

INFLUENCING YOUNG AMERICA TO ACT

Research by

Cause & Social
Influence)))

Supported by

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INTRO

What Influences Young America to Act?

The desire to help others live better, happier lives is part of human nature.

Seeing injustice or need that's caused by circumstances beyond the affected person's control seems especially poignant. Yet, not every social issue inspires action.

Why?

This report, the first of many, seeks to elucidate the sources of those influences on Young America's active, observable support of social issues and movements. The study is part of the larger Cause and Social Influence initiative by INFLUENCE|SG and supported by the Case Foundation to examine how Young Americans in their

formative adult years – specifically, those 18 to 30 years old at any given time – are influenced by and influence others to take action on social issues.

Based on quantitative methods with a nationally representative sample, we have taken the first step toward identifying the intrinsic and extrinsic influences that prompt Young America to move beyond empathy to considered, overt action, and then how such individual actions coalesce into vast numbers of young people acting in concert to deliberately create meaningful change.

SOCIAL ISSUE

A social issue is an existing situation recognized by society as being against its general values, yet able to be alleviated through people working together and/or using community resources.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

A social movement is a group of people working together to support the interests of a community whose lives are affected by an issue. This group often is unable to overcome this issue without the support of dedicated community activists and donors.

INFLUENCE

Influence is an external force that inspires a person to become aware, adopt and act for or against a social issue.

RESEARCH APPROACH

RESEARCH PANEL:

- 1,100 Young Americans
- Census-projected population of ages 18-30
- Nationally representative sample

METHOD:

- Quantitative (online survey)
- Fielded August 8-14, 2018
- 95% confidence interval with 3% margin of error
- Qualitative interviews and focus groups for further analysis are underway

Find complete details of the panel at CauseAndSocialInfluence.com/research

SUMMARY

Executive Summary of Findings

1. The top Issues for today's Young Americans are civil rights/racial discrimination, gun safety, immigration and climate change, and they trust business least to address them.

Though government and business play significant roles in all these issues and Young America is not happy with the direction in which our country is moving, it's business they distrust more than government to make things right. Who do they trust the most? People like themselves, then nonprofits (good news for those active on social media) and then social movements.

2. Young Americans view voting as a way to exert their own influence and force change.

Voting is believed to be more than just one's duty as a citizen; Young Americans also believe it is the most effective means of creating change relevant to social issues and movements – and 66% intend to vote in November 2018. They also use their purchasing power to influence companies' behavior.

3. News coverage and non-profits influence the most Young Americans to begin supporting a social issue.

After they first become aware of social issues via the news media, Young

Americans were intrinsically moved to perform some action in support of an issue. Being asked to act by a nonprofit was the No. 2 influence for three of the four top issues.

4. Social media influences Young America to get involved in movements, yet their own initial foray does not involve social media.

The top current movements began on social media, and that's how Young Americans say they first heard about them. Instead of turning to social media to act, though, they were more likely to sign petitions and attend rallies or protests.

TOP ISSUES OF CONCERN TO YOUNG AMERICA TODAY

Civil Rights/
Racial
Discrimination

#1

Gun Safety

#2

Immigration

#3

Climate Change

#4

Want to see all the issues Young America is interested in?
Visit: CauseAndSocialInfluence.com/research

#1

Source of Influence
for Social Issues:
TV NEWS

VOTING IS:

- ✓ Most effective way to bring about change in social issues.
- ✓ Every U.S. citizen's duty.
- ✓ What two-thirds intend to do in November.

WORTH NOTING

Today almost half (48%) of Young Americans believe the U.S. is off track, while 27% believe the opposite. One year from now, those projections drop significantly for the former to one-third (33%), but only by 1% for the latter - reflecting a great deal of uncertainty about the future.

For voters, non-voters and those unsure if they'll vote, civil rights/racial discrimination was the top issue. Two-thirds of Young Americans intend to vote in November 2018 elections.

Only with #AllLivesMatter did the news media exceed social media as the top influence for social movements.

Civil rights/racial discrimination was the top issue for African Americans and Asians. Caucasians were most concerned with healthcare reform and Hispanics with immigration, while civil rights/racial discrimination was No. 2 for both.

Of the four top issues, climate change had the lowest percentage of respondents becoming first aware of it via TV news outlets. It was the only issue for which print news was among the top three sources of initial awareness.

OUTLOOK

Young Americans view voting as a way to exert their own influence and force change.

Nearly 75% of Young America views voting as a form of activism, and 95% sees it as one's duty as a citizen. More than any other actions taken in support of a cause, Young Americans believe voting for political candidates who agree with their views is the most effective way to create change. And whether they're voting in support of a social issue or a movement, they initially participate through intrinsic desire rather than extrinsic influences.

Though voting is not normally the first action they take in support of an issue, more than two-thirds say they plan to

vote in upcoming elections – especially those who are Hispanic, the same group that is most dissatisfied with President Donald Trump and that most believes their vote will lead to change.

Across all races/ethnicities, the attitude that voting is a duty and the most effective means to change – combined with general unhappiness – could translate into a significant impact on upcoming elections. Though this survey inquired about intention to vote rather than past voting activity, tracking actual voting behaviors taken during the next election will provide opportunities for other useful insights.

Who do you trust? (In Order)

- 1 Myself and/or people like me
- 2 Nonprofit organizations
- 3 Social Movements
- 4 Local Government
- 5 Federal Government
- 6 Corporations

Top issue for me is: % who voted

Civil Rights	46%
Immigration	46%
Climate Change	41%
Gun Safety	40%

Will your action (whatever that is) lead to desired change?

Voters	Non-Voters	Unsure
79% Yes	42% Yes	51% Yes
6% No	38% No	17% No
15% Unsure	20% Unsure	33% Unsure

How do you think our country is now compared to pre-November 2016 presidential election?

	Overall	Males	Females
On track/totally on track	27%	34%	22%
Off track/totally off track	48%	39%	54%

Where do you think our country will be one year from now?

	Overall	Males	Females
On track/totally on track	26%	33%	21%
Off track/totally off track	33%	27%	39%

Hispanics are unhappy and most likely to vote

How well do you think President Trump has addressed causes and social issues important to you?

	Not well at all
Hispanics	46%
Caucasians	46%
Asians	41%
African Americans	40%

Who intends to vote this November?

Hispanics	72%
Caucasians	67%
African Americans	62%
Asians*	57%

*traditionally the lowest voter turnouts

Will voting lead to desired change?

Hispanics	77%
Asians	73%
Caucasians	69%
African Americans	55%

TRUST

The U.S. is moving in the wrong direction.

Young Americans are unhappy with the direction in which our country is moving. Moreover, Young Americans are dissatisfied with President Trump's leadership (57% somewhat or extremely dissatisfied) in general and his approach to addressing social injustice in particular.

However, when asked to project where the country would be one year from now, Young Americans were more likely to say they were unsure than they were to say the country would still be off track. Is it their intention to vote that makes them cautiously hopeful?

COMPANIES EARN LESS TRUST THAN GOVERNMENT

While Young Americans don't believe the country is on track, it's companies they trust the least – and themselves and others like them the most.

To demonstrate their distrust of business, Young America calls for changing purchasing decisions as a form of activism and consider it one of the top four ways to create change. As the influence

and buying power of Young America is unprecedented, this distrust of business could have a sizable impact if employed as part of movements. Millennials alone have a potential buying power exceeding \$300 billion. Thus, a movement directing a boycott or other negative purchasing decision could prove fatal to some companies.

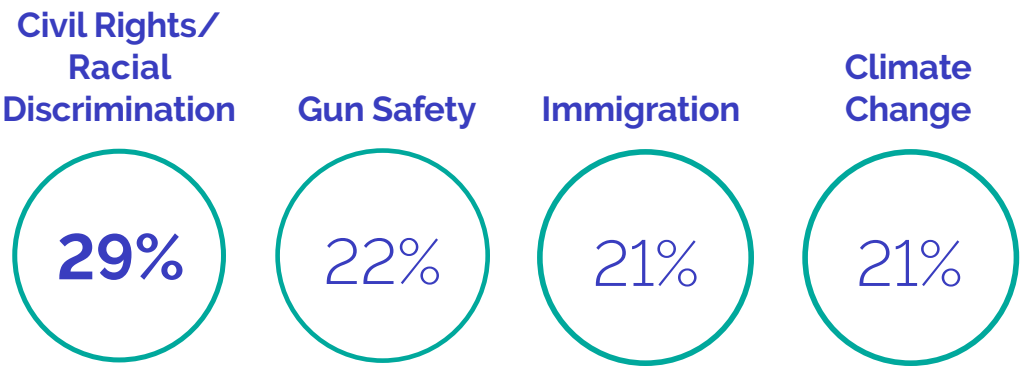
NEWS

News coverage influences Young America by alerting them to social issues and inspiring them to act.

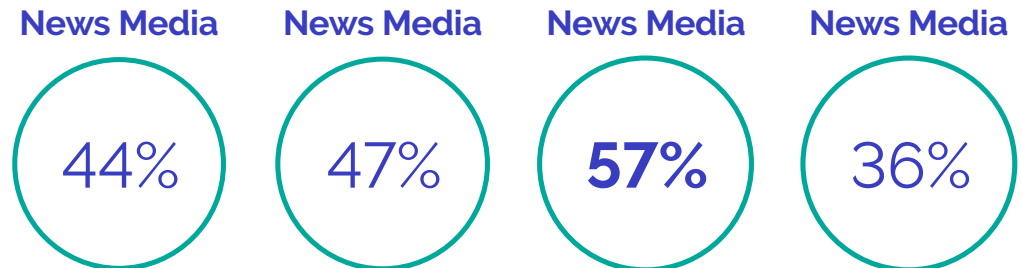
The four social issues Young America is most concerned with today reflect the way they – and half of Americans (Pew Research Center) – initially get their news: via TV news outlets, which include local, national, network and cable news programming. Surprising even to researchers, social media and peers/friends do not appear to be the impetus to action usually attributed to young people. Congruent to one's TV being the source of initial awareness, Young American TV viewers attribute their own self-motivation as the inspiration for their issue-related actions. They do not appear to see television as influencing their behavior, though their action follows issue exposure via TV news. Though they believe today in making change by putting like-minded official representatives into office, Young America has been more likely to sign a petition after being informed about a social issue via television as their first mode of participation, rather than to vote.



TOP ISSUE FACING AMERICA



TOP SOURCE OF AWARENESS



TOP INFLUENCE PROMPTING ACTION:

I acted without being asked to do so

HOW DO YOU USUALLY ACT?

Sign a petition

WHAT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE ACTION?

Vote for someone who shares my views

Guns & Family

Family was the second source of initial awareness for enlightening Young America about gun safety, the only issue for which family was cited. Further investigation could be worthwhile.

SOCIAL MEDIA

**Social media influences
Young America to join movements.**

From an exhaustive list of movements (see website), the top four selected as being of most interest had to do with discrimination, primarily perpetrated against African Americans and sexual violence survivors. When taken as a whole, the survey sample selected #BlackLivesMatter as the top movement of most interest.

How participants found out about movements is directly related to how the movements themselves began.

For today, social media plays a larger role in initially making Young America aware of movements – but TV news does much of the rest. #BlackLivesMatter, #AllLivesMatter, #MeToo and the Women's March originated with one or a few individuals calling for action on social media, and the same platform became the way in which most participants learned about these movements.

News media outlets were the second most-cited source, with peers/friends and celebrities an unexpected third.

While they may learn about movements through social media first, it's the subsequent coverage the media gives to how quickly and widely interest is spreading that prompts a surge of engagement, which is then buoyed by the persuasive influence of peers and friends who join the bandwagon.

So far, movements haven't been reflected in the voting booth – or Young America isn't yet thinking of their individual actions as part of a movement. Here, individuals were most likely to sign petitions, post or share on social media, attend a rally/march or a protest, or, in one case (#MeToo), change their purchasing behavior.

However, they do believe movements are making a difference.

TOP MOVEMENT OF INTEREST

#BlackLives
Matter

34%

#MeToo

30%

#AllLives
Matter

30%

Women's
March

27%

TOP INFLUENCE PROMPTING ACTION

Acted
on my
own

A cause
I follow

Acted
on my
own

Acted
on my
own

HOW DO YOU USUALLY ACT?

Sign a
petition

Sign a
petition

Post/
share on
social
media

Attend a
rally/
march

[See ranking of all movements by clicking here>](#)

MOVEMENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

African Americans had the highest rate of participation in a movement: 38% got involved in #BlackLivesMatter, while no other race/ethnicity had more than 20% participation in any movement.

REFLECTIONS

Final Reflections and Next Steps

In January 2017, a call for the protection of women's rights grew into the **Women's March**, a movement of millions joined to advocate for human rights, healthcare reform and humane immigration policies. In February, **A Day Without Immigrants** closed restaurants nationwide and in federal government buildings in the nation's capital, becoming part of a movement calling for better treatment of those seeking a better life in our country. The **People's Climate March** launched a movement that today is calling for voters to express their concern via the polls in November. The words of students who survived the **Parkland High School shooting** are now being delivered in an across-the-country road tour about gun violence and gun safety.

These moments began with individuals who cared deeply about a cause and decided that business and government would not and could not be trusted to address the challenge ... so they took action on their own.

Each of these remarkable, change-driving movements began with one individual. Someone said, "I have to do something about this," and someone else said, "Me, too. What can we do?" From there, they began a chain of influence that generated awareness on an unheard-of scale and drove involvement in their communities, across the country and around the world.

These Young Americans were frustrated with the status quo. They didn't trust

business or government to make things right. So they turned to each other, and the result has been astoundingly successful.

Now that Young Americans have learned how much power lies in influence, they are determined to use it, most especially at the ballot box. Voting is the best way to create change, they believe. Thus, the next two months could prove critical for candidates to energize and enable Young Americans to get to the polls.

Now is the time for political, business and nonprofit cause leaders to rethink the pathway of cause awareness, interest, adoption and deep action. Without doing so, you risk becoming less relevant every day.

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