

Black Youth Project

FACTSHEET: POLITICS

Black Youth Project researchers surveyed 1,590 Black, White and Hispanic young people between the ages of 15 and 25 about their political behavior and feelings about politics. Responses were broken down by race/ethnicity, sex, and age.

Key findings include the following:

- The majority of youth believe they have the skills and knowledge to participate in politics and that their participation can make a difference.
- Yet, very few young people report engaging in political acts in the twelve months prior to completing the survey in 2005.
- The most popular forms of youth political participation include signing a paper or e-mail petition, boycotting, using the Internet to send a political e-mail or write a politically oriented blog, and talking to friends and family about politics.
- Most young people believe that the people in their neighborhood working together can solve many of the problems they face but they cannot get the government to respond to their needs.
- Among young people who voted in the November 2004 presidential election, Black youth overwhelmingly supported John Kerry, while Hispanic youth supported Kerry by lesser margins and White youth split their votes between John Kerry and George Bush.

Presidential Election

- Of those young people who voted in the last presidential election, the overwhelming majority of Black and Hispanic youth voted for John Kerry, while White youth divided their vote between John Kerry and George Bush. The percentage of youth that voted for John Kerry are:
 - 90% Black youth
 - 73% Hispanic youth
 - 49% White youth

Political Efficacy and Alienation

- A strong majority of all youth believe that they can make a difference by participating in politics and that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in politics.

The percentage of youth who believe that they can make a difference by participating in politics are:

- 79% of Black youth
- 77% of Hispanic youth
- 79% of White youth

The percentage of youth who believe they have the skills and knowledge to participate in politics are:

- 74% Black youth
 - 66% of Hispanic youth
 - 70% of White youth
- At the same time, the majority of both Black and Hispanic youth believe that the leaders in government care very little about people like them. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 56% of Black youth
 - 52% of Hispanic youth
 - 44% of White youth

Black females (58%) and Hispanic males (59%) were most likely to agree that government cares little about their concerns.

- Black and Hispanic young people are also more likely than White youth to agree that the government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves and their friends. The percentage of youth who agree with this are:
 - 66% of Black youth
 - 62% of Hispanic youth
 - 50% of White youth

Most Popular Forms of Youth Participation

- In the twelve months prior to taking the survey in 2005, less than 20% of young people from any surveyed racial or ethnic group participated in traditional political acts that included contacting a public official or agency; attending a protest meeting, demonstration or sit-in; participating in a boycott; joining a political group; giving money to a candidate, party or political issue; working or volunteering on a political campaign or for a candidate or a political party; working with people in their neighborhood on a political issue or problem; or writing an article or letter to the editor about a political issue or problem.

Other Forms of Political Participation

- While very few young people have engaged in boycotts, nearly a quarter (23%) have engaged in *buycotting* (buying a certain product or service because they like the social or political values of that company).

The percentage of youth who report participating in a *boycott* in the twelve months prior to completing the survey in 2005 are:

- 2% of Black youth
- 4% of Hispanic youth
- 6% of White youth

Percentage of youth who report participating in a *buycott* in the twelve months prior to completing the survey in 2005 are:

- 25% of Black youth
 - 20% of Hispanic youth
 - 23% of White youth
- One quarter of all young people report *signing a paper or e-mail petition* in the twelve months prior to completing the survey in 2005. The percentage of youth who report this are:
 - 16% of Black youth
 - 19% of Hispanic youth
 - 28% of White youth
 - About one in five youth say they have *sent an e-mail or written a blog entry* about a political issue, candidate or political party in the twelve months prior to completing the survey in 2005. The percentage of youth who report sending a political email or writing a political blog are:
 - 15% of Black youth
 - 18% of Hispanic youth
 - 21% of White youth
 - A large majority of all youth *report talking with family or friends* about a political issue, party or candidate in the twelve months prior to completing the survey. The percentage of youth who report this are:
 - 66% of Black youth
 - 66% of Hispanic youth
 - 84% of White youth

Community Politics: Political Efficacy versus Collective Efficacy

- Only about four in ten young people believe that people in their neighborhood are able to get the government to respond to their needs. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 40% of Black youth
 - 38% of Hispanic youth
 - 42% of White youth
- Yet, an overwhelming majority of all youth believe that people working together in their neighborhood can solve many of their problems. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 76% of Black youth
 - 72% of Hispanic youth
 - 79% of White youth

Civic Engagement

- The majority of White and Hispanic young people and the near majority of Black youth indicate they have engaged in organized volunteer or community-service work in the twelve months prior to completing the survey in 2005. The percentage of youth who have engaged in this type of work are:
 - 48% of Black youth
 - 54% of Hispanic youth
 - 62% of White youth

- Young people ages 15-17 are much more likely to be a member of an organized group, such as one run through school, church or the park system, than are older youth. The percentage of youth who belong to an organized group are:
 - 62% of 15-17 year-olds
 - 37% of 18-21 year-olds
 - 34% of 22-25 year olds

 - 67% of White 15-17 year olds
 - 53% of Black 15-17 year-olds
 - 47% of Hispanic 15-17 year olds