote nor voting itself is difficult, claims of voter registration have declined slightly.** In this study, 66% of 18 to 24 year olds claim to be registered to vote. In 1998 and 2000, surveys conducted for the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and The White House Project Education Fund, respectively, both found that 70% of 18 to 24 year olds said they were registered voters. As in a 1996 study for the John and Teresa Heinz Family Foundation, very few young adults say registering (16%) or voting (15%) is difficult. Rather, young adults abstain from registering and voting for other reasons discussed throughout this report.
 - **Reported episodic community volunteerism is down.** Compared with an April 2000 survey conducted for The White House Project Education Fund, the percentage of young adults who volunteer at least once a month has stayed about

the same (27% now, 30% in 2000), but episodic volunteering – people who volunteer anywhere from “less often than once a year, but sometimes” to every two or three months – has declined by 7 points (31% now, 38% in 2000). The share who “never” volunteer is up 10 points (37% now, 27% in 2000), and now exceeds the share who volunteer at least once a month.

- **Reports of specific kinds of non-political community involvement – donating to a charity, volunteering with a community organization like a homeless shelter, joining a non-political club or organization – have become less common since the NASS study in 1998.**¹ Comparing the habits of today’s 18 to 24 year olds to those of November 1998, self-reported donations of money, clothes and food have dropped 14 points (72% now, 86% in 1998); reports of joining a club or organization that does not deal with politics or government have declined 11 points (46% now, 57% in 1998); volunteering with a homeless shelter or other community organization decreased by 10 points (40% now, 50% in 1998).

KEY FINDINGS ON VOTING AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY PARENTAL POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

As measured by self-reported voter registration rates, two-thirds of young adults are loosely involved in the political process. However, actual engagement levels are much lower. The impact parents have on their child’s political and civic attitudes and behaviors cannot be overstated. Parents who discuss politics with their children, take their children to vote, and make a habit of voting in all or nearly all elections raise children who volunteer, vote, feel they can make a difference in their communities, and see politicians and institutions as more open to being influenced by the public. Conversely, parents whose own political engagement levels are lower raise children who do less, care less, and feel less connected to institutions and leaders. Parental behavior also fosters higher political knowledge levels and greater political information gathering, which are also related to voting and volunteering.

- **Overall, young adults have ambivalent views of the political realm and their place in it.** On each of the core attitudinal variables that influence political behavior, young adults as a group have divided views:
 - On the importance of voting, 50% say voting is extremely or very important, while 49% say it is a little important or not at all important to them.
 - About a third each see voting as a choice (34%) or a right (31%). A fifth declare voting a responsibility (20%) and even fewer go further to say it is a duty (9%).
 - A bare majority (53%) say the government and elections address the needs and concerns of young adults, and a slightly smaller share (48%) say political leaders pay at least some attention to the concerns of young people like themselves. On the

¹ Other studies suggest this may also be due to some seasonal variation in participation and this study was conducted in the winter, while NASS was conducted in summer and fall.

one hand, these numbers may be higher than many expected. On the other hand, this reflects significant cynicism among young adults when overall cynicism has significantly declined.

- In terms of community-oriented efficacy, most young adults doubt the impact they can have – just 46% say they can make at least some difference in working to solve the problems they see in their community, while 52% say they can make just a little difference, almost no difference, or no difference at all.
- **The single most important factor associated with young adults’ sense of efficacy and views of politics and government is their parents. Whether or not parents discuss politics with their kids, take their kids with them to vote, and vote regularly is highly correlated with whether their kids engage in political life, even after controlling for all other demographics.**
- **Just half of all young adults (50%) say they discussed politics, government, or current events at least sometimes with their parents when they were growing up.** Moreover, slightly more young adults say they “never” discussed politics with their parents (19%), and some say they “often” discussed politics (15%). Among 18 to 24 year olds, the reported frequency of political discussions has declined since the NASS study in 1998 – at that time, 57% of young adults reported discussing politics with their parents at least sometimes, including 22% who said they “often” discussed politics, government, and current events with their parents.
- **Two-thirds of young adults (64%) report that their parents vote in every election or most elections.** Just 37% overall recall going with a parent to vote.
 - Compared to young adults overall, larger shares of college-educated and college-bound youth, full-time students, Republican and conservative youth, Democratic women, devout churchgoers, Born Again Christian youth, and Northeasterners report having parents who discussed politics or took them to vote.
- **Parents’ behavior affects the range of their children’s political views and behaviors. In multivariate models that control for demographic differences, among the three parental behaviors, discussing politics is the strongest predictor of a range of young adults’ attitudes and behaviors.**² Looking just at comparisons of young adults with parents who discussed politics and young adults who were raised with little or no political discussion on attitudinal and behavioral variables:
 - **Efficacy:** 56% of young adults whose parents discussed politics with them believe they can make a difference in solving community problems, compared to just 37% of young adults whose parents did not discuss politics.
 - **Politicians’ responsiveness to youth:** More than half of young adults (57%) who grew up with political discussion at home believe political leaders pay at least some attention to the concerns of young adults (+16 net pay attention), while those whose

² The demographics included as controls were party identification, age, education, gender, race and native status, region, demographic area (urban, suburban, rural), work status, student status, church attendance, and marriage and parental status.

parents didn't discuss politics at home have the opposite perspective (39% pay attention, -20 net do not pay attention).

- **Trust in government:** Seven in ten young adults (71%) who grew up with political discussion trust the government (+43 net trust), compared to just 53% of those who grew up without political discussions at home (+8 net trust).
 - **Importance of voting:** Twice as many young adults who grew up with political discussion in their households believe voting is important (68% of those who grew up with discussion, compared to 33% of those who did not grow up with discussion).
 - **Conception of voting:** A plurality of those who grew up with political discussion at home see voting as a right (38%) and a quarter see it as a responsibility (24%), while a plurality of those who grew up without political discussion see voting as a choice (43%).
 - **Volunteering:** 33% of young adults who grew up with political discussion at home volunteer at least once a month, compared to 22% of young adults who grew up without political discussion. Correspondingly, just 29% of those whose parents discussed politics say they never volunteer, compared to nearly half (46%) of young adults raised by non-discussing parents.
 - **Voter registration:** Three-quarters (75%) of young adults who grew up with political discussion at home are registered, compared to 57% of those who grew up without political discussion.
- **In order for parents' voting habits to have the greatest effect on their children's attitudes, parents must vote consistently in all or most elections.** In terms of beliefs about voting, personal efficacy, and trust in government, young adults whose parents voted only in important elections (14% of all young adults) resemble those whose parents voted rarely or never (17% of all young adults) more than they resemble kids whose parents voted in all or most elections (64% of all young adults).
 - **Parents who talk with their kids about politics, take their kids to vote, and vote in all or most elections also tend to raise kids with higher levels of political knowledge and more attentiveness to political news in the media.** Higher knowledge levels and more frequent news consumption are also correlated with higher levels of political engagement.

KEY FINDINGS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFICACY AND TRUST IN VOTING & YOUTH'S PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP TO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Trust in government and a sense of efficacy – that one's actions can make a difference – are two core beliefs that drive political engagement. Trust in government is at a modern high point among both young and old Americans since September 11th, and this presents an opportunity to increase political participation. However, while trust is up, feelings of efficacy in helping to solve problems have remained relatively unchanged; noticeably, in the same time period, voter registration and community

engagement rates have also declined slightly. The critical question for politicians and others interested in boosting youth participation is how to increase levels of efficacy among young adults who do not currently feel they can have an impact.

- **Recent events have resulted in relatively high levels of trust in government.** As mentioned elsewhere, 62% of young adults currently “trust government to do what is right,” and this is a factor in voting. A smaller proportion of young adults believe most people can be trusted (41%). While trust in people is not a statistical predictor in attitudes about voting, it is related to the general mindset of youth and their willingness to engage with others.
- **Despite an increase in faith in the government among all adults and youth, young adults continue to be divided about the impact they can have in solving community problems.** As noted elsewhere in this report, fewer than half of young adults (46%) say they believe they can make at least some difference in working to solve problems in their community; just 11% say definitively that they can make a great deal of difference. A third (31%) feel they can make a little difference, and 21% say they can make almost no difference, or no difference at all.
- **Efficacy and engagement are mutually reinforcing – young adults who have already been mobilized into politics and community life have higher levels of efficacy, and those with higher levels of efficacy show greater levels of involvement in civic and political life.** Registered voters, people who see voting as important, people who trust government, and people who volunteer generally believe they can make a difference in their community, while people who have not been involved in community and political life do not tend to express feelings of efficacy. Additionally, young adults who pay attention to political news have relatively high levels of efficacy.
- **Life experience, educational experience, and a sense of group identification bolster feelings of efficacy.** Relative to their peers, older, more educated, more partisan, and more religious young adults feel efficacious, as do young adults whose parents taught them and demonstrated political engagement.
 - Relatively few 15 to 17 year olds have feelings of efficacy – just 41% feel they can make a difference (-17 net make no difference) – and these figures are even lower for high school students who do not expect to attend college (35% can make a difference, -27 net make no difference). Comparatively, 55% of 18 to 25 year olds in college or with some college education (+12 net make a difference) and 62% of college graduates (+25 net make a difference) have high levels of efficacy. Regression models show age, student status, and church attendance have significant and strong effects on feelings of efficacy.
 - **Young adults of color feel less efficacious than whites.** While white youth are split almost evenly in their views on whether they can make a difference in their community (-3 net not make difference), African Americans (-16 net not make difference) and Hispanics (-19 net not make difference) are more pessimistic; men of color are particularly skeptical of the difference they can make. Since 2000,

whites have become more efficacious, while feelings of efficacy among African Americans have declined.³

- **Just as they are divided on the impact they can have in solving community problems, young adults are ambivalent about the real impact they can have on politics.** Half (50%) agree it would be difficult for someone like them to have a real impact in politics and government, while 45% disagree. Intense opinions on this question are polarized – 19% strongly agree that it would be difficult to have an impact on politics, while 17% strongly disagree.
- **Young adults’ ambivalence about the impact they can have may be fueled, in part, by uncertainty about the goals and responsiveness of candidates, politics, and government.** Young adults have particularly mixed feelings about whether and how well these institutions and actors address young people’s needs and concerns, and about how important young voters are to candidates, relative to other audiences candidates have to court.
- **Overall, young adults see politics and elections more as the business of elites, than as avenues for democratic participation.** More young adults strongly agree that politics and elections are about politicians competing to get elected (49%) and about debating laws and issues (41%) than strongly agree that politics and elections are the way that average people get their say in government (32%) or a democratic community’s efforts to solve its problems (30%). Young adults with high levels of efficacy see these two types of goals as having a more equal place in politics and elections, while those with low levels of efficacy believe politics and elections are dominated by politicians competing with one another to get elected.
- **Young adults believe their votes count, but that they may not be a priority audience for candidates.** Young adults say they believe their votes count as much as anyone else’s (85% agree, including 53% strongly agree), but also believe candidates would rather talk to older and wealthier people than to younger people (71% agree, including 42% strongly agree). Additionally, two-thirds of young adults believe that candidates ask for their vote (68% agree, including 28% strongly agree), but are unsure whether candidates take young voters seriously (47% agree, 50% disagree). Young adults with high levels of efficacy are more positive about politicians’ motives and the role of young adults in politics.
- **Young adults do not see themselves and their generation as particularly significant in the political process, and they feel that candidates do not always reach out to their communities.** Young adults split on whether they see people like them voting by a three-point margin (44% agree that they do not see young people voting, 47% disagree), but agree by a six-point margin that candidates never come to their community (50% agree, 44% disagree). Younger and less educated voters are more likely than their older and more educated peers to think people like them do not vote and to think that candidates ignore their communities. In contrast, among young adults with high levels of efficacy, just a third

³ 49% of whites believe they can make a great deal or some difference, compared to 43% in 2000. However, only 42 percent of African Americans believe they can make at least some difference, while 53% believed they could in 2000 (note, small sample size among African Americans in the 2000 data).

agree that they don't see people like themselves voting (34% agree) and that politicians don't come to their community (37% agree).

KEY FINDINGS ON VOLUNTEERISM

This is a generation that believes in the importance of community volunteer involvement, but is volunteering at slightly lower rates than the cohort of 18 to 24 year olds of a few years ago. Most volunteer because they were asked by a person or by a religious institution, because it provides personal gratification, or because they believe it makes a difference. Volunteer activities of choice include working with local community-based organizations and making donations of clothing, food, or money. Volunteer involvement in political activities is much lower than in activities that provide direct service or focus on the community more broadly. As has been seen in other studies, young adults see community activism and political activism as two separate items. Cluster analysis reveals that, while 30% of young adults can be classified as engaged in both politics and community life, another quarter (24%) only tend to volunteer; the rest (46%) are largely disengaged from both facets of public life.

- **Across the board, young adults see local community involvement as the most important focus for volunteer activities.** Twice as many young adults see volunteering in local community activities as important as see participation in a national organization as important (49% versus 23%). Four times as many see volunteering in the local community as important than see getting involved in politics and government as important (12%). Even majorities of those who say voting is personally important to them and who are registered to vote say local community volunteer activities are the most important kind of activity in which a citizen can engage.
- **Donations to community or church organizations and involvement with a community group or club top the list of volunteer activities in which young adults have participated in the last couple of years. As is true for older adults, activities that do not involve politics are more popular than activities that do.** 72% of young adults say they have donated money, clothes, or food to a community or church organization in the past couple of years. This is the only activity that more than half of young adults have done, but – among 18 to 24 year olds – donations have dropped since 1998, when 86% of young adults said they had donated. Second tier activities of choice are: joining a club or organization that does not deal with government or politics (47%, down among 18 to 24 year olds by 11 points since 1998), and volunteering for a homeless shelter or other community organization (38%, down among 18 to 24 year olds by 10 points since 1998).
 - **Like their older adult peers, a minority of young adults participate in politically-oriented volunteer activities.** Fewer than a fifth have participated in an online discussion or visited a politically oriented website (18% overall, 29% among full-time students, who are more likely to have reliable Internet access). About a tenth have participated in a political march or demonstration (12%), volunteered in a political campaign (13%), joined a political club (13%), or worked for a political party (8%); these numbers are statistically unchanged from 1998, although club membership is up slightly among 18 to 24 year olds (14% now, 9% in 1998).

- **About a fifth of young adults have held or sought leadership positions. Full-time students are more likely to explore leadership opportunities than non-students.** 22% of all young adults, including 36% of full-time students, have held leadership positions in groups, clubs, or organizations *other than* student government; part-time students are actually less likely than young adults overall to have held a leadership position (16%). Similarly, 20% of all young adults and 33% of all full-time students have *run for* an *elected* leadership position, including student government. Projecting to their future, however, only 12% of all young adults (23% of full-time students) say they are very likely to run for political office.
- **College-educated women are dramatically more engaged in community leadership than their male counterparts and may represent a cohort of community leaders.** For example, 73% of college women say they have joined an organization that is not political and 53% say they have volunteered in the community compared to 47% and 35% respectively among college men. Unfortunately, we do not see a number surge in terms of joining political organizations, running for office, or engaging in political activity.
- **Looking to the future, young adults are most likely to see themselves engaging in the same kinds of activities in which they already tend to participate.** Nearly all say it is at least somewhat likely that they will donate money, clothes, or food to a community or church organization in the next few years (85%, including 24% extremely likely, 34% very likely); half say they are at least somewhat likely to join a non-political club or organization (55%, including 9% extremely and 20% very likely); and six out of ten say they are likely to volunteer for a homeless shelter or other community group (59%, including 11% extremely likely and 21% very likely).
 - **Noticeably, strong pluralities to majorities of young adults are certain that they will not engage in political activism.** A majority (57%) say they are not at all likely to run for an elected leadership position (32% in 1998); 53% say they are not at all likely to work for a political party; 50% say they are not at all likely to join a political club or organization; 46% say they are not at all likely to volunteer in a political campaign; 44% say they are not at all likely to participate in a political march or demonstration.
- **Just under half of all young adults (47%) and 48% of 18 to 24 year olds volunteer in their communities at least once a year.** This is lower than the 54% of 18 to 24 year olds who said they volunteered at least once a year in a survey conducted in 2000.
 - **Currently, just over a quarter of young adults claim to volunteer with a local community group or organization at least once a month (27%).** 11% volunteer at least once a week. These dedicated volunteers tend to be current high school and college students, students who are in school full-time and do not work, college-educated or college-bound women, first generation Americans, devout churchgoers, Born Again Christian youth, and young adults who identify as either weak or strong Republicans or strong Democrats.
 - **Another fifth of young adults (20%) volunteer every couple of months or at least once a year.** An additional 10% do not volunteer once a year, but do

volunteer from time to time. These tend to be 18 to 20 year olds, women in their early 20s, part-time students and young adults who work two jobs.

- **A plurality of young adults (38%) say they *never* participate in volunteer activities with a community group or organization.** Those who never volunteer tend to be men (particularly high school age men, and 21 to 25 year olds), Hispanic and white men, high school students who are not bound for college, 18 to 25 year olds who did not attend college, and young adults who do not attend religious services.
- **Parental socialization affects both *whether* young adults volunteer, and how *often*.** Majorities of young adults whose parents discussed politics (57%) and took them to vote (60%) volunteer at least once a year, including a third of each group (33% and 35%, respectively) who volunteer at least once a month. Just 25%-29% of young adults with engaged parents (whether measured by taking their children to vote or talking with their children about politics) never volunteer. Conversely, nearly half of those whose parents did not engage them in politics (46%) never volunteer.
 - **Only a bare majority of today's young parents are showing their children that volunteering is important.** 51% of young adults with children volunteer at least sometimes. Episodic monthly volunteering is popular with this group – 30% volunteer every month – 10% volunteer every week. This may reflect the relatively young age and low socio-economic status of these young parents, but still gives further evidence of a shift in trends from previous generations where young parents were heavily involved in regular volunteer activities.
- **Contrary to the conventional wisdom that young adults volunteer for selfish reasons or because they are required to by their school, most young adults (30%) say they volunteer because they were asked – by a church (17%) or a person (13%) – because it makes them feel good (24%), or because it makes a difference (21%).** Just 8% volunteer as a resume-builder (including 11% of full-time students) and just 6% volunteer as part of a school requirement (including just 9% of full-time students). Additionally, parental volunteer activity is only responsible for motivating 4% of young adults to volunteer.
 - **Subgroups of young adults who volunteer at higher than average rates tend to be motivated by different factors.** Younger teen volunteers (24%), especially non-college-bound teens (30%), tend to be driven most by their *churches* asking them to volunteer, while 18 to 25 year old high school graduates and those with some college tend to be driven about equally by personal gratification and the desire to make a difference (23%-27% for each response). College graduates are motivated disproportionately by personal gratification (33%). Devout churchgoers and Born Again Christian youth volunteer mainly because their church asked them (27% and 23%, respectively).

KEY FINDINGS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT

Young adults who are attached to institutions that provide political, civic, and ideological cues participate more than their peers in community activities, and have distinctly more positive attitudes about voting and political participation. In particular, young adults who attend church on a weekly basis, Republican young adults, and conservative young adults are notable for their civic and political engagement. Additionally, Republican youth are motivated by the presidency of George W. Bush and the aftermath of the Florida controversy. This is one of the only periods in recent times where supporters of the in-party are more mobilized than supporters of the out-party. However, given the unique circumstances of war, terrorism, and President Bush's popularity, this may not be surprising. Church-going and Republican youth have more politically engaged parents, that is, parents who tended to vote more in all or nearly all elections, were more likely than other parents to discuss politics with their children, and were more likely to take their children with them to vote.

- **Young adults who identify with one of the two major party labels have more positive and well-defined views about politics than independents who seem to be more disengaged than ideologically middle-of-the-road.**
 - **Young adults who associate themselves with a partisan or ideological label on either the Left or the Right are more likely than others to be registered voters.** Registration rates among Democrats and Republicans (78% and 76%, respectively) are significantly higher than among Independents (58%). There is a similar, though less strong, relationship among ideologues – liberals and conservatives (72% and 74%, respectively) tend to be registered to vote in higher shares than moderates (63%). Conservative ideologues have many of the same attributes as Republicans.
 - **Volunteerism is more common among Republicans than among Democrats, but in both parties, strong partisans are dedicated volunteers.** A third of all Republicans volunteer at least once a month, and 29% of Democrats. Relative to their partisan peers, independents volunteer in lower proportions (25% volunteer at least once a month). Strong partisans in both the Democratic and Republican party have higher *weekly* volunteerism rates than their weak partisan peers – 21% of strong Democrats and 15% of strong Republicans volunteer once a week or more.
- **Republican and conservative youth attach more value to voting.** Nearly two-thirds of Republicans (64%) say it is important to them to vote, including a sizable share (29%) who say voting is extremely important (+29 net important). Strong Republicans are even more steadfast in this ethic – 74% say voting is important, including 37% who say it is very important (+50 net important).
- **Republicans and conservatives express a greater sense of efficacy than Democrats.** Republicans overall believe they can make a difference in helping to solve problems they see by an 8-point margin (+13 among strong Republicans). Democrats express slightly lower levels of efficacy, but strong Democrats feel more efficaciously than Democrats overall (+5 net can make a difference among all Democrats, +9 among strong Democrats). Similarly, more conservatives than liberals express efficacy (+10 net make a difference versus +2 net

make a difference), but both defined ideological groups have greater feelings of efficacy than moderates (-9 net not make a difference).

- **The government in power likely affects this generation's feelings about government. Young Republicans and conservatives are currently mobilized by George W. Bush's Presidency, and trust the government to do what's right. They also believe the system is addressing the needs and concerns of young people.** Seven in ten Republicans and conservatives (70%-73%) trust the government to do what's right for the country (+47 and +41 net trust, respectively). 63% of Republicans and 59 percent of conservatives say the Bush Presidency makes them more likely to participate in government and politics (including a quarter of each group who say they are much more likely to participate). Additionally, 69% of Republicans and 66% of conservatives say Bush makes them feel more favorable towards government (including a third of each group who say they are much more likely to participate). Both of these groups also agree by large margins that government and politics do a good job addressing young people's needs (Republicans: +31, conservatives: +29 net agree). Democrats and liberals have more mixed views (Democrats: +10, liberals: +4 net agree). As we have seen, Democrats and liberals also have lower levels of political engagement though controlling for factors like religion and parental involvement removes the separate effects of party and ideology.
- **Political discussion habits in Republican and Democratic families were more equal than were voting experiences with parents. Parents of Republicans and conservatives are among the most regular voters and make a uniquely strong effort to involve their kids in politics.** Most Republicans (60%) and a majority of Democrats (54%) grew up with parents who discussed politics with them, while only a minority of independents (45%) grew up with political discussion at home. Once again, similar patterns exist among ideological groups – 59% of conservatives had political discussions with their parents as did 55% of liberals; discussion among moderates was slightly less common (48%). While nearly half of all parents of Republicans and conservatives voted in every election and took their children to the polls with them, parents of Democrats and liberals voting behavior was closer to the behavior of the parents of youth overall (27% of Democrats and 29 % of liberals say their parents voted in every election; 38% of Democrats and 40% of liberals say their parents took them to vote). Voting behavior and propensity to take kids to the polls was below average among the parents of independents and moderates (24% of independents and 27% of moderates say their parents voted in every election; 33% of independents and 36% of moderates say their parents took them to vote).
- **Young adults who attend church at least once a week (30% of all young adults) see community engagement as a core value.** Nearly half (48%) volunteer at least once a month, including nearly a quarter (23%) who volunteer at least once a week. Both regular churchgoers and Born Agains are more likely to believe they can make a difference in solving problems in their community (55% can make at least some difference, +11 net difference among churchgoers; 50% can make at least some difference, +2 net difference among Born Agains).
- **Young churchgoers also see political participation as meaningful.** Nearly two-thirds of devout young adults (64%) say voting is extremely or very important (+30 net important), compared to 54% of occasional churchgoers (+8 net important), and 37% of non-churchgoers (-23 net not important). Similarly, 62% of Born Again youth see voting as important (+26 net important).

- **Young churchgoers have a more positive view of government and the political system's performance in addressing the concerns of young people.** Seventy percent of devout and occasional churchgoers and Born Again youth trust government to do what is right for the country (+45 among devout churchgoers, +43 among Born Agains, and +41 among occasional churchgoers net trust government); there is a .29 correlation between church-going and trust in government. Far more than their peers, these young adults agree that elections and government address the needs and concerns of young people (+30 among Born Agains, +24 among devout churchgoers, and +22 among occasional churchgoers net agree, +8 among all youth).
- **Devout churchgoers and Born Again young adults appear to have been exposed to greater civic and political engagement from their parents than young adults overall.** A full 50% of devout churchgoers went with their parents to vote, as did 44% of Born Again youth. Majorities discussed politics with their parents (56% of devout churchgoers, 55% of occasional churchgoers, and 55% of Born Again youth). More than a third (37%) of both devout churchgoers and Born Again youth say their parents voted in every election, compared to 29% of young adults overall.

KEY FINDINGS ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANDIDATES: WHAT ARE YOUTH LOOKING FOR?

While parents, current events, and a young person's environment can dramatically affect young adults' political and civic attitudes and behaviors, candidates and political leaders also play a critical role in mobilizing young adults to vote. As the Center for Democracy and Citizenship learned in putting together its Candidate Toolkit in 2000, young adults want to interact and be treated seriously by candidates. This study has quantified young adults' candidate preferences and suggests tremendous opportunities for candidates who impress youth with substance over style, and who make an effort to talk directly to young adults about issues affecting all Americans.

- **Young adults are unsure whether political institutions and actors – government, politics and elections, candidates – pay attention to youth and address their concerns.** Young adults agree by only a slim 8-point margin that politics and elections and government address their concerns (53% agree, 44% disagree). They are even more ambivalent about how much attention political leaders give to issues that concern young people (-2 net little/no attention).

Young adults who do not feel political institutions and leaders address their concerns are far less likely to be registered to vote (56% are registered), think voting is important (-21 net not important), or trust government (-17 net distrust). They are also more likely to be disengaged from their community – 46% never volunteer.

- **Like most older voters, young adults say a candidate's issue stands are the most important factor in their voting decisions.** Given a list of candidate attributes to consider, two-thirds (65%) say issue stands are the first or second most important consideration in choosing a candidate (44% say it is the most important consideration). Record and experience follow second (18% most important, 40% first or second most important), and the character of the candidate ranks close behind (16% most important,

36% first or second most important). Personality is seen as the most important factor by just 11% of young adults.

Party affiliation is an issue for just a small share of young adults, including even those who self-identify as strong partisans (15% overall name party as one of the top two considerations; 30% of strong Democrats and 28% of strong Republicans name party as one of their top two considerations). Strong partisans from both parties prioritize issue positions, record and experience, and character above party affiliation; and weak partisans and independents are more concerned with each of the other four factors, including the candidate's personality, than with the candidate's party affiliation.

- **As young adults said in focus groups in 2000 in preparation for compiling the Center for Democracy and Citizenship's Candidate Toolkit, young adults want candidates who show strength in their convictions, seek out opportunities to address young people, try to relate their own experiences to those young adults have, and have a demonstrated commitment to the community and a demonstrated record in politics.** Young adults feel warmest towards a candidate who can "face powerful interests and stand up for what he believes is right," (mean score of 83 on a 1-100 scale, with 32% rating "100"). In a second cluster of desirable candidate traits are: "a candidate who calls for a debate at a local high school or college to take issues to the students and to young people," (mean: 79, 23% rate 100); "a candidate who speaks to issues of particular concern to young people, like affordable college," (mean: 78, 21% rate 100); "a candidate who is experienced in politics and can get things done," (mean: 78, 19% rate 100); "a candidate who says he understands first hand the importance of affordable college education because he needed grants and loans to go to college himself," (mean: 75, 21% rate 100); and "a candidate who has been active volunteering in his community," (mean: 75, 18% rate 100).
- **Bipartisanship, hiring young people as senior campaign staff, and providing information on issue positions comprise a second tier of traits that make young adults favorable to candidates overall, but do not generate intensely positive opinions.** Young adults give mean scores of between 69 and 73 to the following types of candidates, but only between 14% and 17% rate these candidate traits as a "100:" "a candidate who has worked with people from the opposing party to reach consensus on issues," (mean: 73, 17% rate 100); "a candidate who regularly publishes a report to voters on how he has voted on the issues," (mean: 72, 15% rate 100); "a candidate who has young people holding some major positions in his campaign," (mean 72, 14% rate 100); "a candidate who has a website with detailed information about his positions on issues," (mean: 70, 17% rate 100); "a candidate who admits he does not have all the answers," (mean: 70, 15% rate as 100); and "a candidate who has a written plan on the major issues facing the voters," (mean: 69, 14% rate 100).
- **Relative to other traits, candidates who accept voter feedback over the Internet, "outsider" candidates, candidates with views on issues that are counter to those of the voter, and a candidate's appearance are less important and appealing to young adults. However, young adults still feel far more favorable than unfavorable to these candidate traits and – in a real campaign setting – these traits may convey something about the character of the candidate that appeals to young adults.** Young adults are less impressed with the following kinds of candidates: "a candidate who has a website which invites you to tell the candidate what you think about the issues," (mean: 67, 14% rate 100, 46% rate 76-100); "a candidate whose positions you may not always agree with but who

explains the reasons for his positions,” (mean: 65, 9% rate 100, 41% rate 76-100); “a candidate who dresses informally or casually,” (mean: 60, 8% rate 100, 33% rate 76-100). Noticeably, the outsider profiles of “a candidate who is relatively new to politics and brings a fresh perspective” (mean: 68, 11% rate 100, 46% rate 76-100) and “a candidate who has been successful in business or a profession,” (mean: 65, 8% rate 100, 40% rate 76-100) are far less appealing than the profile of a candidate who is politically experienced and effective.

- **Political leaders should note that young adults’ top concerns mirror those of Americans overall. This means they need to talk to young adults as they would any other audience – pointing out how the issue is relevant to the particular constituency they are addressing and suggesting how they might address the issue once in office.** Jobs and the economy (17%), terrorism and national security (14%) and crime and violence (12%) comprise the top tier of young adults’ diffuse issue concerns. The cost of college is far lower on the priority list – just 6% of young adults, including 6% of college-bound high school students and 8% of those with some college education. Jobs and the economy are particularly salient concerns to 20-somethings, working young adults, Hispanics (tied with crime and drugs), married couples, young parents, and registered voters.
- **In the current environment, Republican candidates can benefit from heightened mobilization among Republican and conservative youth, as well as the institutional structure offered by religious institutions to reach and engage young adults.** Republican candidates have the opportunity to build upon the enthusiasm George W. Bush’s Presidency has generated among a cohort whose formative years were spent under a controversial Democratic president.
- **Democratic candidates need to beware of the current optimistic and engaged mood of Republican youth, reach out aggressively to mobilize young Democrats, and work to engage young independents.** Democrats have a great deal of work to do to get their young partisans as engaged as youth were during the early part of the Clinton administration and reverse the negative feelings independent youth have about government as a result of the Clinton administration. They also need to overcome the negative feelings generated by the Florida election controversy among Democrats and independents. Democrats must make particular efforts to re-engage liberal youth.

KEY FINDINGS ABOUT PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS TO ENGAGEMENT

As this and other studies demonstrate, young adults with higher knowledge levels, more education, more attachment to institutions, and more extensive parental socialization tend to be more engaged in their communities and in politics. More extensive civic education and community involvement may provide all youth – not just those that come from particular backgrounds – with a strong foundation for future community and political involvement. Young adults in this survey say they would be open to new opportunities to do community service, particularly when they receive something tangible in return; they are most resistant to new initiatives that would require mandatory participation. There are significant differences in attitudes about these new measures by subgroups, depending upon whether the particular subgroup would be directly affected by the new program or requirement. In general, young adults who are already engaged like these proposals more than those who are not engaged.

- **Young adults are most enthusiastic about an expanded Americorps-type program – where every young person would be offered a chance to do a full year of national or community service to earn money towards college or advanced training.** Eight in ten young adults (81%) say they favor this proposal, including nearly half (46%) who strongly favor it (+64 net favor). This proposal is most popular among working students (+72 net favor), college-bound 15-17 year olds (+71), young adults with two jobs (+69), and African American youth (+81). It is popular with all Democrats (+72) as well as with strong Republicans (+81), but it is not as engaging to independents (+59).
- **Youth are more divided over a proposal that would require service in exchange for government student aid, and less positive toward a proposal that would require all high school students to do community service.** Young adults favor service in return for federal financial aid by just a 10-point margin (53% favor), but strong opposition is greater than strong support (27% strongly oppose, 21% strongly favor). Youth are negative overall towards the idea of requiring community service in order to graduate from high school (-12 net oppose); 55% oppose this measure, including 36% who strongly oppose it. This is particularly true among 15 to 17 year olds (-35 net oppose).
- **Given young adults’ opposition to a community service requirement in high school, it is surprising that survey respondents expressed support for “instituting a new draft that gives people the choice between civilian or military service.”** The concept of the draft may not be completely clear to this cohort. 61% say they would favor a draft alternative, including 30% who strongly favor this proposal (+31 net favor).⁴
- **Instituting civics and government course requirements in schools wins high marks overall, but is more popular among those who would not be affected by new course requirements.** Two-thirds (66%) favor requiring civics and government classes in high school, including a third (35%) who strongly favor this proposal (+35 net favor). Similarly, 64% favor requiring civics and government classes in middle school, including 30% who strongly favor this requirement (+31 net favor). Noticeably, however, support for these proposals is lower among those who would be currently or most recently affected by these new requirements – for example, 15 to 17 year olds only favor the high school requirement by a 15-point margin and the middle school requirement by a 7-point margin.

⁴ Given the disparity in responses between this question and the proposal for mandatory community service in high school, it is possible that young adults interpreted this proposal as giving people who get drafted for war an alternative to military service; given the current political environment this interpretation might make sense.

**Snapshot of Politically-Oriented, Volunteer-Oriented, and Disengaged Youth
(Cluster analysis results)**

	Political/Volunteer Youth (30% of all)	Volunteer, Not Political Youth (24% of all)	Disengaged (46%)
Volunteerism			
% volunteer at least weekly	13%	30%	1%
% volunteer at least monthly	34%	64%	4%
% volunteer at least annually	61%	90%	16%
% never volunteer	22%	3%	66%
Voter registration			
% registered	98%	46%	47%
Parental Engagement			
% went to vote with parents	56%	43%	21%
% discussed politics with parents	87%	51%	25%
% parents vote in every election	41%	33%	20%
Core Attitudes			
%/(net) can make a difference solving problems	62% (+25)	57% (+15)	31% (-37)
%/(net) say voting is important	81% (+63)	59% (+19)	25% (-48)
% trust other people	47%	47%	33%
%/(net) trust government	75% (+50)	74% (+48)	48% (-2)
% strongly agree elections are a way for people to have a voice	50%	42%	23%
% strongly agree elections are about politicians competing to get elected	48%	49%	56%
%/(net) say political leaders pay a lot/some attn. to youth	64% (+30)	55% (+11)	34% (-31)
% strongly agree my vote counts as much as anyone else's	71%	56%	40%
% strongly agree candidates want my vote	56%	50%	32%
Demographics			
% women	47%	59%	45%
18-25: % some college +	63%	51%	41%
15-17: % expect some college +	67%	65%	55%
% ID as partisan (Dem or GOP)	77%	57%	45%
% ID as Dem	38%	28%	25%
% ID as GOP	39%	29%	20%
% ID as independent	18%	29%	32%
% Liberal	39%	27%	31%
% Conservative	32%	28%	15%
% student full-time	33%	35%	17%
% weekly churchgoer	34%	44%	20%

THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

Observers of the American political scene have often suggested that perhaps today's young adults are less interested in politics because there has not been a critical moment to engage them. Some questioned whether the sad circumstances of September 11th and the war that has followed would be the catalyst that youth needed to become more involved.

Far more than other recent public events, young adults describe September 11th and the war on terrorism as having a significant positive effect on their attitudes about political participation and government. A sizable share also say the tragic attacks have increased their interest in pursuing community-oriented jobs. Clearly, September 11th has created unprecedented opportunities for engaging a new generation of activists and public servants who – even before the attacks in New York and Washington – have a strong sense that community involvement is an important core value.

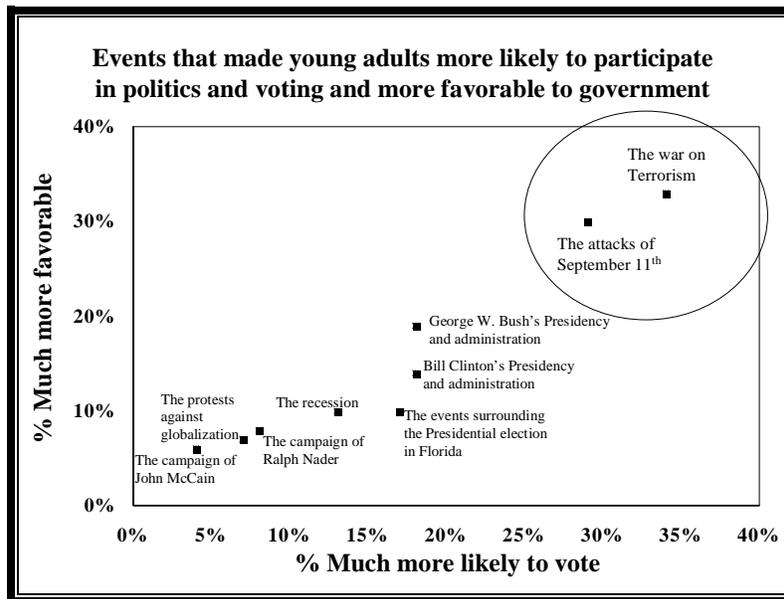
For the moment, however, young adults do not appear to have become more engaged in their communities nor to have changed their attitude about the importance of voting. Thus, it remains to be seen whether those who seek to engage youth – and young adults themselves – will realize the long-term opportunities presented by 9/11 and the war on terrorism.

The Impact of Recent Events

The last two years have presented several moments in politics and public life that could have captured young adults' imagination and attention, affecting both their level of engagement in politics and their feelings about government. The 1990's ended and the new millennium began with Presidential scandal, a contentious presidential election with two major Third party candidates, a historic controversy over election results, an economic downturn, and – finally – terrorist attacks and the first war this generation has seen.

The war and the terrorist attacks had a much larger and more intense impact than any other event, affecting two-thirds of young adults. Given that other events are further in the past and had smaller impacts, the war and the attacks are likely to be the two most significant socializing forces for this generation in the short-term, if not in the long-term. Other events had a positive impact on half or fewer, and one event – the Florida election controversy – actually caused a decline in feelings towards government. Additionally, patterns of interest across subgroups reveal that those who are disproportionately motivated and mobilized by current events tend to be young adults who are already more interested than their peers in government and politics.

- **Not surprisingly, the war on terrorism and the attacks that provoked it have had the most significant impact on young adults' attitudes.** Seventy percent of young adults say the war on terrorism makes them at least somewhat more likely to participate in politics and voting, including a full third (34%) who say they are now *much* more likely to participate (+62 net more likely). Similar shares say the war has made them more favorable towards government (72% at least somewhat more favorable, including 33% much more favorable). Fewer than ten percent say the war has made them less likely to participate, and just 12% say they feel less favorable towards the government as a result of the war (+60 net more favorable).



Asked specifically about the September 11th attacks, two-thirds of young adults (67%) say they are at least somewhat more likely to participate in politics and voting (29% much more likely to participate) because of the attacks (+58 net more likely). An equally large share (69%) say they feel more favorable towards government (30% much more favorable, +53 net more favorable). Just 6% percent say they feel less favorable towards government as a result of September 11th.

Across all subgroups, the war and the terrorist attacks have had a greater positive impact than any other event on attitudes towards government and intentions of greater political participation. The war has particularly affected the attitudes of high school age youth (+71 net more likely to participate, +66 net more favorable). It has intensified engagement among those already likely to care more than their peers about politics, including Republicans, and registered voters; but it has had an average impact on those whose engagement is more marginal, like independents, and those who are disengaged.

	More likely to participate (net)	More fav to gov't (net)
Republicans	+71	+68
Conservatives	+67	+66
Registered voters	+69	+67
See voting as impt	+74	+69
Democrats	+65	+57
Independents	+62	+65
Non-registered	+42	+42
See voting as unimpt	+52	+51

The war has had an equal impact on the attitudes of the politically-oriented and volunteer oriented youth groups identified through cluster analysis (see Snapshot of Youth at front of report for more on these groups) – they are more likely to participate by 70-72 point margins and more favorable towards government by 65-67 point margins. The war has not had as great an impact on the disengaged youth cluster (+53 net more likely to participate, +54 net more favorable to government).

- **George W. Bush's Presidency is the next most significant motivator for half of all young adults.** Overall, 50% of young adults say George W. Bush's Presidency and administration make them more likely to participate in politics, including just under a fifth (18%) who say Bush's Presidency makes them much more likely to participate (+30 net more likely). Nearly equal shares say Bush's Presidency makes them feel more favorable towards government (49% more favorable, including 19% much more favorable, +24 net more favorable).

However, not all youth are equally mobilized and engaged by Bush – Republicans, not surprisingly, are most mobilized (+50 net more likely to participate, +56 net more favorable toward government), while Bush has less impact on Democrats (+26 net more likely to participate, +5 net more favorable toward government) and independents (+24 net more likely to participate, +25 net more favorable toward government).

Similarly, Bush has more impact on young adults who already see voting as important (+45 net more likely to vote) and are registered to vote (+38 net more likely to vote) and less impact on disengaged youth. Just small margins of non-registered young adults and those who do not see voting as important say Bush's Presidency makes them more likely to participate in politics and voting (+6 and +17, respectively) or more favorable towards government (+3 and +11, respectively).

- **The recession is a mobilizing force for some of the most and least engaged groups of young adults.** Overall, 43% of young adults say they are more likely to vote because of the recession (43% more likely); however, feelings are not particularly intense (13% much more likely) and a full third (33%) say the recession will have no impact on their voting behavior. Noticeably, there are certain groups who are more mobilized by the recession than by any event other than September 11th and the war: working young adults (+33 net more likely to vote), Democrats (+37), independents (+31), African Americans (+35), and registered voters (+42).
- **Bill Clinton's Presidency and the Florida election controversy had some impact on young adults' intentions to vote, but did nothing to improve their attitudes towards government. In fact, Florida made a majority of young adults (51%) feel *less* favorable towards government.** Overall, Clinton's Presidency makes young adults more likely to vote by a 21-point margin (45% more likely, 24% less likely), but causes ambivalence about government (+4 net more favorable, 39% more favorable, 35% less favorable). Young adults who tend to volunteer, but not vote feel less favorable to government by a 4-point margin because of the Clinton Presidency.

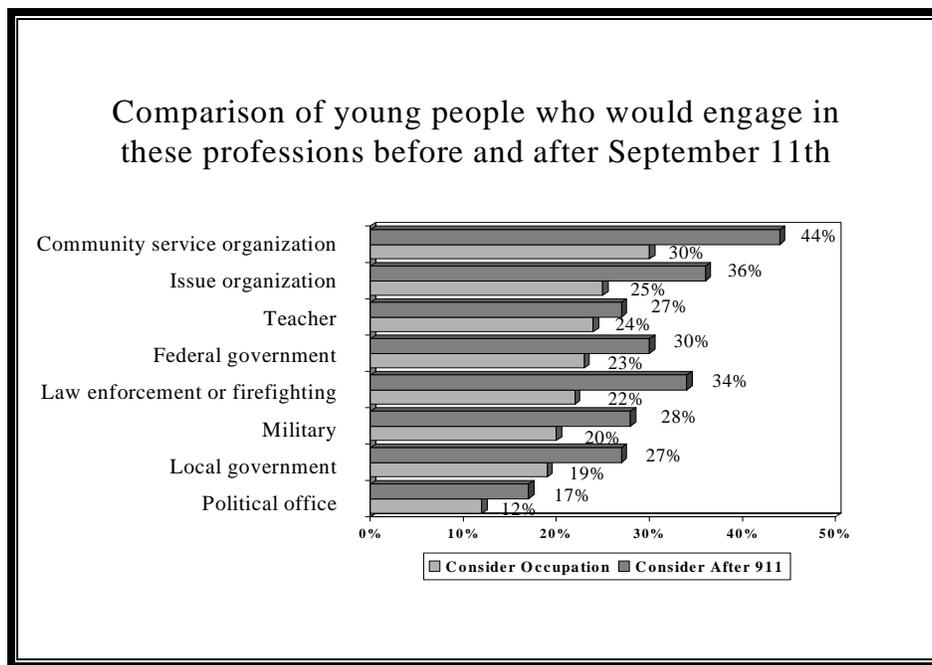
The Florida election controversy is more polarizing – 41% say they are more likely to vote, 31% say they are less likely to vote – and Florida has made young adults less favorable towards government by a 26-point margin. Florida's primary mobilizing impact is on partisans, especially Republican youth. Republicans are more likely to vote by an 18-point margin (18% much more likely to vote) and Democrats are more likely to vote by a 19-point margin (23% much more likely to vote); independents are more likely to vote by just a 7-point margin because of Florida. Noticeably, Florida makes Republicans *more* favorable toward government by a narrow 4-point margin, but makes Democrats (-43 net less favorable) and independents (-37 net less favorable).

- **Events that some thought would engage young adults – Third party presidential candidacies, youth-driven protests – had little impact.** The campaigns of John McCain and Ralph Nader did little to increase interest in voting (+7 and +10 net more likely, 45% and 46% “no difference,” respectively) or favorability toward government (+3 and +8 net more favorable,

40% and 39% “no difference,” respectively). Similarly, protests against globalization had a small marginal impact on vote likelihood (+9 net more likely, 39% “no difference”) and feelings toward government (+8 net more favorable, 35% “no difference”). Republicans were more engaged by the McCain candidacy and Democrats by the Nader candidacy, but neither had a disproportionate impact on independent youth. Democrats were slightly more engaged by the globalization protests than other young adults.

Careers in Public Service

- **As many as half of all young adults say they are at least somewhat likely to pursue a career in publicly-oriented careers; but with the exception of direct involvement with a community or issue-oriented organization, 9/11 has spurred little *additional* interest in these careers.⁵** Non-governmental careers are more appealing than careers in government or politics.



- **In keeping with the community-orientation of this generation, non-governmental organizational service in the community or on specific issues is most appealing.** In all, more than half of all young adults (56%) say they would be at least somewhat likely to consider working for a community service organization, and just under half (49%) say they would be at least somewhat likely to work for an organization that focuses on a particular issue; a quarter or more say they are extremely likely or very likely to consider these careers (30% and 25%, respectively). Interest in these occupations has increased in the wake of the terrorist attacks – a plurality of young adults (44%) say they are *more likely* to work for a community service

⁵ We must note, however, that pluralities to majorities of young adults say their occupational pursuits were not affected by the events of September 11th. For each career mentioned, between 38% and 55% said 9/11 would make “no difference” in their likelihood to pursue the career. Teaching and running for political office garnered the highest share saying 9/11 would make no difference (55% and 53%, respectively).

organization as a result of 9/11, and a significant minority say they are *more likely* to work for an issue-focused organization (36%). These are among the most positive outcomes of the 9/11 events.

Those who are most intensely interested in working for a community service organization include a diverse cross-section of youth: those with at least some college education or a college degree (39% extremely/very likely), college-educated or college-bound women (50%), working students (45%), strong Republicans (41%), first generation youth (42%), African American women (39%), Hispanic women (36%), devout Churchgoers (46%), and Born Again youth (37%). Interest in these careers increased most among women, including women under 23 (52%), college-educated or college-bound women (52%), Democratic women (55%), African American women (57%), and among 15-17 year old college-bound youth (52%), students (52%), Republicans (52%), and all regular and occasional Churchgoers (55%). Throughout the data, there is a particular opportunity to mobilize college-educated and college-bound women who seem particularly geared around community involvement.

- **The visibility of law enforcement over the last few months has made some difference in young adults' desire to pursue a career in law enforcement or firefighting.** A plurality of young adults express some interest in considering a career in law enforcement or firefighting (43% at least somewhat likely, including 22% extremely/very likely). Most (39%) say 9/11 has made no difference in their interest in pursuing this career. Among those whose career choice might be affected by 9/11, 34% are more likely to pursue law enforcement or firefighting careers, while 25% are less likely (+9 net more likely). Younger men, college-educated and college-bound men, African American men, Hispanic men, full-time students, and both Republican men and women are among those whose interest in law enforcement careers has increased since September 11th, though of these groups, only full-time students and Republicans express intense initial interest in a law enforcement career. Men age 21-22, independents—especially independent women and independents age 18-20—African American women, parents, and young adults who are not registered to vote are most likely to say their interest in these careers has declined.
- **Rather than wanting to follow in the footsteps of the men and women fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan, young adults tend to say they are less likely to consider joining the military since 9/11.** A third of young adults (36%) say they are at least somewhat likely to consider joining the military, including a fifth (20%) who say they are extremely or very likely to join the military. In the aftermath of 9/11, however, young adults are slightly more likely to say they are less inclined to join the military than more inclined to join the military (-3 net less likely; 28% more likely, 31% less likely). More than twice as many adults say they are much less likely to join the military since 9/11 as those who say they are much more likely to join (20% *much less* likely, 9% *much more* likely). Those most negatively affected are strong Democrats (-17 net less likely), young adults who are not registered (-15 net less likely), independents (-13 net less likely) older young adults (-13 net less likely among 23-25 year olds), and Hispanics (-12 net less likely).
- **The visibility of government leaders and politicians throughout the war has not resulted in youth desiring to run for office themselves.** A quarter of young adults (24%) express a moderate interest in running for political office and a tenth (12%) say they are extremely or very likely to run for office. Rather than inspiring youth to become political leaders, the terrorist attacks have made no difference for half of young adults (53%) and have had a dampening effect on that impulse for the rest (-11 net less likely to run, 17% more likely, 28% less likely). Just 3%

say they are *much more* likely to run for office, while nearly six times that number (17%) say they are *much less* likely to run. Only full-time students (+1 net more likely), Republican men (+6 net more likely), devout Churchgoers (+1 net more likely) and, interestingly, liberals (+1 net more likely) have processed 9/11 differently vis-à-vis their own interests in political leadership.

Similarly, while careers in local or federal government are of moderate interest to just over four in ten young adults (43% federal, 41% local) and a fifth to a quarter are extremely or very interested in government careers, 9/11 has not fostered a heightened desire to work in local or federal government. Strong pluralities (45%-46%) say their desire to work for the federal or local government has not changed since 9/11 and the remainder are divided on the impact 9/11 would have in a government-related career choice (federal government: +5 net more likely, local government: even split, 27% more likely, 27% less likely with higher intensity on the less likely side).

- **Many young adults say they are considering becoming teachers, an interest that has increased some since 9/11.** About half of young adults (49%) say they are at least somewhat likely to consider a career in teaching, including a quarter (24%) who say they are extremely or very likely to consider this type of career. For most (55%), 9/11 has neither heightened nor diminished young adults' level of interest in teaching. Among those who have re-thought their views since 9/11, 27% say they are more likely to become teachers, while 17% say they are less likely.
- **As is true among adults overall in national polling data, young adults show remarkable levels of trust in government in the wake of the terrorist attacks.** Six in ten young adults (62%) say they trust the government to do what is right for the country, while just over a third (37%) say they have little or no trust in government (+26 net trust government). Remarkably, while there are significant differences in the *level* of trust, virtually every demographic segment of the youth population is more likely to trust than distrust the government. However, these levels of trust have yet to result in increased attachment or involvement in political and civic activities, although trust in government along with efficacy are powerful predictors of political engagement.

Voting

- **Despite their stated intention to participate in politics and community life more vigorously, young adults' civic and political involvement has not increased in recent months.** Voter registration and volunteerism rates are lower in this survey than in previous national surveys. Throughout the report, we discuss contributing factors in these trends and suggest solutions to improving the state of participatory democracy.
- **Despite the fact that three-quarters of young adults continue to insist that neither registering to vote nor voting itself is difficult, reports of voter registration have declined slightly.** In this study, 65% of 18 to 24 year olds say they are registered to vote. In 1998 and 2000, surveys conducted for the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and The White House Project Education Fund, respectively, found that 70% of 18 to 24 year olds said they were registered voters. Reports of registration have declined most since 1998 among women (64% now, 72% in 1998) – particularly independent women (52% now, 68% in 1998) – and 21-22 year olds (64% now, 78% in 1998).

As discovered in a 1996 study for the John and Teresa Heinz Family Foundation, very few young adults say registering (17%) or voting (15%) are difficult. This is true across all subgroups. Only

a small share of young adults who are not registered to vote say registering and voting are difficult (27% and 22% respectively). Young adults abstain from registering and voting for other reasons discussed throughout this report.

- **Young adults are ambivalent about the importance of voting.** Half (50%) say it is extremely important or very important (including 19% who assign the most intense importance to voting), while 49% assign lower or no importance to voting. Among that 49%, a quarter (28%) say it is somewhat important and a fifth (20%) say it is a little important or not important at all.

Demographically, true believers in the importance of voting tend to be 23-25 year olds (59% extremely/very important), especially women in this age group (61% extremely/very important), college graduates (79%), current students (59%), Democrats (58%), Republicans (64%), conservatives (61%), married youth (66%), devout Churchgoers (64%) and Born Again Christians (62%). Among demographic factors, church attendance, age, and being a college student are the most powerful predictors of voting being important. As noted throughout the report, these are many of the same groups who tend to be most engaged in political and civic life. Volunteer activity, trust, and efficacy all predict that one believes voting is important even after controlling for demographic factors.

Young adults more likely to be convinced of the importance of voting, but currently say it is “somewhat” important include 18 to 20 year olds (34% somewhat important), 18-20 year old independents (44% somewhat important), young adults who currently hold two jobs (39% somewhat important), and occasional Churchgoers (33%).

As we will see later in this report, parental factors have incredible power in influencing the importance of participation and voting. Even after controlling for demographic differences, whether one’s parents voted regularly, whether they talked about politics, and whether they took their children to vote all have powerful independent influences on the importance young adults place on voting. The most powerful predictor is whether or not parents discussed politics at home, which also tends to happen more in Republican and religious homes.

Volunteering

While volunteering will be discussed in detail in the next section, it is important to note that the trend in the last two years has been towards diminished levels of volunteerism.

- **Reports of episodic community volunteerism is down.** Compared to an April 2000 survey conducted for The White House Project Education Fund, the percentage of young adults who volunteer at least once a month has stayed about the same (27% now, 30% in 2000), but episodic volunteering – people who volunteer anywhere from “less often than once a year, but sometimes” to every two or three months – has declined by 10 points (31% now, 38% in 2000). The share who “never” volunteer is up 10 points (37% now, 27% in 2000), and now exceeds the share who volunteer at least once a month. The decline has been across nearly all subgroups, with a particularly large drop among Democrats (41% say they never volunteer now, compared to 19% in 2000).
- **Reports of specific kinds of non-political community involvement – donating to a charity, volunteering with a community organization like a homeless shelter, joining a non-political club or organization – have become less common since the NASS study in 1998.** Comparing the habits of today’s 18 to 24 year olds to those of November 1998, self-

reported donations of money, clothes and food have dropped 14 points (72% now, 86% in 1998); reports of joining a club or organization that does not deal with politics or government have declined 11 points (46% now, 57% in 1998); volunteering with a homeless shelter or other community organization decreased by 10 points (40% now, 50% in 1998).

- **Young adults stated intentions to volunteer for various non-political activities have also declined since 1998.** Expectations about donating to a charity are down 14 points (58% now, 72% in 1998), the likelihood of joining a non-political club or organization is down 9 points (29% now, 38% in 1998), and intentions of volunteering at a homeless shelter or other community organization are down 9 points (33% now, 42% in 1998).⁶

Key Opportunities: The Aftermath of September 11th

- **Build on the mood of increased trust in government and heightened mobilization to engage youth on issues besides the war by talking about issues of concern, like the economy and jobs and crime and violence.**
- **Build on increased interest in careers in community-based organizations to show how those kinds of jobs benefit real people.**
- **Encourage parents to use the current context of national events to talk to their children about politics and government.**

⁶ We should note that the scale used in 1998 was a 4 point scale (extremely likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, not likely at all, while in this survey, a five point scale was used (extremely likely, very likely, somewhat likely, a little likely, not at all likely). In the comparison given above, the top two categories from this survey (extremely and very) have been combined and are compared to the top category (extremely) from the 1998 survey.

VOTING AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY PARENTAL POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

As measured by self-reported voter registration rates, two-thirds of young adults are loosely involved in the political process. However, actual engagement levels – as measured by efficacy, perceptions of the political system, and the importance young adults assign to voting – are much lower. Just 30% of young adults can be classified as truly “politically-oriented,” while another 24% have some political inclinations, but tend to direct more energy towards volunteering.

The impact parents have on their child’s political and civic attitudes and behaviors cannot be overstated. Parents who discuss politics with their children, take their children to vote, and make a habit of voting in all or nearly all elections raise children who volunteer, vote, feel they can make a difference in their communities, and see politicians and institutions as more open to being influenced by the public. Conversely, parents whose own political engagement levels are lower raise children who do less, care less, and feel less connected to institutions and leaders. Parental behavior also fosters higher political knowledge levels and greater political information gathering, which are related to voting and volunteering. Our modeling suggests that parental behaviors also have powerful direct and indirect effects—correlating indirectly with higher levels of efficacy and directly on the importance attached to the vote and to levels of activity.

Core Youth Political Attitudes and Behaviors

- **Overall, young adults have ambivalent views of the political realm and their place within it.** While 65% of young adults say they are registered to vote, fewer actually cast a ballot on election day. In 2000, just 17% voted in the Presidential election. Three-quarters of young adults say registering to vote and voting itself are not difficult. A range of other factors – upbringing, experiences, and candidates – are critical in a young adult’s propensity to register and cast a vote.

There is great variation among subgroups of young adults by age, student status, and church attendance on political attitudes like vote importance and registration patterns – some are highly engaged, while others are not. On the whole, however, young adults’ attitudes reflect overall ambivalence towards the

	% say voting is impt	% reg to vote	% parent discussed politics
15-17 yr olds	47%	-----	45%
18-20 yr olds	45%	57%	52%
21-22 yr olds	50%	64%	52%
23-25 yr olds	59%	77%	51%
18-25 no coll	44%	53%	45%
18-25 coll+	58%	77%	57%
F/T Student	59%	67%	62%
P/T Student	58%	70%	46%
Not a student	48%	65%	49%
Weekly church	64%	76%	56%
Occas. church	54%	74%	55%
No church	37%	57%	42%

political process:

- On the importance of voting, 50% say voting is extremely or very important to them, while 49% say it is a little important or not at all important. Only a fifth (19%) say voting is extremely important.
- About a third see voting as a choice (34%) or a right (31%). A fifth declare voting a responsibility (20%); half as many (9%) are willing to call voting a duty.
- A bare majority (53%) say the government and elections address the needs and concerns of young people; asked about political leaders, a slightly smaller share (48%) say political leaders pay at least some attention to the concerns of young people like themselves.
- In terms of community-oriented efficacy, most young adults doubt the level of impact they can have – just 46% say they can make at least some difference in working to solve the problems they see in their community, while 52% say they can make just a little difference, almost no difference, or no difference at all.

Parental Impacts

- **In addition to the impact that age, education, student status, and religion have on political engagement, statistical analysis shows a very strong relationship between parental behavior and children’s attitudes and behaviors.** Multivariate models show that parental political engagement – whether kids are raised in households with parents who discuss politics, go with their parent to vote, and see their parents vote in all or nearly all elections – has an even greater impact on how young adults perceive and behave in the political realm, even after controlling for all other demographic factors.
- **Before exploring the impact parents have on their kids, it is useful to know what young adults report about their parents’ behaviors and which groups of young adults tend to have more and less engaged parents.** Compared to young adults overall, larger shares of college-educated and college-bound youth, full-time students, Republican and conservative youth, Democratic women, devout churchgoers, and Born Again Christian youth report having parents who discussed politics and took them to vote; these are also the groups who exhibit some of the highest participation and engagement rates.
 - **Just half of all young adults (50%) say they discussed politics, government, or current events at least sometimes with their parents when they were growing up.** Moreover, slightly more young adults say they “never” discussed politics with their parents (19%) as say they “often” discussed politics (15%). Among 18 to 24 year olds, the reported frequency of political discussions has declined since the NASS study in 1998 – at that time, 57% of young adults reported discussing politics with their parents at least sometimes, including 22% who said they “often” discussed politics, government, and current events with their parents.

- **Just 29% of young adults recall their parents voting in every election. This share expands to nearly two-thirds (64%) when asked about all or most elections.** However, nearly a third (31%) recall their parents voting only in important elections or less often than that.
- **Just 37% recall going with a parent to vote, including fewer than half of those whose parents voted in all or most elections (49%).**
- **As demonstrated in the Snapshot of Youth at the beginning of this report, politically-oriented, volunteer-oriented, and disengaged youth were raised with dramatically different levels of parental socialization.** For example, 87% of political youth discussed politics with their parents at least sometimes while they were growing up, compared to 51% of volunteer-oriented youth, and 25% of disengaged youth.

Statistical analyses demonstrate the strength of the relationship between parental behavior and young adults' attitudes. Simple bivariate correlations show a strong positive relationship between thinking voting is important and political discussion ($r=.44$), between vote importance and parental voting behavior ($r=.34$) and between thinking voting is important and going with parents to vote ($r=.31$). There are also solid, though slightly weaker, relationships between efficacy and these three measures of parental impact ($r=.26$ for discussion; $r=.21$ for going to vote; $r=.2$ for parental voting behavior).

Further, in a multivariate model of the factors that contribute to thinking voting is important (controlling for efficacy and demographic factors including age, education, student status, and church attendance), both frequency of political discussion and going with parents to vote are significant and have a large effect. Of the two, discussing politics has three times the effect of going with parents to vote (beta of .304 on discussion, .112 on going to vote with parents).

- **To illustrate the difference parental political socialization makes in attitudes and behaviors of young adults, we provide the following comparison between young adults who grew up with parents who talked about politics often or sometimes and those who did not:**
 - **Internal Efficacy:** 56% of young adults whose parents discussed politics with them believe they can make a difference in solving community problems, compared to just 37% of young adults whose parents did not discuss politics.
 - **External efficacy measured in perceptions of politicians' responsiveness to youth:** More than half of young adults (57%) who grew up with political discussion at home believe political leaders pay at least some attention to the concerns of young people (+16 net pay attention), while those whose parents didn't discuss politics at home have the opposite perspective (39% pay attention, -20 net do not pay attention).
 - **Trust in government:** Seven in ten young adults (71%) who grew up with political discussion trust the government (+43 net trust), compared to just 53% of those who grew up without political discussions at home (+8 net trust).

- **Importance of voting:** Twice as many young adults who grew up with political discussion in their households believe voting is important (68% of those who grew up with discussion, compared to 33% of those who did not grow up with discussion).
- **Conception of voting:** A plurality of those who grew up with political discussion at home see voting as a right (38%) and a quarter see it as a responsibility (24%), while a plurality of those who grew up without political discussion at home see voting as a choice (43%).
- **Voter registration:** Three quarters (75%) of young adults who grew up with political discussion at home are registered, compared to 57% of those who grew up without political discussion.
- **Volunteer rates:** Thirty-three percent of young adults who grew up with political discussion at home volunteer at least once a month, compared to 22% of young adults who grew up without political discussion. Correspondingly, just 29% of those whose parents discussed politics say they never volunteer, compared to nearly half (46%) of young adults raised by parents who did not discuss politics. In multivariate analysis, parents taking their children to vote (Beta .145) and parents talking about politics (Beta .205) had significant impact on rates of volunteerism even after controlling for other demographics and attitudes.

Consistency Matters

- **In order for parents' voting habits to have the greatest effect on their children's attitudes, parents must vote consistently in all or most elections.** In terms of beliefs about voting, personal efficacy, and trust in government, young adults whose parents voted only in important elections resemble those whose parents voted rarely or never more than they resemble kids whose parents voted in all or most elections. In terms of registration levels, simply voting even occasionally has a significant impact.

	Parents voted in every/most elections (64% of all youth)	Parents voted in important elections (14% of all youth)	Parents voted rarely/not at all (17% of all youth)
% say voting is extremely impt. % voting is extremely/very impt.	24% 60%	9% 40%	9% 28%
% say they can make a difference solving community problems	52%	40%	34%
% say they trust government	71%	51%	42%
% registered to vote	75%	63%	37%
% volunteer monthly % never volunteer	30% 33%	25% 40%	22% 50%

Secondary Effects of Parental Socialization: Higher Knowledge and Greater Attentiveness to News

- **Parents who talk with their kids about politics, take their kids to vote, and vote in all or most elections also tend to raise kids with higher levels of political knowledge and more attentiveness to political news in the media.** Higher knowledge levels and more frequent news consumption are also correlated with higher levels of political engagement.

Most young adults have a basic level of knowledge about contemporary politics – 74% know that Dick Cheney is the Vice President, but fewer can answer other questions about government processes or political institutions. Just 57% know that Republicans are more conservative than Democrats, and 55% know that it takes a two-thirds majority vote in Congress to override a presidential veto. Only 40% know that the Supreme Court is the institution that determines the Constitutionality of laws.

Young adults who come from political homes where political discussions occurred are more likely to know the answers to each of these questions. Among these young adults, 82% know Dick Cheney is the VP; 64% know Republicans are more conservative than Democrats; 63% know the appropriate number of votes needed to override a veto; and 46% (still a low number, but higher than average) know the Supreme Court is responsible for determining the Constitutionality of laws.

This higher level of knowledge translates into greater political engagement. Statistically, controlling for parental voting behavior, age, student status, and church attendance, and knowing that Republicans are more conservative than Democrats is a significant predictor of thinking voting is important. Young adults who know the right answer to the knowledge questions are registered to vote in higher proportions than less knowledgeable youth.

- **Like their parents and other adults, young adults say they rely on television news and newspapers and magazines for news about public affairs, politics, candidates, and campaigns.** Four in ten (42%) say they watch TV news for political coverage very often and 80% say they watch TV news at least somewhat often. Three in ten (30%) say they read newspapers and magazines for political coverage very often and two-thirds (68%) say they use print media for political news at least somewhat often. Fewer get political news from the Internet (20% very often, 44% at least somewhat often) or from talk radio programs (12% very often, 34% at least somewhat often).

As with political knowledge, young adults who discussed politics with their parents growing up tend to take political news from all sources more often than young adults overall. Nearly half (49%) report watching TV news very often (88% at least somewhat often); four in ten (40%) say they read magazines and newspapers very often (79% at least somewhat often); a quarter (25%) report getting political information from the Internet often (54% at least somewhat often); and a sixth (15%) report listening to talk radio for political news often (41% at least somewhat often).

For young adults as for their elders, more avid news consumers tend to be more engaged in public affairs and to have different views of politics than others. Youth who often get political news from TV and newspapers are more likely to be registered to vote (77%-78% versus 65% overall), and more likely to think voting is important (63%-66% versus 50% overall). They also perceive government and politics in a more positive light – their levels of trust in government are

higher than other young adults (70%-74% versus 62% overall) and perceive political leaders to pay more attention to young people's concerns (57%-58% versus 48% overall).

However, news consumption tends to be driven by other factors and does not have an independent effect on political attitudes.

Key Opportunities: Voting and Political Engagement as well as Parental Political Socialization

- **Advocacy efforts aimed at parents of teens to explain the enormous impact parents have in shaping their children's political attitudes and behaviors may help to raise awareness of the connection for parents who may not otherwise make time to talk about politics, vote consistently, or take their kids with them to vote.**
- **Coordinated efforts with schools to help involve both kids and parents in vote-related activities.**
- **Outreach to young parents to teach them that their political behavior will affect their kids well into adulthood.**

EFFICACY AND TRUST IN VOTING AND YOUTH'S PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP TO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Trust in government and a sense of efficacy – that one’s actions can make a difference – are two core beliefs that drive political engagement. Trust in government is at a modern high point among both young and old Americans since September 11th, and this presents an opportunity to increase political participation. However, while trust is up, feelings of efficacy in helping to solve problems have remained relatively unchanged; noticeably, in the same time period, voter registration and community engagement rates have also declined slightly. The critical question for politicians and others interested in boosting youth participation is how to increase levels of efficacy among young adults who do not currently feel they can have an impact.

Attitudinal Preconditions for Engagement

- **Trust and efficacy each have a significant impact on views of voting.** Trust in government and efficacy are both positively correlated with one another ($r=.29$) and each correlated with the feeling that voting is important (trust: $r=.41$, efficacy= $.37$). With each controlling for the other in a multivariate model, both trust and efficacy have a strong and significant positive impact on predicting whether voting is seen as important.
- **Recent events have resulted in relatively high levels of trust in government.** As mentioned elsewhere, 62% of young adults currently “trust government to do what is right,” and this is a factor in voting. Smaller proportions of young adults believe most people can be trusted (41%). Importantly, trust in people is not a statistical predictor in attitudes about voting. However, it is related to the general mindset of youth and their willingness to engage with others.
- **Despite an increase in faith in the government among all adults and youth, young adults continue to be divided about the impact they can have in solving community problems.** As noted elsewhere in this report, fewer than half of young adults (46%) say they believe they can make at least some difference in working to solve problems in their community; just 11% say definitively they can make a great deal of difference. A third (31%) feel they can make a little difference, and 21% say they can make almost no difference, or no difference

Trust in government is highest among...		
	%	Net Trust
See voting as impt	78%	+56
Voted w/parents	77%	+54
F/T students	74%	+50
Coll ed/bnd wom	75%	+52
Republicans	73%	+47
White women	72%	+45
Weekly church	71%	+45
Born again	71%	+43
Parents always vote	71%	+43
Conservatives	70%	+41
Occas. church	70%	+41
Reg. voters	70%	+41
15-17 year olds	67%	+35
Democrats	67%	+35
Trust is lowest among...		
Young parents	57%	+14
Work two jobs	55%	+11
Non-student	54%	+9
Independent men	53%	+6
Hispanic men	52%	+8
Non-religious	50%	+1
Voting not impt	47%	-5
Non-voting parents	42%	-14
Not registered	40%	-18

at all.

Efficacy and experience with engagement are mutually reinforcing – young adults who have already been mobilized into politics and community life have higher levels of efficacy, and those with higher levels of efficacy show greater levels of involvement in civic and political life. Registered voters, people who see voting as important, people who trust government, and people who volunteer generally believe they can make a difference in their community, while people who have not been involved in community and political life do not tend to express feelings of efficacy. Additionally, young adults who pay attention to political news have relatively high levels of efficacy, although there is undoubtedly an interactive effect here. Additionally, those more efficacious are also slightly more knowledgeable.

➤ **Older and more educated young adults are more likely to feel efficacious.**

Relatively few 15 to 17 year olds have feelings of efficacy – just 41% feel they can make a difference (-17 net make no difference) – and these figures are even lower for high school students who do not expect to attend college (35% can make a difference, -27 net make no difference). Comparatively, 55% of 18 to 25 year olds in college or with some college education (+12 net make a difference) and 62% of college graduates (+25 net make a difference) have high levels of efficacy. Regression models show age and student status to have a strong effect on efficacy, independent of attitudinal differences and parental behavior.

➤ **As noted earlier, higher feelings of efficacy and greater feelings of trust are correlated with having parents who participate in politics and help their children to become engaged in politics.**

Parental engagement and efficacy have a stronger statistical relationship to one another than any other pairs of variables. In multivariate models that hold all other factors constant, parental voting behavior, parental discussion about politics, and parents taking kids to vote are each significant and strong predictors of efficacy, just as they are important predictors of feeling that voting is important. People who went with their parents to vote, discussed politics with

The degree to which people feel they can make a difference in their community is related to experience levels as well as socialization and feeling part of a group

	<i>Net Feel Can Make a Diff.</i>	<i>% Have Efficacy</i>
By age		
15-17 yr olds	-17	41%
18-20 yr olds	-9	45%
21-22 yr olds	-2	49%
23-25 yr olds	+6	52%
By education and age		
15-17 not coll bound	-27	35%
15-15 coll bound	-12	44%
18-25 no college	-21	39%
18-25 in college/some coll	+12	55%
18-25 college grad	+25	62%
By race/ethnicity		
White	-3	48%
(no differences by gender)		
African American men	-19	41%
African American women	-14	42%
Hispanic men	-25	36%
Hispanic women	-12	43%
By partisanship		
Republican	+8	53%
Democrat	+5	52%
Independent	-15	42%
By religiosity		
Go to church weekly	+11	55%
Born Again	+2	50%
Attend church sometimes	-2	49%
Rarely/never attend church	-22	38%
By area type		
Urban	-8	45%
Suburban	-8	45%
Rural	+2	50%
By parental behavior		
Went with them to vote	+16	57%
Didn't go to vote	-20	39%
Discussed politics	+12	56%
Didn't discuss politics	-24	37%
By political engagement		
Registered to vote	+16	58%
Not registered	-38	30%
Think voting is imp	+24	62%
Don't think voting is imp	-36	31%

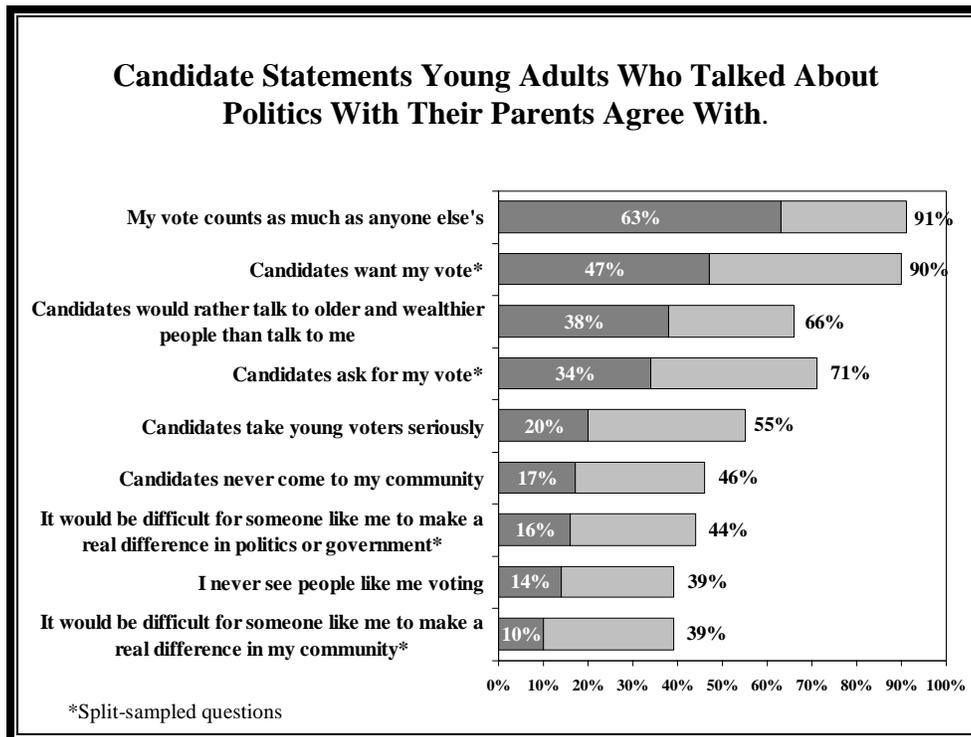
- their parents, and had parents who voted regularly all believe they can make a difference in solving community problems by 5 to 16 point margins, while young adults with disengaged parents all believe they cannot make a difference in solving community problems by 20 to 30 point margins.
- **Weekly church attendance is also a statistical predictor of efficacy.** Young adults who attend church weekly say they can make a difference in their communities by an 11-point margin (56% say they can make a difference), while those who never go to church say they cannot make much of a difference in their communities by a 22-point margin (just 38% say they can make a difference).
 - **Young adults of color feel less efficacious than whites.** While white youth are split almost evenly in their views on whether they can make a difference in their community (-3 net not make difference), African Americans (-16 net not make difference) and Hispanics (-19 net not make difference) are more pessimistic; men of color are particularly skeptical of the difference they can make. Since 2000, whites have become more efficacious, while, interestingly, feelings of efficacy among African Americans have declined.
 - **Partisans have a stronger sense of efficacy than independents.** As outlined in an earlier section, 53% of Republicans and 52% of Democrats feel they can make a difference in their communities (+8 and +5 net make a difference, respectively), while independents are more doubtful (just 42% think they can make a difference, -15 net not make a difference). Given the change of political scene in the last two years, it is not surprising that efficacy has increased among Republicans and independents, but declined among Democrats since 2000.
 - **Just as they are divided on the impact they can have in solving community problems, young adults are ambivalent about the real impact they can have on politics.** Half (50%) agree it would be difficult for someone like them to have a real impact in politics and government, while 45% disagree. Intense opinions on this question are polarized – 19% strongly agree that it would be difficult to have in impact on politics, while 17% strongly disagree. Most groups are divided in this question.

Efficacy and the Political Scene

- **Young adults' ambivalence about the impact they can have may be fueled, in part, by uncertainty about the goals and responsiveness of candidates, politics, and government.** Young adults have particularly mixed feelings about whether and how well these institutions and actors address young adults' needs and concerns and about how important young voters are to candidates, relative to other audiences candidates have to court. Politically-oriented youth and volunteer-oriented youth have different ideas about whether they can make a difference in solving problems, whether their votes count, and whether politicians pay attention to their concerns.
- **Overall, young adults see politics and elections more as the business of elites, than as avenues for democratic participation.** More young adults strongly agree that politics and elections are about politicians competing to get elected (49%) and about debating laws and issues (41%) than strongly agree that politics and elections are the way that average people get their say in government (32%) or a democratic community's efforts to solve its problems (30%).

Young adults who feel a high level of efficacy by saying they can make a lot of difference in their communities tend to see the elite and democratic goals of politics and elections as more closely matched: 55% strongly agree that politics and elections are about debating laws and issues, 53% strongly agree politics and elections is the way average people get their say in government, 47% strongly agree that politics and elections is about a democratic community's efforts to solve its problems, and 46% agree that politics and elections are about politicians competing to get elected. In contrast, young adults with lower levels of efficacy are far more likely to see politics and elections as focusing on elite level competition for election than about policy debates or democratic input or process.

- Young adults associate politics with institutions, elite-level process, and leadership figures, rather than with people or public policy outcomes.** The word “politics” conjures up – first – process-oriented words like “government,” “laws,” “voting,” “elections,” and “campaigns” (33%). Second, the word “politics” triggers mentions of key players like the “President,” “candidates and politicians,” “leaders,” and “political parties” (18%). Third, “politics” reminds young adults of things like “corruption, lying, cheating, and lack of trust” (11%). In contrast, public policy and issues are mentioned by just 4% of young adults, and just 2% say politics makes things better or is about people voicing their opinions and being heard.
- Young adults believe their votes count, but that they may not be a priority audience for candidates.** Young adults say they believe their votes count as much as anyone else’s (85% agree, including 53% strongly agree), but also believe candidates would rather talk to older and wealthier people than to younger people (71% agree, including 42% strongly agree).



Additionally, two-thirds of young adults believe that candidates ask for their vote (68% agree, including 28% strongly agree), but are unsure whether candidates take young voters seriously (47% agree, 50% disagree).

Young adults with high levels of efficacy are more positive about politicians' motives and the role of young adults in politics. Nearly all (90%) agree their vote counts as much as anyone else's (73% strongly agree) and an even larger share (94%) agree that candidates want their vote (62% strongly agree). However, even efficacious young adults are less convinced that candidates *ask* for their vote (74% agree, including 42% strongly agree). Just over half (58%) agree that candidates would rather talk to older and wealthier people (33% strongly agree) than young adults.

- **Young adults do not see themselves and their generation as particularly significant in the political process, and they do not always see candidates come to their communities.** Young adults split on whether they see people like them voting by a three-point margin (44% agree that they do not see young people voting, 47% disagree), but agree by a six-point margin that candidates never come to their community (50% agree, 44% disagree).

Younger and less educated voters are more likely than their older and more educated peers to think people like them do not vote and to think that candidates ignore their communities. Surprisingly, there are no major differences by race or ethnicity on this question, although Hispanic women are more likely than other young adults to think that candidates never come to their community (63% agree).

Even among young adults with high levels of efficacy, a third agree they don't see people like themselves voting (34% agree) and that politicians don't come to their community (37% agree).

Key Opportunities: Efficacy and Trust in Voting

- **Show young adults how the actions of people like them have and can influence communities to increase their sense of efficacy.**
- **Provide tangible examples of the influence citizen activity can have on politics and public policy.**
- **Work with civic educators and the media to frame politics and elections in terms of citizens having a say in political leadership, rather than in terms of competing personalities.**
- **Work with politicians and others in the political system to help show tangible public policy outcomes of issue debates and electoral competitions.**
- **Politicians need to capitalize on the fact that youth already believe their votes count by asking them to vote.**

COMMUNITY SPIRIT: YOUNG ADULTS AS VOLUNTEERS

Like their peers and predecessors surveyed in recent years, this is a generation that believes in the importance of community and volunteer involvement. A majority see working in their community as the most important way a citizen can make a difference.

However, young adults today are reportedly volunteering at slightly lower rates than the cohort of 18 to 24 year olds of a few years ago. As has been seen in other studies, young adults see community activism and political activism as two separate items. Volunteer involvement in political activities is much lower than in activities that provide direct service or focus on the community more broadly. Most volunteer in their community because they were asked by a person or by a religious institution, because it provides personal gratification, or because they believe it makes a difference. Volunteer activities of choice include working with local community-based organizations and making donations of clothing, food or money.

Community Minded

- **Across the board, young adults see local community involvement as the most important focus for volunteer activities.** Focus group research conducted for the Center for Democracy and Citizenship in 2000 suggested, and this current study and others have confirmed, that young adults believe local community involvement is more important than less direct forms of national and political involvement.

Asked about the most important kind of civic activity a citizen can engage in – community volunteering to solve local problems, participating in national organizations to change society, or getting involved in politics and government – twice as many young adults chose volunteering in local community activities as chose participation in a national organization (49% versus 23%). Four times as many chose volunteering in the local community as more important than getting involved in politics and government (12%).

Even young adults who say voting is personally important to them, who are registered to vote, and whose parents talked to them about politics and current affairs say local community volunteer activities are the most important kind of activity in which a citizen can engage. The primary difference in attitudes between politically-oriented youth and politically disengaged youth is the share who believe that any of these activities are important. A fifth to a quarter of disengaged youth say they are not sure which of these activities is most important.

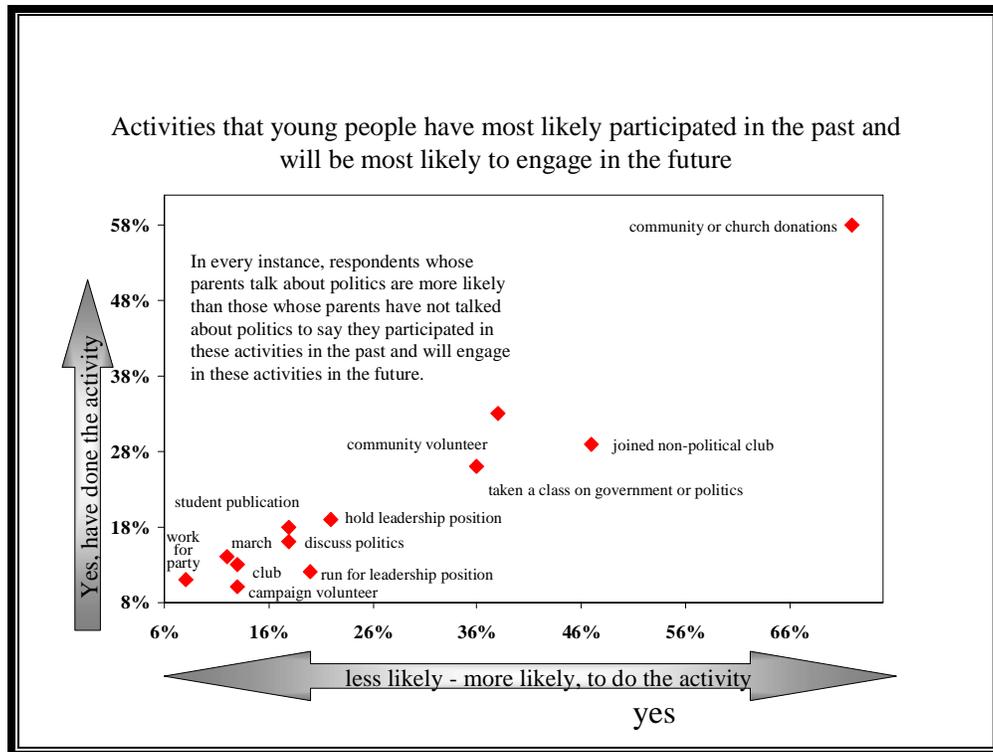
In your opinion, which of the following is the most important kind of activity a citizen can engage in?						
	Registered Voter	Not Registered	Say voting is important	Say voting is not important	Parents discussed politics	Parents didn't discuss politics
Volunteering in local community activities	50%	44%	52%	47%	54%	44%
Participating in national organizations	22%	27%	22%	23%	22%	23%
Getting involved in politics and government	16%	9%	19%	5%	16%	8%
Not sure/don't know	12%	20%	7%	25%	8%	25%

Current & Expected Volunteer Involvement

- **Despite the decline in reported volunteerism, a significant share of young adults are involved in community activities and expect to be involved in these activities in the future.**

Statistically, heightened involvement in community activities is more correlated with being a student ($r=.23$), being a devout Churchgoer ($r=.28$), and being 18 to 20 years old ($r=.13$) than with other demographic factors. Regression models show these factors are all significant as positive predictors of participating in volunteer activities, while having no more than a high school education is a significant predictor against volunteer participation. Additionally, parental behavior is even more strongly related – the correlations between participation in volunteer activities and discussing politics at home and between volunteerism and going to vote with parents ($r=.31$ and $.31$, respectively) are stronger than for any demographic variables; and the level of significance and effect in regression models (controlling for demographic factors) is also greater than any other variables.

- **Donations, club membership, and community organizational involvement are most common and are most likely to see continued involvement.** Looking first at activities in which youth have participated in the “past couple of years,” donations to community or church organizations (72% have done) and involvement with a community group or club top the list of youth volunteer activities (47%). A significant minority (38%) have volunteered for a homeless shelter or other community organization.



Looking to the future, 85% say it is at least somewhat likely they will make donations in the future (including 24% who say extremely likely and 34% who say very likely). Majorities (55% and 59%, respectively) say they are at least somewhat likely to join a non-political club or organization or volunteer for a homeless shelter or other community organization.

- Like their older adult peers, a minority of young adults participate in politically-oriented volunteer activities.** Fewer than a fifth have participated in an online discussion or visited a politically oriented website (18% overall, 29% among full-time students, who are more likely to have reliable Internet access). About a tenth have participated in a political march or demonstration (12%), volunteered in a political campaign (13%), joined a political club (13%), or worked for a political party (8%); these numbers are statistically unchanged from 1998, although club membership is up slightly among 18 to 24 year olds (14% now, 9% in 1998).

Following their current patterns of engagement, few young adults have plans to become involved in politically-oriented volunteerism in the future. Fewer than a third say they are even somewhat likely to volunteer for a campaign or political party (26%), join a political club (28%), or participate in a march (31%); and just over a third (36%), say they are at least somewhat likely to participate in online discussions or visit a political website. Strong interest in these activities hovers around ten to fifteen percent. Rather, strong pluralities to majorities of young adults are certain they will not engage in political activism. A majority (57%) say they are not at all likely to run for an elected leadership position (32% in 1998); 53% say they are not at all likely to work for a political party; 50% say they are not at all likely to join a political club or organization; 46% say they are not at all likely to volunteer in a political campaign; 44% say they are not at all likely

to participate in a political march or demonstration. Currently, only young adults with already-strong political ties anticipate future political involvement.

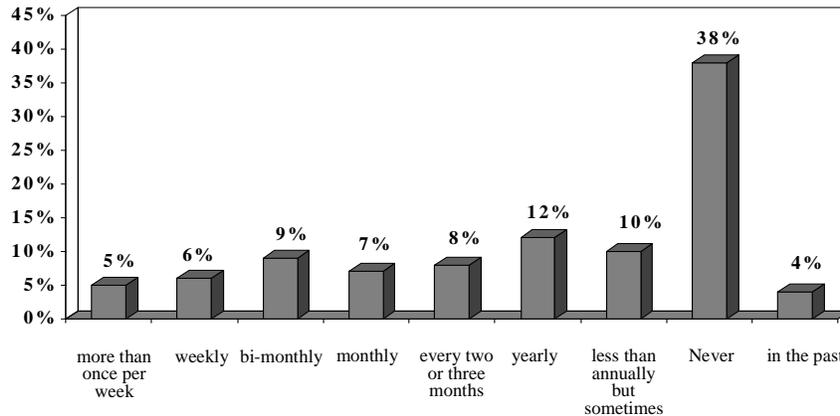
- **About a fifth of young adults have held or sought leadership positions. Full-time students are more likely to explore leadership opportunities than non-students.** A fifth (22%) of all young adults, including 36% of full-time students have held leadership positions in groups, clubs, or organizations *other than* student government; part-time students are actually less likely than young adults overall to have held a leadership position (16%). Similarly, 20% of all young adults and 33% of all full-time students have *run for* an *elected* leadership position, including student government. Looking ahead, 39% say it is somewhat likely they will hold a leadership position in the future (19% extremely/very likely), but far fewer (26%) say they will *run* for an elected leadership position (just 12% are extremely or very likely).
- **Just as parents have a significant impact on their children’s level of political engagement, parents’ civic behavior affects levels of community and political activism.** Young adults whose parents discussed politics with them are more likely to have done each of the 12 activities tested and give themselves a higher probability of doing each activity in the future.

Young adults who grew up in homes with political discussions are 12 to 19 points more likely than those who did not to donate money clothes or food, join a non-political organization, or volunteer at a homeless shelter or other community group. They are between 7 and 11 points more likely to have participated in political activities, like working for a political party or campaign or participating in a march or demonstration. They are also 9 points more likely to have held a leadership position other than student government and 17-points more likely to have run for a student government or other elected leadership position. There are similar differences between the expectations of future involvement between youth who had parents that discussed politics and youth who did not.

Frequency of Community Volunteerism

- **Slightly fewer than half of all young adults (47%) volunteer at least once a year with a community organization, while 38% say they “never” volunteer, and 10% volunteer sometimes, but less often than once a year.**

Level of participation in volunteer activities



- **Currently, just over a quarter of young adults claim to volunteer with a local community group or organization at least once a month (27%), including 11% who volunteer at least once a week.** These dedicated volunteers tend to be current high school and college students, students who are in school full-time and do not work, college-educated or college-bound women, first generation Americans, devout Churchgoers, Born Again Christian youth, and young adults who identify as either weak or strong Republicans, or strong Democrats.
- **A fifth of all young adults (20%) volunteer every couple of months or once a year. Another 10% volunteer less often than that, but at least sometimes.** As a whole, this group tends to be 18 to 20 year olds, women in their early 20's, part-time students and young adults who work two jobs.
- **A significant number of young adults (38%) say they *never* participate in volunteer activities with a community group or organization.** Those who never volunteer tend to be men (particularly high school age men, and 21 to 25 year olds), Hispanic and white men, high school students who are not bound for college, 18 to 25 year olds who have not attended college, and young adults who do not attend religious services.

America's youth volunteer corp is diverse....

	% vol. weekly	% vol at least monthly
Devout churchgoers	23%	48%
Strong Democrats	21%	34%
First generation Amer	18%	40%
Non-working students	19%	34%
Hispanic women	17%	37%
College grads	17%	46%
15-17 year old women	16%	32%
Strong Republicans	15%	32%

Socialization Impacts the Frequency of Volunteering

- **Parental socialization affects both *whether* young adults volunteer, and how *often*.** Majorities of young adults whose parents discussed politics (57%) and took them to vote (60%) volunteer at least once a year, including a third of each group (33% and 35%, respectively) volunteer at least once a month. Just 25%-29% of young adults with engaged parents (whether measured by taking their children to vote or talking with their children about politics) never volunteer. Conversely, nearly half of those whose parents did not engage them (46%) never volunteer.

Looking at the impact of current volunteerism rates on the engagement of future generations, we have noticed an apparent drop-off in volunteer rates among today's young parents. Only a bare majority of young adults with children are showing their children that volunteering is important, perhaps reflecting the relatively younger age of these parents. 51% of young adults with children volunteer at least sometimes. Episodic monthly volunteering is popular with this group – 20% volunteer every month – but just 10% volunteer every week. This is further evidence of a shift from previous generations, where young parents were heavily involved in regular volunteer activities.

Motivation for Volunteering

- **The youth service movement has sparked great debate about why young adults volunteer and what kinds of incentives can motivate even greater numbers of young adults to become active in their communities.** This study shows that, contrary to conventional wisdom, young adults volunteer for several core reasons, none of which involve requirements or perceived personal gain.
- **Just under a third of young adults who volunteer (30%) tend to have been *asked* to get involved.** 17% were asked by a church and 13% by another person. In focus groups on political and civic engagement, young adults describe being asked for their help as a very important incentive for actually doing something and say they wish people (and especially politicians) would ask for their assistance more often. In this survey, younger teen volunteers (24%), especially non-college-bound teens (30%), tend to be driven most by their churches asking them to volunteer. Devout church-going youth (27%) tend to volunteer because their church has asked them.
- **A quarter of young adults (24%) volunteer because it makes them feel good.** This is the primary motivator for 23 to 25 year olds (29%), first generation Americans (29%), and young adults who do not attend church (28%).
- **A fifth (21%) volunteer because they believe it makes a difference.** Strong Democrats – 21% of whom volunteer at least once a week – give “making a difference” as their top reason for volunteering (28%), as do those who believe they can make a great deal of difference in solving community problems (33%). Additionally, 27% of young adults who are not registered to vote, but do volunteer say making a difference is the key reason they volunteer.
- **Self-interest or having no choice about volunteering only motivates a small share of young adults.** Just 8% volunteer as a resume-builder (including 11% of full-time students), and just 6% volunteer as part of a school requirement (including just 9% of full-time students).

Additionally, parental volunteer activity is only responsible for motivating 4% of young adults to volunteer.

Key Opportunities: Young Adults as Volunteers

- **Demonstrate how community-oriented volunteer activities will make a difference.**
- **Show young people the gratification that other young volunteers have experienced.**
- **Ask youth to get involved – through church, through school, or through extracurricular activities.**
- **Show how local, community-based volunteering can have a broader impact.**
- **Use tangible examples to explain how direct service to others may actually be related to larger questions of public policy.**

POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT

Young adults who are attached to institutions that provide political, civic, and ideological cues participate more than their peers in community activities, and have distinctly more positive attitudes about voting and political participation. In particular, young adults who attend church on a weekly basis, Republican young adults, and conservative young adults are notable for their civic and political engagement. Additionally, Republican youth are motivated by the presidency of George W. Bush and by the aftermath of the Florida controversy; this is one of the only periods in recent times where supporters of the in-party are more mobilized than supporters of the out-party.

Church-going and Republican youth also had good role models in their parents, who tended to vote more often in all or nearly all elections, were more likely than other parents to discuss politics with their children, and were more likely to take their children with them to vote.

The Power of Party and Ideology

- **Political parties and political ideologies have always been organizing principles of American politics.** For several decades, political scientists and observers have noted the weakening of party structures and the growing proportion of the population that classifies themselves as “independent” or “moderate.” Young adults are now nearly evenly divided among the three labels “Democrat” (30%), “Republican” (28%) and “Independent” (27%); like their older peers, about a third each consider themselves “liberal” (32%), “moderate,” (30%), and nearly a quarter call themselves “conservative” (23%).

To some, the expanding middle partisan and ideological category has suggested a “third way” in politics, while to others, it has simply suggested diminished engagement and muddled political attitudes. This data shows that young adults who identify with one of the two major party labels have more positive and well-defined views about politics than independents. Conservative ideologues have many of the same attributes as Republicans, and are more positive and more engaged than moderates or liberals on most political attitudes and questions of efficacy. Given the current political environment – a popular Republican President in office fighting a war on terrorism– it is not surprising that Republican and conservative youth are among the most engaged and politically optimistic youth constituencies.

- **Young adults who associate themselves with a partisan or ideological label on either the Left or the Right are more likely than others to be registered voters.** Indeed, throughout the data, being an “independent” suggests more political disengagement than ideology. Registration rates among Democrats and Republicans (78% and 76%, respectively) are significantly higher than among Independents (58%). There is a similar, though less strong, relationship among ideologues – liberals and conservatives (72% and 74%, respectively) tend to be registered to vote in higher shares than moderates (63%).
- **Volunteerism is more common among Republicans and Democrats, and in both parties, strong partisans are more dedicated volunteers.** A third of all Republicans volunteer at least

once a month, as well as 29% of Democrats. Relative to their partisan peers, independents also volunteer in lower proportions (25% volunteer at least once a month). Strong partisans in both the Democratic and Republican party have higher *weekly* volunteerism rates than their weak partisan peers – 21% of strong Democrats and 16% of strong Republicans volunteer once a week or more.

The relationship between volunteerism and ideology is less clear. Conservatives, and particularly strong conservatives, are faithful volunteers (36% of all conservatives and 41% of strong conservatives volunteer monthly), compared to moderates (27% volunteer monthly) and liberals (25% volunteer monthly). Surprisingly, unlike their strong conservative counterparts, strong liberals are the most cut off from community volunteering – 44% never volunteer. Strong conservatives are reinforced in their community volunteerism by their church attachment, however, the differences go beyond this relationship.

- **Republican and conservative youth attach more value to voting.** Nearly two-thirds of Republicans (64%) say it is important to them to vote, including a sizable share (29%) who say voting is extremely important (+29 net important). Strong Republicans are even more steadfast in this ethic – 74% say voting is important, including 37% who say it is very important (+50 net important). Democrats and strong Democrats are less adamant about the importance of voting (58% important, +18 net important), but – as with Republicans – strong Democrats are more likely to say that voting is important than their weak partisan peers (69% important, +38 net important). In contrast, just 43% of independents see voting as important (-13 net not important).

Ideological patterns resemble partisan patterns on this question overall and in terms of the relationship between strong and weak ideologues. Conservatives (+23 net important) and strong conservatives (+29 net important) think voting is important by larger margins than liberals (+6 net important) and strong liberals (+14 net important). Moderates are more ambivalent about the importance of voting (+3 net important).

- **Feelings of efficacy track along similar partisan and ideological lines.** Republicans overall believe they can make a difference in helping to solve problems by an 8-point margin (+13 among strong Republicans). Democrats have slightly lower levels of efficacy; but not surprisingly, strong Democrats have more efficacy than Democrats overall (+5 net can make a difference among all Democrats, +9 among strong Democrats). In contrast, just 42% of independents believe they can make a difference (-15 net not make a difference).

However, more conservatives than liberals express efficacy (+10 net make a difference versus +2 net make a difference), but both defined ideological groups have greater feelings of efficacy than moderates (-9 net not make a difference). Unlike the relationship between strong partisans and weak partisans, strong ideologues at both ends of the spectrum actually have slightly less efficacy on average than weak ideologues. This may reflect the perception that politics today is about moderation and finding middle ground, making it difficult for people with extreme views to prevail or, more simply, that the kinds of problems strong ideologues see are not problems they personally can help fix.

- **Young Republicans and conservatives are currently mobilized by George W. Bush's Presidency.** 63% of Republicans and 59% of conservatives say the Bush Presidency makes them more likely to participate in government and politics (including a quarter of each group who say they are much more likely to participate). Additionally, 69% of Republicans and 66% of conservatives say Bush makes them feel more favorable towards government (including a third of each group who say they are much more likely to participate). These constituencies are also energized by the Florida election controversy, and – unlike other groups of young adults – feel warmer towards government as a result of Florida.
- **The government in power has most likely affected this generations' feelings about government. Despite a traditionally more limited view of the role of government, both Republicans and conservatives trust the government to do what's right. They also believe the system is addressing the needs and concerns of young people.** Seven in ten Republicans and conservatives (70%-73%) trust the government to do what's right for the country (+47 and +41 net trust, respectively). Both of these groups also agree by large margins that government and politics do a good job addressing young people's needs (Republicans: +31, conservatives: +29 net agree).

Democrats have more mixed views, which lead to lower overall levels of engagement. Democrats have high levels of trust in government (67%, +35 net trust), but are less certain than Republicans that government and politics do a good job addressing young people's needs (+10 net agree). Independents are less willing than partisans to trust the government (57% trust, +13 net trust) and are split on whether government and politics address young people's needs (+3 net agree, 50% agree, 47% disagree).

In the current environment, liberals are a group to watch for declining levels of engagement. Liberals are *less* trusting of government than moderates (+23 net trust versus +32 net trust) and less likely to agree that politics and government addresses young people's needs (+4 net agree among liberals versus +10 net agree among moderates).

- **Parents of Republicans and conservatives are among the most regular voters and make a uniquely strong effort to involve their kids in politics.** Nearly 8 in 10 Republicans (79%) say their parents voted in all or most elections, including an astounding 45% who say their parents voted in *every* election; parents of conservatives exhibited nearly identical behavior. In contrast, Democrats report parental behavior that mirrors that of all young adults (66% voted in all or most elections, including 27% voted in all elections) and independents' parents were even less regular voters (61% voted in all or most elections, including 24% voted in all); parents of liberals and moderates follow the same pattern in voting habits as partisans.

Additionally, Republicans were also far more likely to go with their parents to vote (49% of Republicans, 38% of Democrats, 33% of independents); strong Republicans were more likely than weak Republicans to have been taken to the polls with their parents (55% versus 45%), but strong Democrats were actually less likely than weaker Democrats to go vote with their parents (33% versus 40%). Similarly, more conservatives went to vote with their parents (45%) than liberals or moderates (40% and 36%, respectively).

Political discussion habits within Republican and Democratic families were more equal than voting expeditions with parents. Most Republicans (60%) and a majority of Democrats (54%) grew up with parents who discussed politics with them, while only a minority of independents (45%) grew up with political discussion at home. Once again, similar patterns exist among

ideological groups – 59% of conservatives had political discussions with their parents as did 55% of liberals; discussion among moderates was even less common (48%).

The Power of Religiosity

- **Religious young adults are more politically and civically involved than their peers.** Church attendance – combined with parents who also tend to be more engaged – appears to drive young adults' behaviors and attitudes. Even holding parental behavior constant in a multivariate regression, whether a young adult attends church often is a highly significant predictor of political attitudes and community involvement.
- **Young adults who attend church at least once a week (30% of all young adults) also see community engagement as a core value.** Nearly half (48%) volunteer at least once a month, including nearly a quarter (23%) who volunteer at least once a week. One subset of regular Churchgoers – Born Again Christians – are also high-frequency volunteers (39% at least monthly, including 18% weekly). Both regular Churchgoers and Born Agains are more likely to believe they can make a difference in solving problems in their community (55% can make at least some difference, +11 net difference among churchgoers; 50% can make at least some difference, +2 net difference among Born Agains). Devout Churchgoers narrowly trust people rather than thinking you can't be too careful in dealing with people (49% trust, +3 net trust), though Born Agains are more skeptical (-10 net not trust).

Statistically, there is a significant relatively strong correlation between regular church attendance and participation in the community and political activities ($r=.281$). In a regression model predicting participation in that range of activities, regular church attendance is a significant and strong predictor of involvement, even when other contributing factors (age, student status, feelings of efficacy, and political socialization variables) are controlled.

- **Young Churchgoers also see political participation as meaningful.** Nearly two-thirds of devout young adults (64%) say voting is extremely or very important (+30 net important), compared to 54% of occasional Churchgoers (+8 net important), and 37% of non-churchgoers (-23 net not important). Similarly, 62% of Born Again youth see voting as important (+26 net important). Statistically, thinking voting is important is more correlated with regular church attendance than with any other demographic variable ($r=.29$). Additionally, three-quarters of church-going youth and Born Again youth are registered to vote.
- **Interestingly, young Churchgoers have a more positive view of government and the political system's performance in addressing the concerns of young people.** Seventy percent of devout and occasional Churchgoers and Born Again youth trust government to do what is right for the country (+45 among devout churchgoers, +43 among Born Agains, and +41 among occasional churchgoers net trust government); there is a .29 correlation between churchgoing and trust in government. Far more than their peers, these young adults agree that elections and government address the needs and concerns of young people (+30 among Born Agains, +24 among devout churchgoers, and +22 among occasional churchgoers, +8 among all youth net agree).
- **Religiously observant and Born Again young adults appear to have learned civic and political engagement from their parents than young adults overall.** A full 50% of devout Churchgoers went with their parents to vote, as did 44% of Born Again youth. Majorities discussed politics with their parents (56% of devout Churchgoers, 55% of occasional

Churchgoers, and 55% of Born Again youth). More than a third (37%) of both devout Churchgoers and Born Again youth say their parents voted in every election, compared to 29% of young adults overall.

Key Opportunities: Political Party Identification and Religious Involvement

- **Look for non-religious institutions that can serve a political socialization function that parallels the function of churches in providing cues and political information to non-church-going youth. This is particularly critical for institutions and movements that might appeal to liberal students.**
- **Work with existing political party structures to give young adults a reason to join or identify with political parties.**
- **Work with political parties to engage and mobilize youth, and explain to independent or uncertain young people what political parties can do for them.**
- **Strengthen civic education curriculum to help clarify the differences between political parties and explain the significance of parties in the American political system in terms of policy, rather than in terms of partisan bickering.**

WHAT YOUTH ARE LOOKING FOR IN CANDIDATES

While parents, current events, and a young person's environment can dramatically affect young people's political and civic attitudes and behaviors, candidates and political leaders also play a critical role in mobilizing young adults to vote. As the Center for Democracy and Citizenship learned in putting together its Candidate Toolkit in 2000, young adults want to interact and be treated seriously by candidates. This study has quantified what the research for the Toolkit began to explore and demonstrates tremendous opportunities for candidates who impress youth with substance over style. Our study shows candidates should make an effort to talk directly to young adults about issues that affect all Americans.

Youth Want to Feel Included

This and other data clearly show that political leaders need to help resolve young adults' ambivalence about whether government, politics and elections address the needs and concerns of young people. Talking about issues that are of concern to everyone – not just youth – in front of youth audiences is one way to do this.

- **Today, young adults agree by only a slim 8-point margin that politics and elections and government address their concerns (53% agree, 44% disagree).** Women (+13 net agree) – especially 21-22 year old women (+17), white women (+16) – college-bound high schoolers (+19), young adults with some college education or a college degree (+12) and young adults with either some college or plans to attend college (+18), full-time students (+19), Republicans (+31), conservatives (+29), church-attending youth (+23), Born Again youth (+30), and first generation Americans (+15) are among the most likely to say that government and politics and elections address their concerns.

In contrast, men (+4), particularly 18-20 year old men (-1 net disagree), men without a college education or plans to attend college (+1), independent men (+1) – young adults who are not in school (even split), non-Churchgoers (-13), and rural youth (+2) are divided or negative about whether politics and government address their concerns.

Not surprisingly, engaged and disengaged youth have dramatically different views on governmental and political inclusion and responsiveness to youth. Registered voters believe their needs are addressed by a 21-point margin (60% agree), while non-registered youth disagree by a 26-point margin (just 34% agree, while 61% disagree). Similarly, youth who think voting is important agree that government and politics address concerns of youth by a 30-point margin (64% agree), while youth who do not see voting as important tend to think their needs aren't being addressed (-13 net disagree).

- **While young adults overall do not think differently about “government’s” responsiveness to youth concerns than about whether youth concerns are addressed in “politics and elections,” there are noticeable differences between older and younger youth that may be important down the road.** Teenagers believe “government” addresses their concerns, but they are unsure or negative about whether “politics and elections” do, while youth in their 20's are more cynical about “government,” but they are more optimistic about “politics and elections”

(see box). It is unclear whether these cohorts are actually different or whether this is a life-cycle effect.

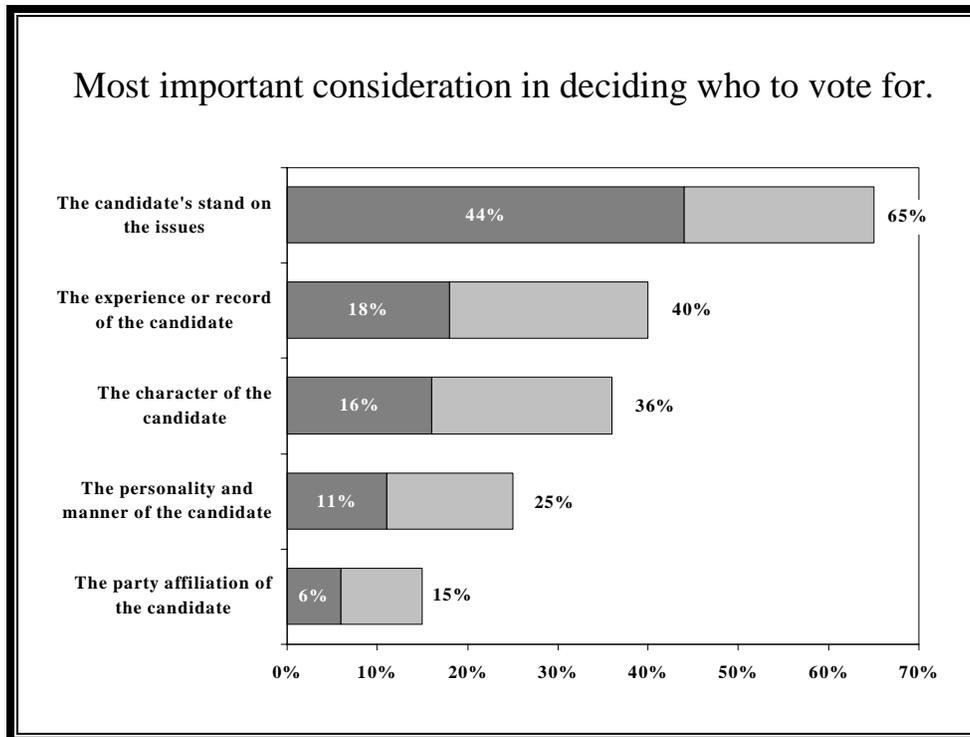
- **Young adults are even more ambivalent about how much attention *political leaders* (as opposed to political systems or institutions) give to issues that concern young people.** Young adults are split – 48% say political leaders pay a great deal of attention or some attention to them, while 50% say political leaders pay just a little attention or no attention at all to the concerns of young people like themselves.

<i>Do you agree or disagree that government and politics address the needs and concerns of young people like you?</i>		
	Net agree gov't does	Net agree pol/elect. do
15-17 yr olds	+20	+6
18-20 yr olds	+20	-9
21-22 yr olds	-2	+27
23-25 yr olds	-2	+11

Demographic distinctions are similar to those described above, although on this question there are noticeable differences by race and ethnicity. White youth are split evenly in their views on how much attention political leaders pay to them, while African Americans are largely positive (+8 net leaders pay a lot/some attention). Hispanic youth are far less likely to feel their needs are addressed (-12 net leaders pay a little/no attention).

An important finding for the future of democratic participation and a clear wake up call for political leaders, is that young adults who do not feel political institutions and leaders address their concerns are far less likely to be registered to vote (56% are registered), think voting is important (-21 net not important), or trust government (-17 net distrust). They are also likely to be disengaged from their community – 46% never volunteer.

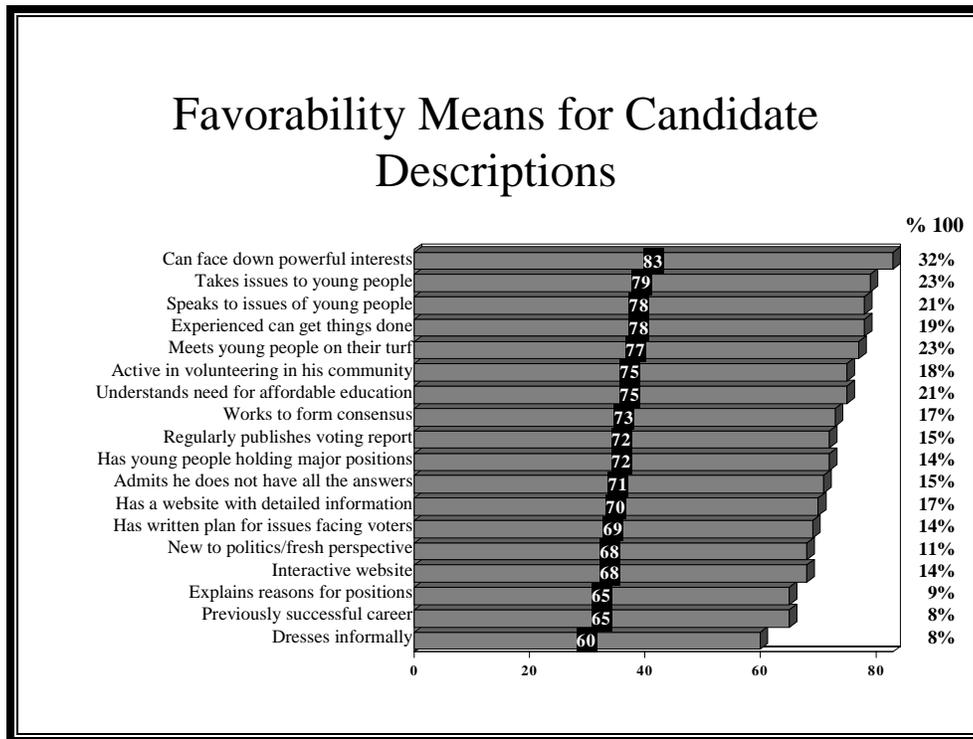
- **Politicians clearly need to make young adults feel more included in politics by presenting themselves and their ideas to youth.** Throughout the survey, we see a real seriousness among youth. The most important thing a candidate can remember is that young adults are no different than older adults when evaluating candidates. Young people are most interested in what a candidate believes and how effective he or she has been in the past.



- Like most older voters, young adults say candidates' issue stands are the most important factor in their voting decisions.** Given a list of candidate attributes to consider, a plurality (44%) say a candidate's stand on the issues is the most important factor in their decision to vote for a candidate, and two-thirds (65%) say issue stands are the first or second most important consideration in choosing a candidate. Issues rank as the top priority for young adults across all subgroups of the population.
- What a politician has done and who he or she are as people fall into a second tier of priorities in selecting a candidate.** Record and experience follow second (18% most important, 40% first or second most important), and the character of the candidate ranks close behind (16% most important, 36% first or second most important). Personality is seen as the most important factor by just 11% of young adults, and as one of the first or second most important factors by 25%.
- Party affiliation is an issue for only a small share of young adults, including those who self-identify themselves as strong partisans.** The party affiliation of the candidate is regarded as most important by just 6% of young adults and as one of the most important criteria in candidate selection by just 15%; even among strong Democrats and strong Republicans, party affiliation rates as the most important criteria by 11% and 14%, respectively; and as one of the top two factors in candidate choice by 30% of strong Democrats and 28% of strong Republicans. Strong partisans from both parties prioritize issue positions, record and experience, and character above party affiliation; and weak partisans and independents are more concerned with each of the other four factors – including the candidate's personality.

Evaluating Candidate Traits: Strength and a Willingness to go to Youth are Paramount

- As young adults said in focus groups in 2000 in preparation for compiling the Center for Democracy and Citizenship’s Candidate Toolkit, young adults want candidates who show strength in their convictions, seek out opportunities to address young people, try to relate his or her own experiences to those young adults have, and have a demonstrated commitment to the community as well as demonstrated record in politics.



- Far more than any other candidate trait, young adults want a candidate with the courage of his or her convictions.** Young adults feel warmest towards a candidate who can “face powerful interests and stand up for what he believes is right,” (mean score of 83 on a 1-100 scale, with 32% rating “100”). All youth, particularly 21-22 year olds (39% rate 100), Republicans (39% rate 100), African Americans (39% rate 100), Hispanic youth (40% rate 100), young parents (41% rate 100), and those with very high levels of efficacy (49% rate 100), rate this trait more favorably than any other trait.
- In a second cluster of desirable candidate traits, youth feel warmest towards candidates who make an effort to come to them and speak about issues of concern, candidates who can demonstrate that they have had the same experiences that young adults themselves, and that they have been involved in community life, not just in politics.** Specifically, this group includes: “a candidate who calls for a debate at a local high school or college to take issues to the students and to young people,” (mean: 79, 23% rate 100); “a candidate who speaks to issues of particular concern to young people, like affordable college,” (mean: 78, 21% rate 100); “a candidate who is experienced in politics and can get things done,” (mean: 78, 19% rate 100); “a candidate who says he understands first hand the importance of affordable college

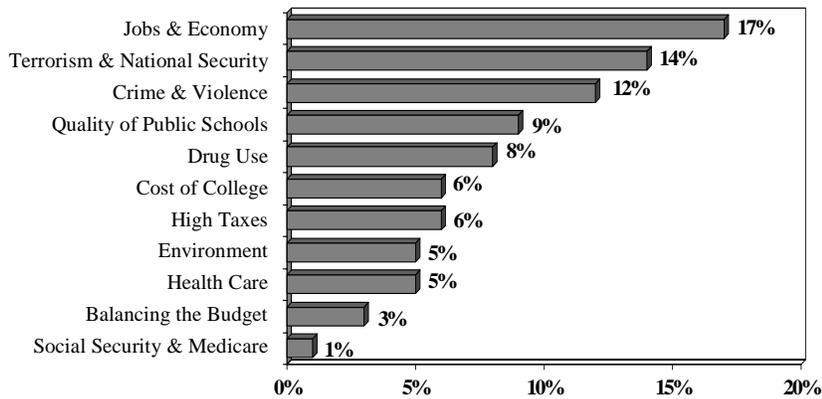
education because he needed grants and loans to go to college himself,” (mean: 75, 21% rate 100); and “a candidate who has been active volunteering in his community,” (mean: 75, 18% rate 100).

- **Young adults appreciate candidates who work well with their peers, are not cocky or condescending, include young adults in their campaigns, and provide information to voters on their issue positions, but these traits do not generate particularly intense enthusiasm among young adult--perhaps because they assume candidates should be doing these things automatically.** Young adults give mean scores of between 69 and 73 to the following types of candidates, but only between 14% and 17% rate these candidate traits as a “100”: “a candidate who has worked with people from the opposing party to reach consensus on issues,” (mean: 73, 17% rate 100); “a candidate who regularly publishes a report to voters on how he has voted on the issues,” (mean: 72, 15% rate 100); “a candidate who has young people holding some major positions in his campaign,” (mean 72, 14% rate 100); “a candidate who has a website with detailed information about his positions on issues,” (mean: 70, 17% rate 100); “a candidate who admits he does not have all the answers,” (mean: 70, 15% rate as 100); and “a candidate who has a written plan on the major issues facing the voters,” (mean: 69, 14% rate 100).
- **Relative to other traits, candidates who accept voter feedback over the Internet, “outsider” candidates, candidates with views on issues that are counter to those of the voter, and a candidate’s appearance are less important and appealing to young adults. However, young adults still feel far more favorable than unfavorable to these candidate traits and – in a real campaign setting – these traits may convey something about the character of the candidate that appeals to young adults.** Young adults are less impressed with the following kinds of candidates: “a candidate who has a website which invites you to tell the candidate what you think about the issues,” (mean: 67, 14% rate 100, 46% rate 76-100); “a candidate whose positions you may not always agree with but who explains the reasons for his positions,” (mean: 65, 9% rate 100, 41% rate 76-100); “a candidate who dresses informally or casually,” (mean: 60, 8% rate 100, 33% rate 76-100). Noticeably, the outsider profiles of “a candidate who is relatively new to politics and brings a fresh perspective” (mean: 68, 11% rate 100, 46% rate 76-100), and “a candidate who has been successful in business or a profession,” (mean: 65, 8% rate 100, 40% rate 76-100) are far less appealing than the profile of a candidate who is politically experienced and effective. These traits in general have declined in importance with voters since 9/11. Voters now value more experience and want more traditional candidates.

Young Adults’ Concerns Mirror Those of All Americans

- **Political leaders need to keep in mind that young adults’ top concerns mirror those of Americans overall, though their agenda is slightly more diffuse. This means they need to talk to young adults as they would any other audience – pointing out how the issue is relevant to the particular constituency they are addressing and suggesting how they might address the issue once in office.** Jobs and the economy (17%), terrorism and national security (14%) and crime and violence (12%) comprise the top tier of young adults’ diffuse issue concerns. The cost of college is far lower on the priority list – just 6%, including 6% of college-bound high school students and 8% of those with some college education.

Number one problem facing the country needing to be addressed



Older young adults and young adults who are attached to the labor market are most concerned with jobs and the economy. Relative to the list of other concerns they have, jobs and the economy are particularly salient concerns to 21 and 22 year olds (26%) and 23 to 25 year olds (20%), working young adults who are not in school (23%), married couples (22%), young parents (18%) as well as to registered voters (22%) and Democratic women (22%). Terrorism is of greater concern and ranks as the top issue among young adults who are just in school and do not work (26%) and youth under age 21 (18%).

In terms of targeting particular audiences, Hispanics are as concerned with jobs and the economy as with crime and drugs (18% name each as their top concern, while just 9% name terrorism); 24% of Hispanic women are more concerned about crime and violence than any other issue. Additionally, independents' agenda includes the quality of public schools as a top tier concern (14%) along with the economy and terrorism (16% name each as their top concern).

Partisan Nuances for Candidates To Consider

- In the current environment, Republican candidates can benefit from heightened mobilization among Republican and conservative youth, as well as the institutional structure religious institutions provide to reach and engage young adults.** Republican candidates have the opportunity to build upon the enthusiasm George W. Bush's Presidency has generated among a cohort whose formative years were spent under a controversial Democratic president. As noted throughout this report, Republican and conservative youth are highly engaged, highly trusting in government, and have positive feelings about their own personal efficacy in making a difference as well as about politicians' propensity to address their concerns.

- **Democratic candidates need to beware of the current optimistic and engaged mood of Republican youth, reach out aggressively to mobilize young Democrats, and work to engage young independents.** Democrats have a great deal of work to do to get their young partisans as engaged as youth were during the early part of the Clinton administration and reverse the negative feelings independent youth have about government as a result of the Clinton administration. They also need to reverse the negative feelings about government that arose among Democrats and independents after the Florida election controversy. Democrats – or political parties to the ideological left of the Democrats – have particular work to do in re-engaging liberal Democrats in political participation.

Key Opportunities: What Youth are looking for in Candidates

- **Politicians and political institutions can affect young adults through outreach and through demonstrating that they *do* pay attention to young adults' concerns just as they pay attention to the concerns of all Americans.**
- **Candidates for office can win the confidence and capture the imagination of young adults by going to the places young adults are and talking to them about issues that are important – not only to young people, but to all people.**
- **While issues should be the *content* of political leaders' discussions with young adults, they should frame their record and experience in terms of taking a stand, following through, and getting results.**
- **Politicians should not think that simply having young staffers or putting out information on their issue positions alone will engage youth – this needs to be part of a larger strategy to let young people know they matter.**
- **Young adults do not want politicians to treat them differently than other adults – they simply want to be treated *equally*.**

PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTIONS TO ENGAGEMENT

One avenue for engaging young adults more fully in political and civic life is to create new structures or strengthen existing institutions that instill civic values and provide civic knowledge. As this and other studies demonstrate, young adults with higher knowledge levels, more education, more attachment to institutions, and more extensive parental socialization tend to be more engaged in their communities and in politics. The rationale for wanting more extensive civic education and community involvement experience, is to provide all youth – not just those that come from particular backgrounds – with a strong foundation for future community and political involvement.

Young adults in this survey say they would be open to new opportunities to do community service, particularly when they receive something tangible in return, and most resistant when new initiatives would require mandatory participation. There are significant differences in attitudes about these new measures by subgroups, depending upon whether the particular subgroup would be directly affected by the new program or requirement. In general, young adults who are already engaged like these proposals more than those who are not engaged. In terms of mobilizing youth, most of these proposals are not likely to work. However, instituting these proposals would likely affect levels of knowledge, if not – ultimately – engagement.

Interest in Civic Education

While this survey did not probe young adults' assessments of the civic education they received or ask how interested they are in receiving more, young adults do believe in the value of civic education. As discussed in more detail below, two-thirds of young adults believe civics and government classes should be requirements for high school graduation.

- **Despite their belief that civic education is valuable, this survey suggests that just a minority of young adults are choosing these classes on their own.** A third of all young adults (36%) – including 41% of college-bound high school students and 42% of all young adults with some college education or a college degree – say they have chosen to take classes on government or politics in the past couple of years.⁷ However, just 27% of non-college-bound high schoolers and 26% of young adults who are not currently in school report choosing to take a government or politics class. Looking to the future, just a quarter of all young adults (26%) say it is extremely or very likely they will take a class on government, politics, or civic education in the future. Nearly half of current students say they are likely to take a class (49%); notably, these students are already more likely than their peers to be politically engaged. In contrast, just 16% of young adults who are not in school say they are likely to take a class on politics.

⁷ We should note that “chosen” in this question may mean that young people were forced as students to choose from a constrained set of courses, rather than to take a government or politics class *in addition* to other course requirement or independent of any designated school program.

Attitudes Towards New Programs and Requirements

- **Young adults are most enthusiastic about an expanded Americorps-type program – where every young person would be offered a chance to do a full year of national or community service to earn money towards college or advanced training.** Eight in ten young adults (81%) say they favor this proposal, including nearly half (46%) who strongly favor it (+64 net favor). No subgroup opposes this proposal, and it is engaging to many of those youth who politicians are working to reach.

This proposal is most popular among working students (+72 net favor), college-bound 15-17 year olds (+70), young adults with two jobs (+69), and African American youth (+81). It is popular with all Democrats (+72) as well as with Republicans (+66); but it is not as engaging to independents (+59).

- **Young adults are marginally positive, but have more polarized views about making a year of community service a condition for receiving government student loans or grants.** Young adults favor this proposal by a 10-point margin, with 53% saying they favor this proposal. However, those with well-defined views on this issue tend to oppose the proposal – a fifth (21%) are strongly in favor, while a quarter (27%) are strongly opposed. Realistically, it would be unusual for a candidate to run on this issue – most candidates are interested in telling people they will be able to work less for their money, not telling them they must work more.

Older young adults, who would likely not be affected by such a change, are among the most supportive of this proposal (+17 net favor; 26% of 23-25 year old women strongly support it), as are 18 to 25 year olds who did not go to college (+19 net favor). Additionally, strong Democrats (+23) and strong Republicans (+35) – groups with already high levels of civic attachment – are supportive of this proposal. In general, there are very few groups with intensely positive feelings about mandatory service for government loans.

- **Young adults oppose community service as a requirement for high school graduation by a 12-point margin.** More than half *oppose* this proposal (55%), including over a third who strongly oppose it (36%). In contrast, 43% favor a high school community service requirement and just 16% strongly support it. The only demographic groups that are more positive than negative towards this idea are 23-25 year old women (+8 net favor), 18 to 25 year olds who have gone or graduated from college (+15), and young adults who are already in school (+14). Democratic women (+6) and Republican women (+4), as well as strong Democrats (+21), strong liberals (+14) and strong conservatives (+17) are in favor, though strong Republicans are more divided (+3).

Opposition is, not surprisingly, highest among many of the groups politicians need to reach and engage: current high school age students (-35 net oppose), including 15 to 17 year old college-bound youth (-30), and independents (-20).

- **Given young adults' oppositions to a community service requirement in high school, it is surprising that survey respondents expressed support for "instituting a new draft that gives people the choice between civilian or military service."** 61% say they would favor a draft alternative, including 30% who strongly favor this proposal (+31 net favor). Given the disparity in responses between this question and the proposal for mandatory community service in high school, it is likely that young adults interpreted this proposal as giving people who get drafted for war an alternative to military service; given the current political environment this

interpretation is possible. Thus, this result should not be seen as support for a *new* civilian draft, but rather as support for an alternative to military service should one be instituted. Since we know from other questions in the survey that small shares of young adults are interested in joining the military, it is unlikely that the level of support in this question can be interpreted as active support for a draft.

- **Instituting civics and government course requirements in schools wins high marks overall, but is less popular among those who would be affected by new course requirements.** Two-thirds (66%) favor requiring civics and government classes in high school, including a third (35%) who strongly favor this proposal (+35 net favor). Similarly, 64% favor requiring civics and government classes in middle school, including 30% who strongly favor this requirement (+31 net favor). Every subgroup in the youth population supports civic education as part of the school curriculum, though levels of support vary. In general, the data suggest that those who are already engaged are convinced of the need for the curriculum and believe that all youth should know what they do about politics. Non-engaged young adults and those who are closest to being affected by new requirements are less enthusiastic.

Support for these proposals is noticeably lower among those who would be currently or most recently affected by these new requirements – for example, 15 to 17 year olds only favor the high school requirement by a 15-point margin and the middle school requirement by a 7-point margin, while those who are safely out of secondary school support the school requirements by 40-point margins or more.

Young adults who already have higher levels of political attachment think civic education is a particularly good idea – Democrats favor high school civics requirements by a 46-point margin (+72 among strong Democrats) and Republicans favor high school civics requirements by a 53-point margin (+62 among strong Republicans). Independents are less supportive (+24 net favor). There are similar gaps in levels of support among registered voters and non-registered young adults (+55 versus +21 net favor) and between young adults who grew up with political discussions in the home and those who did not (+54 versus +18 net favor).

Key Opportunities: Public Policy Solutions to Engagement

- **Work to expand Americorps or similar, community-based programs, to give young adults incentives to do community service in exchange for financial aid.**
- **Help politicians to see that talking about programs like Americorps and the benefits these programs provide to local communities may both increase national service rates and engage young adults in political and community life.**
- **Work to establish engaging civic education curriculum so that young adults see classes on politics and government as interesting, desirable courses that have application to the real world.**
- **Implement programs that facilitate or compel youth to participate more fully in community life rather than insisting or requiring that they participate – provide incentives or rewards for participating, but do not require participation.**