

INFLUENCING YOUNG AMERICA TO ACT 2019

Research By: Cause & Social
Influence)))

INTRODUCTION:

“My message is that we’ll be watching you.”

Some in the audience laughed, many applauded, but teen climate activist Greta Thunberg never unbent her eyebrows, never cracked a smile. Speaking at the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit in September, the 16-year-old’s demeanor represented the attitudes of young Americans toward not just climate action, but the many social issues they wish to influence.

The 2019 Influencing Young America to Act report reflects the actions young Americans have taken on the social issues they care about. It’s the second in the Cause and Social Influence research initiative launched by INFLUENCE|SG in 2018. The initiative examines how Americans 18 to 30 years old (Generation Z and millennials) at any given time are influenced by and influence others to intentional action on social issues, and analyzes how those actions become a community of supporters for an issue.

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**TERMS****Campaign**

a deliberate, organized, active promotion or pathway by a company, cause or governmental entity to create awareness, attention and action that may result in individual support (financial, activism and volunteerism) for a social issue.

Fake news

information that is not factually accurate and/or opinions presented as fact.

Influence

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

Generation Z

the group of people born after 1996.

Millennials

the group of people born 1981-1996.

Moment

a one-time or short-term concentration of informal or organized actions fueled by cultural, political and/or social events or occurrences that yield a surge of individual participation and public self-organizing.

Social issue

an existing situation recognized as being against society’s general values, yet able to be alleviated through people working together and/or using community resources.

Social movement

a group of people working together to support the interests of a community whose lives are affected by a specific issue; the group often is unable to overcome this issue without the support of dedicated community activists and constituents.

RESEARCH PROTOCOL 2019

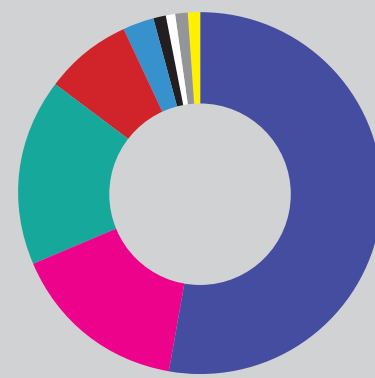
This mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach used social listening and surveying techniques to collect data about the campaigns, moments and movements in which young Americans learned about and were moved to support in some way.

Social Listening Research: This approach informed researchers about which moments, campaigns and movements were discussed, through what platforms and with what frequency, then emerged with the most engagements from January 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019.

Surveying: This approach inquired more specifically about the campaigns, moments and movements identified during the social listening phase of research with a nationally representative panel of young Americans. The survey was fielded September 20-30, 2019.

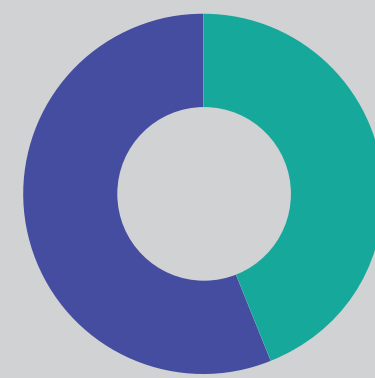
RESEARCH SAMPLE

- Nationally representative panel based on census-projected ethnic and demographic composition
- 95% confidence interval and 3% margin of error = 1,100 participants



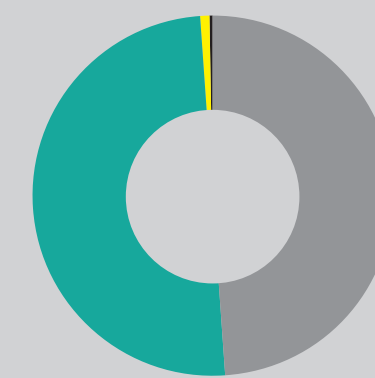
ETHNICITY/RACE:

White / Caucasian	54%
Spanish / Hispanic / Latino(a)	16%
Black / African American	17%
Asian	8%
Multiple races	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Other	1%
Middle Eastern or North African	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%



GENERATION

Millennial	56%
Gen Z	44%



GENDER

Female	50%
Male	49%
Nonbinary/third	1%
Prefer to self-describe	<1%

Learn more about our methodology and demographics at CauseAndSocialInfluence.com/research

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Climate change tops list of social issues of most concern in 2019.

The top five social *issues* for 2019 are climate change (30%), civil rights/racial discrimination (25%), immigration (21%), healthcare reform (20%) and mental health/social services (16%).

Climate change jumped to number one and gun safety dropped off the list of the top social issues this year compared to one year ago. In 2018, civil rights/racial discrimination was the social issue of most concern, followed by gun safety, immigration and climate change. This year, the interest in gun safety declined among millennials, with almost twice the percentage of Gen Z interested (10% vs. 18%, respectively).

Most of what were top *issues* last year – civil rights/racial discrimination, gun safety, immigration and climate change – grew into the top *movements* of 2019: #MeToo (26%), #BlackLivesMatter (26%), #AllLivesMatter (24%), #HumanRights (24%) and #MedicareForAll (23%)¹. Though climate change became the number-one social issue in 2019, it did not appear among the top movements.

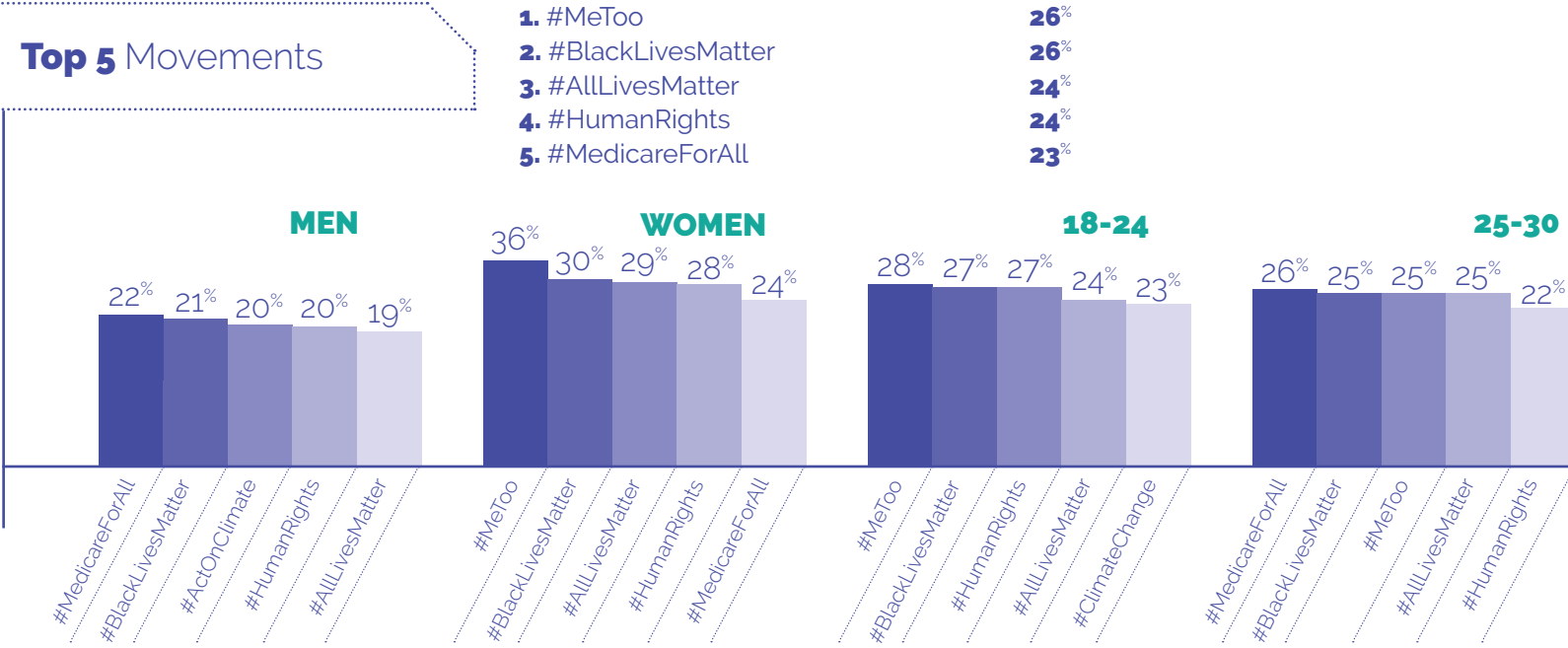
Is interest in a topic influenced by media coverage and online activity surrounding moments? This year's research began in the wake of Greta Thunberg's sail to the Climate Change Summit and heavy media coverage of her trip and the issue; climate change subsequently was the top social issue for 2019. Similarly, 2018 was the worst year on record for gun violence in schools², and gun violence was among the top issues of concern in that year³.

1. See the list of all issues and movements and their percentages at causeandsocialinfluence.com/research.
 2. Center for Homeland Defense and Security, K-12 School Shooting Database, Incidents by Year. Based on publicly available data on incidents from 1970-present. <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/incidents-by-year/>, accessed 9 October 2019.
 3. We note this not to stress any topic's importance over another, but to illuminate possible external influences.

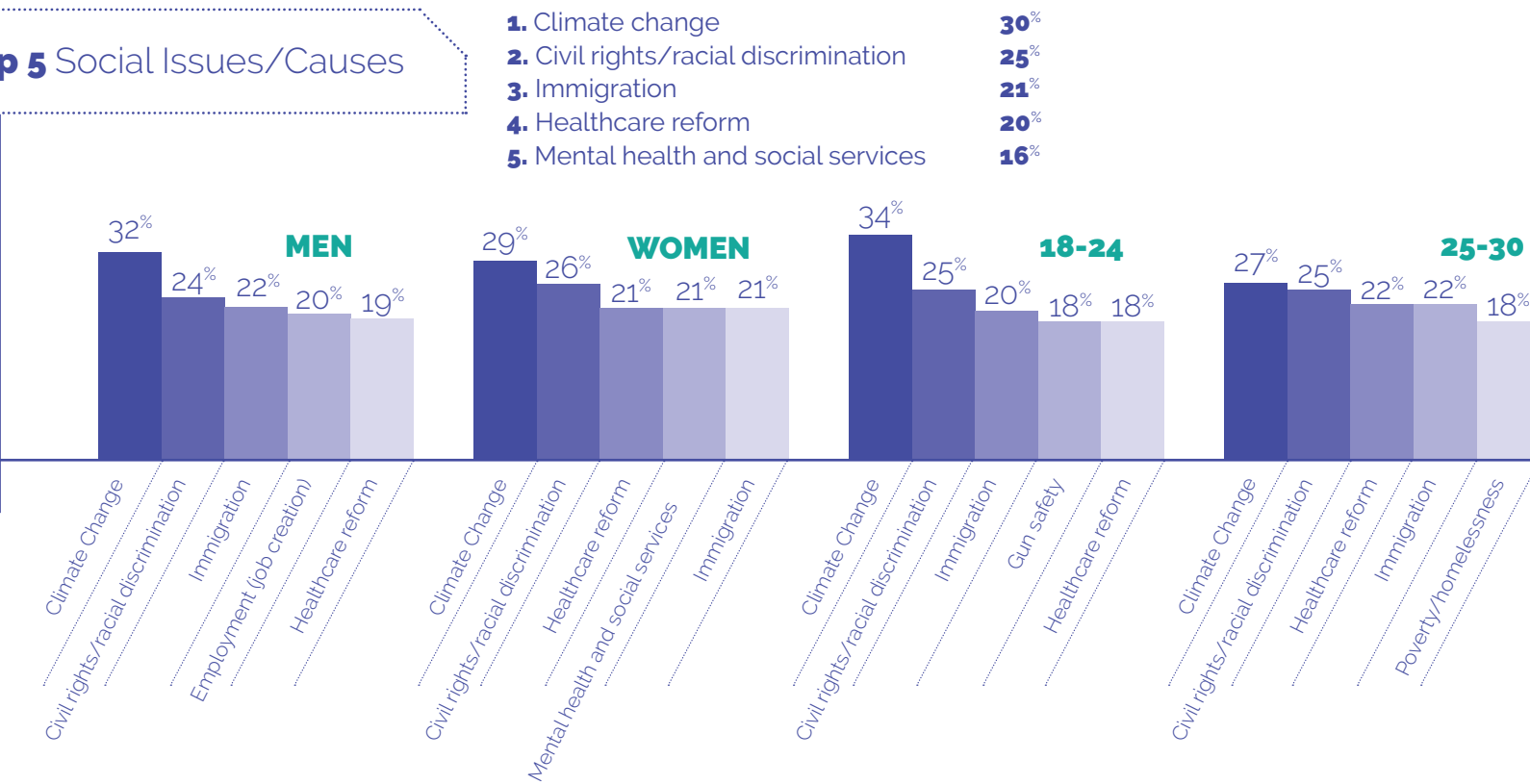
The Influence of Moments

Online conversations reflect the interconnectedness of politics and interest in social issues. For example, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's testimony in the Brett Kavanaugh hearing, audio recordings shared of mass immigration trials and a popular tweet encouraging people to recognize their own prejudices prompted numerous peaks in social conversations on #MeToo, immigration and civil rights/racial discrimination movements, respectively.

Top 5 Movements



Top 5 Social Issues/Causes



TOP MENTIONS BY GEN Z & MILLENNIALS

PEOPLE, CAMPAIGNS, ORGANIZATIONS, MOMENTS + MOVEMENTS
Mentions of President Trump were almost as frequent when retweets were included. This list counts original mentions by these generations only.



Health and Healthcare

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Bernie Sanders, Andy Slavitt
Various 2018 midterm political campaigns, Protect Our Care, various 2020 political campaigns
#MedicareForAll, #ProtectOurCare, #ACA



Politics

Bernie Sanders, Barack Obama, Sacha Baron Cohen: Who is America?
Vote.org, various 2018 midterm political campaigns, DNC - I Will Vote
#Resist, #ElectionDay, #GetOutTheVote



Racism and Discrimination

Shaun King, Colin Kaepernick, Cardi B
ThinkProgress, Indivisible, ACLU
#BlackLivesMatter, #BLM, #Resist



Women's Rights

Dr. Christine Blasey Ford, Alyssa Milano, various survivors + reporters
Planned Parenthood, ACLU, Women's March
#MeToo, #TimesUp, #WomensMarch



Immigration

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, various politicians
United We Dream ACLU, RAICES
#DACA, #Dreamers, #HumanRights



Environment

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Bernie Sanders, Greta Thunberg
Sunrise Movement, Climate Reality, NRDC
#GreenNewDeal, #ActOnClimate, #ClimateChange



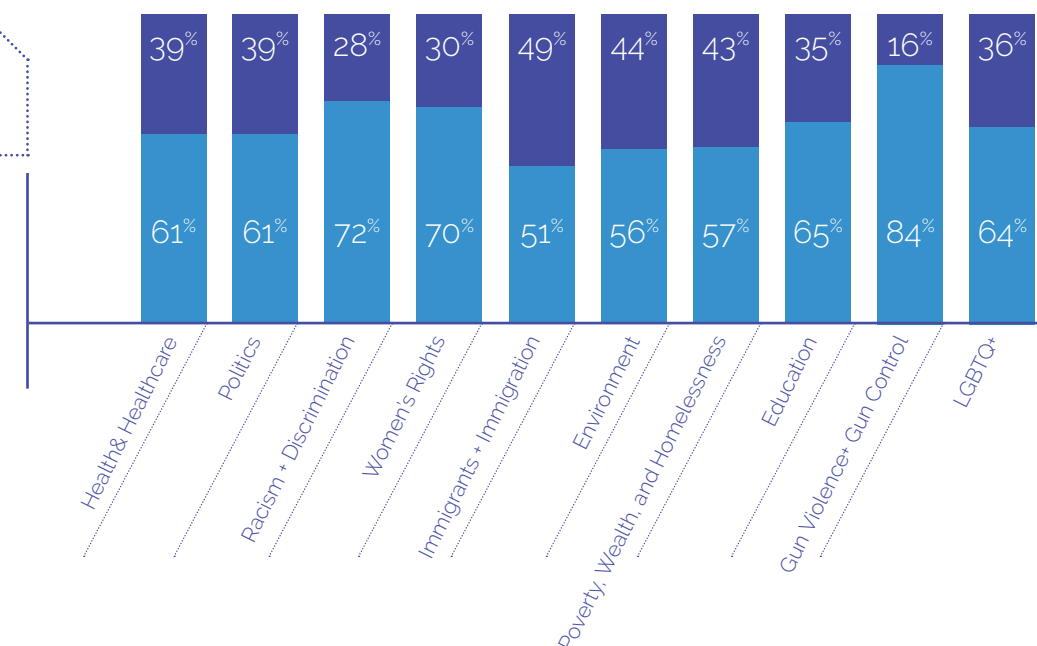
Poverty, Wealth and Homelessness

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Gavin Newsom, Kamala Harris
Fight For 15, Poor People's Campaign, National Alliance to End Homelessness
#FightFor15, #AffordableHousing, #PoorPeoplesCampaign

Topics of Discussion: Age Breakouts

Total percentage of conversation topics broken out by Gen Z (approx. 18-26) and millennials (approx. 27-30) of volume related to social causes + movements from January 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019.

● Millennial
● Gen Z



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

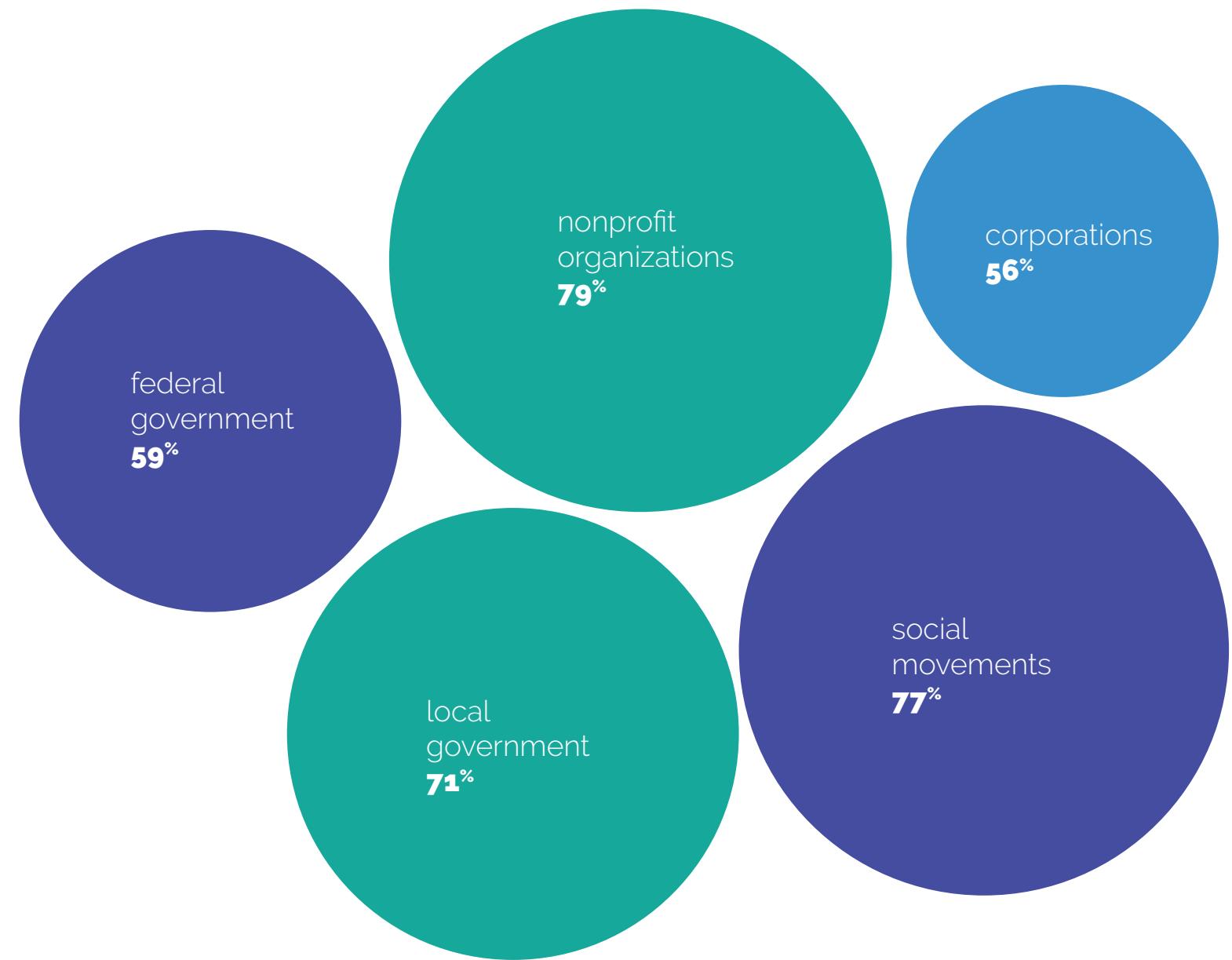
2. Young Americans trust nonprofits and social movements the most.

Of nonprofits, social movements, corporations, and local and federal governments, nonprofits garnered the most trust at 79%. Social movements came in a close second at 77%. These were followed by local government (71%), federal government (60%) and corporations (55%). This is the same order of trust expressed by respondents in 2018.

When broken down by gender, females trusted social movements more than males, while males trusted governments more than females. The genders' levels of trust, distrust and uncertainty about nonprofits were nearly identical.

Distrust of social movements differed slightly by generation. With Gen Z, 11% didn't trust social movements at all and 15% of millennials felt the same. There was a similar jump by generation in distrust of the federal government, with 28% of Gen Z and 35% of millennials saying they had none.

Who do you trust?



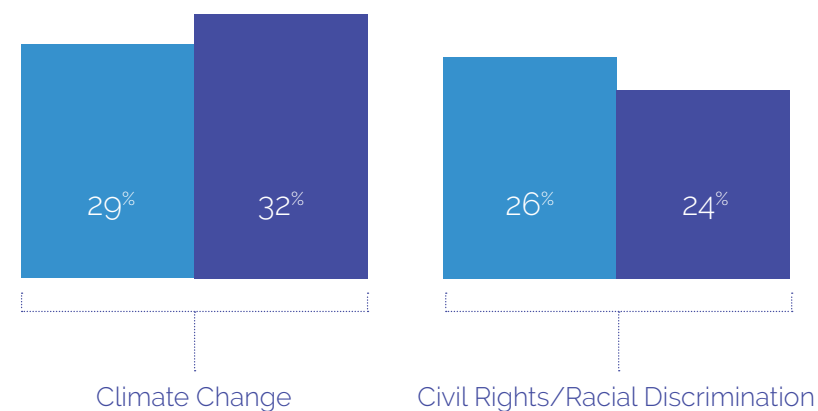
3. Gender influences social issues of interest.

Females and males agreed on the top two issues. For females, three issues tied for third place at 21%: immigration, healthcare reform and mental health/social services. For males, however, immigration was the issue of third-most concern (22%), employment fourth (20%) and healthcare reform fifth (19%).

The largest gender gap in social-issue interest appeared in the two categories specifically mentioning women: women's health/reproductive issues, selected by 19% of females and 4% of men as an issue of interest, and women's rights, picked by 18% of women and 3% of men.

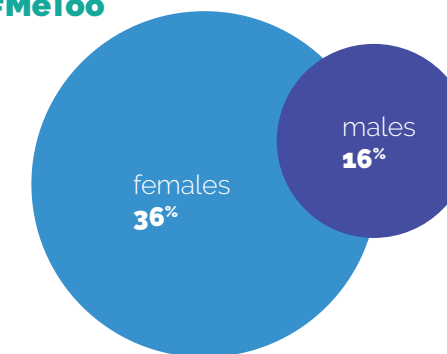
Even larger gaps occurred in the female-specific *movements*. #MeToo was selected as a movement of interest by 36% of females and 16% of males; Women's March was 24% and 6%, respectively.

Social Issues that are aligned regardless of gender

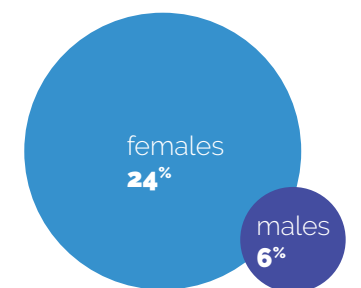


Movements with the largest interest gaps by gender

#MeToo



Women's March



4. The most successful journey from awareness to action is personal.

Young Americans overwhelmingly became aware of the top four issues – climate change, civil rights/racial discrimination, immigration and healthcare reform – from the news media, primarily these outlets' social posts. Both generations care most about the social causes and movements that resonate with their lives.

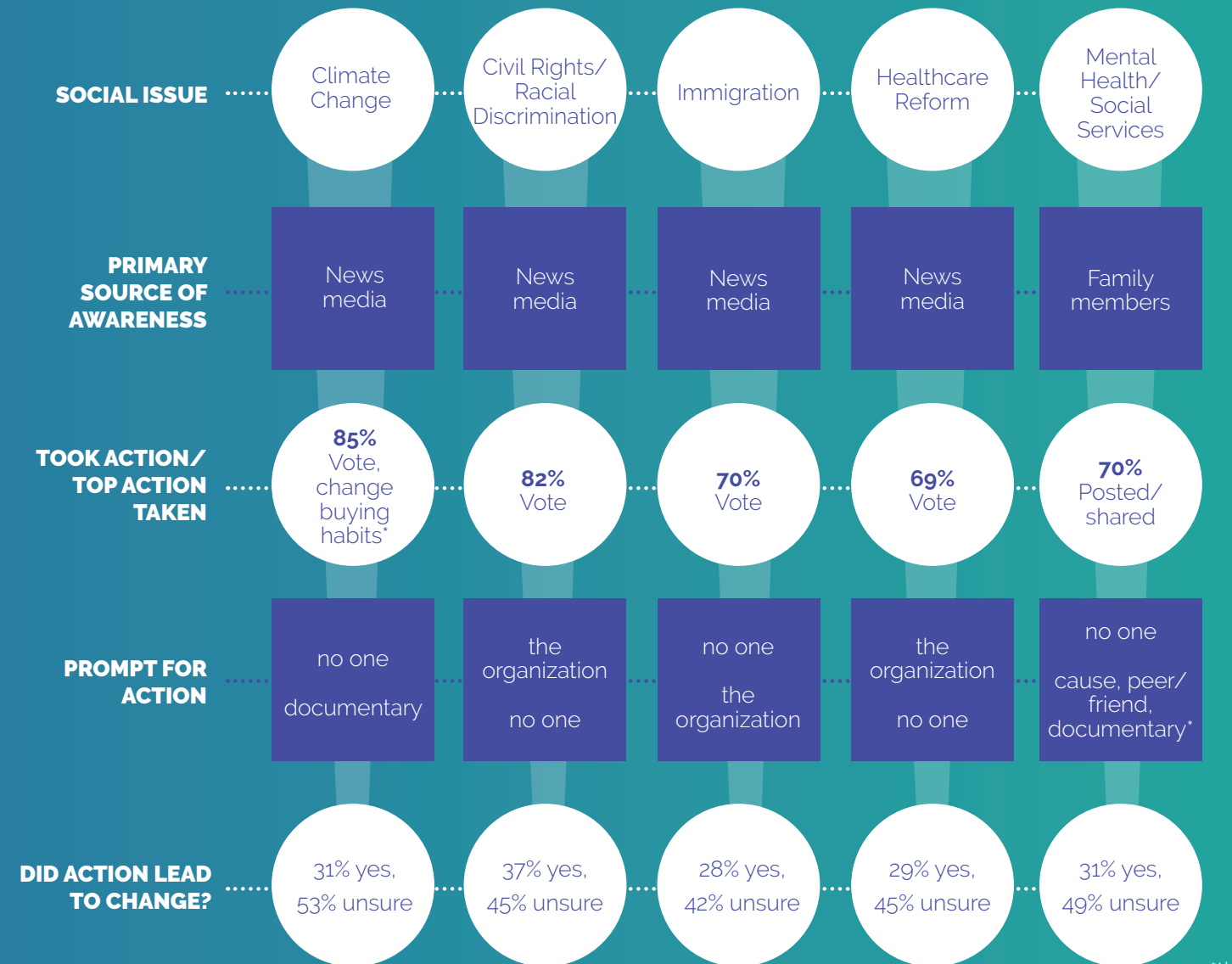
Once they became aware of an issue that concerns them, a majority then chose to act.

Voting was the number-one action taken on the issues of civil rights/racial discrimination, healthcare reform and immigration. For climate change, respondents chose to alter their purchasing habits to reflect their beliefs; this action edged out voting by 2%. When acting in response to the issue of mental health, the generations posted and shared on social media. Both generations also often shared stories on social media about how issues touched them personally.

But what prompted them to take action? For most respondents, either no one asked them to act or a cause/organization did so. For civil rights/racial discrimination, respondents gave credit to an organization for asking them to do something specific; for healthcare reform, an organization and no one almost tied as the top influencer.

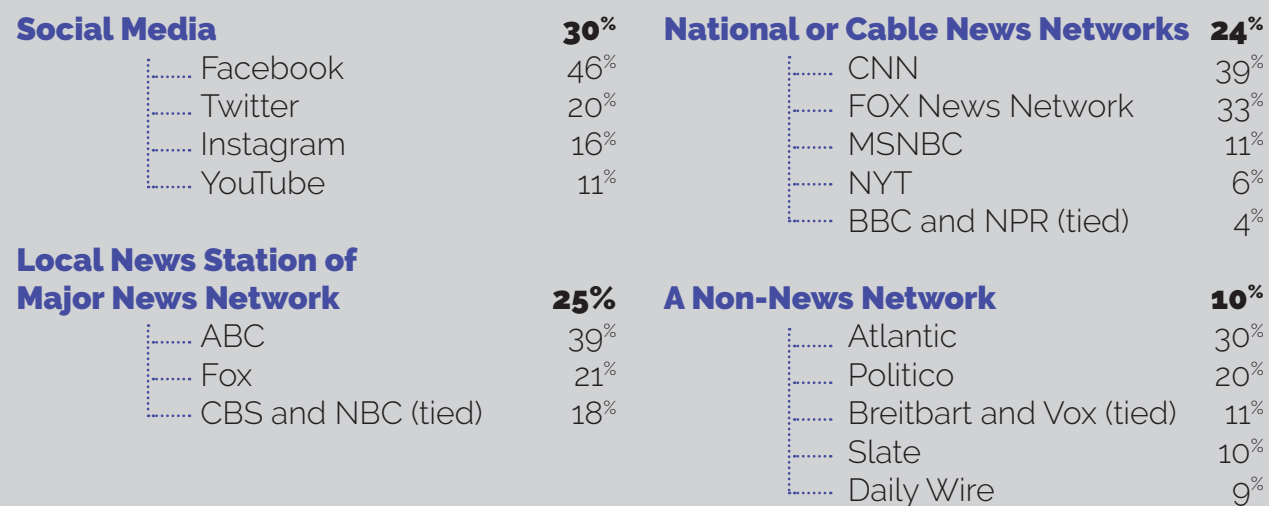
Looking back, more respondents were unsure that their actions would have any effect on the change they want to see. Across the board, a quarter to a third believed yes, it would, but from 43% to 53% remained uncertain.

When respondents chose not to take any action on an issue, the most popular reasons given were that they don't know what to do, they think "it's not my place" or they believe they are unable to make a difference.

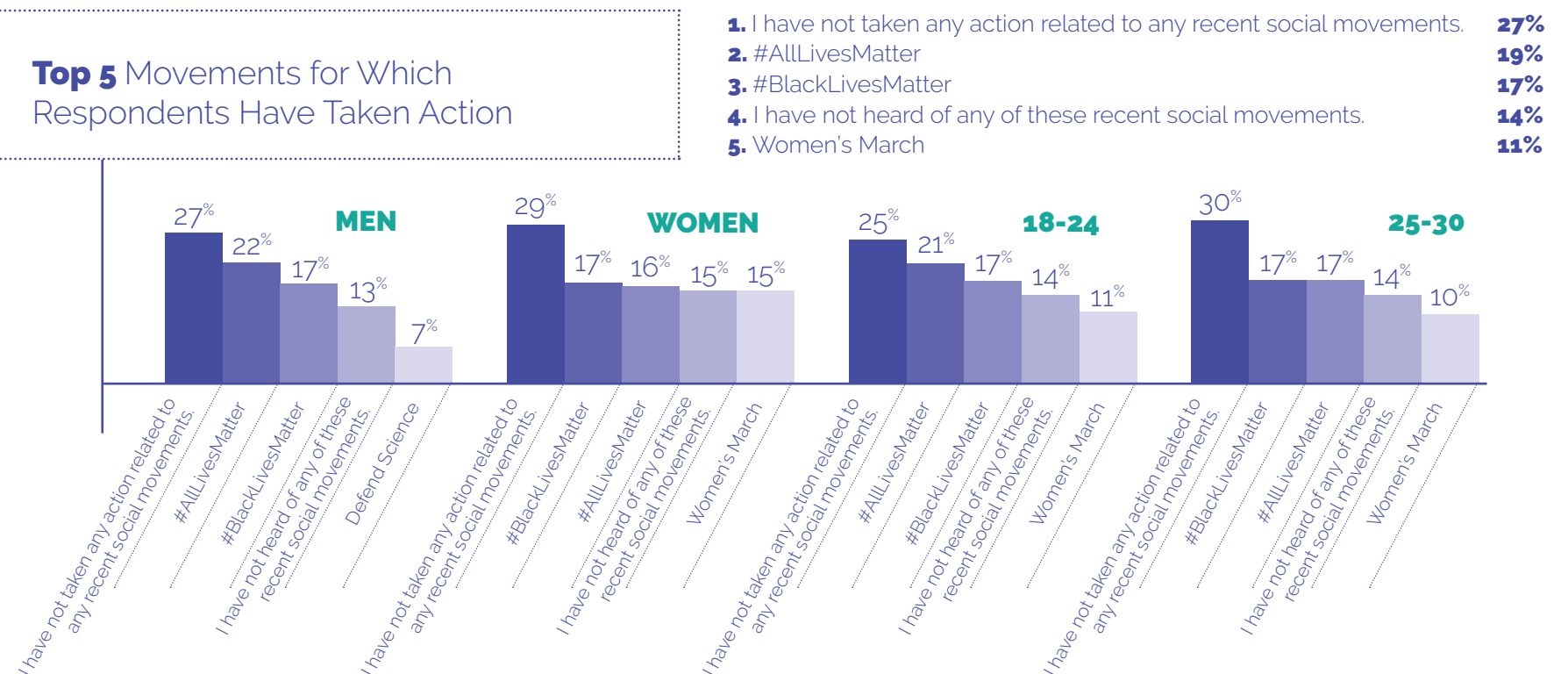


*tie

Respondents Obtain Their News From:



Top 5 Movements for Which Respondents Have Taken Action



- 1. I have not taken any action related to any recent social movements. **27%**
- 2. #AllLivesMatter **19%**
- 3. #BlackLivesMatter **17%**
- 4. I have not heard of any of these recent social movements. **14%**
- 5. Women's March **11%**

5. Voting is a form of social activism and an action that will lead to desired changes.

The 2018 *Influencing Young America to Act* revealed that voting was viewed as the most effective way to bring about change in social issues, every American's duty and what two-thirds of respondents intended to do in the upcoming midterm election. 2019 sees voting as viewed even more favorably. When action is taken in relation to a social issue of interest, voting is far and away the top action for climate change, civil rights/racial discrimination, immigration and healthcare reform.

In their social conversations, young Americans mention politics, and specifically voting, at a higher rate than other forms of activism, such as boycotting, protesting, donating, volunteering and community organizing.

Voting will lead to the changes you want to see in the topics important to you.

	Overall	Female	Male	18-24	25-30
Yes	69%	71%	66%	71%	66%
No	17%	13%	20%	13%	19%
Unsure	15%	15%	14%	15%	15%

Voting is a form of social activism.

	Overall	Female	Male	18-24	25-30
Agree	71%	73%	70%	73%	70%
Disagree	13%	10%	15%	12%	14%
Unsure	16%	17%	15%	15%	17%

6. The country is off track.

Nearly half of respondents (48%) think the U.S. is off track today, compared to 31% who think it's on track and others who are unsure.

In addition, a greater percentage believe it's further off track now than before the 2016 election (44%) compared to the third who think it has gotten more on track (34%).

Similarly, more than half (52%) of respondents are dissatisfied with the president, compared to 30% who are satisfied. However, we saw little difference between whether respondents thought he has addressed social issues well or not.

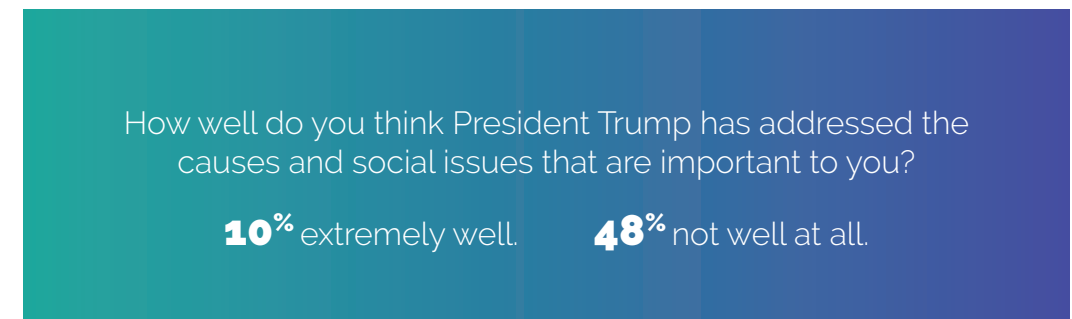
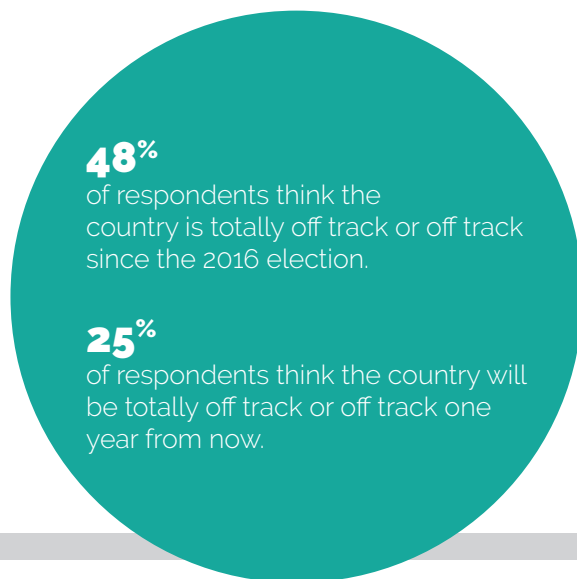
Where will the country be a year from now? 44% were unsure, 31% said on track or totally on track and 25% said off track or totally off track.

Currently, how satisfied are you with President Trump?

	Overall	Female	Male	18-24	25-30
Extremely dissatisfied	39%	46%	30%	41%	37%
Somewhat dissatisfied	13%	12%	15%	15%	12%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18%	16%	20%	19%	17%
Somewhat satisfied	16%	16%	17%	14%	18%
Extremely satisfied	14%	10%	18%	12%	16%

All things considered, how would you rank the current state of our country?

	Overall	Female	Male	18-24	25-30
Totally off track	17%	18%	15%	16%	18%
Off track	31%	37%	25%	33%	30%
On track	20%	15%	26%	19%	21%
Totally on track	11%	6%	15%	9%	12%
Unsure	21%	24%	19%	22%	21%



7. "Fake news" exists and will influence the 2020 presidential election.

The belief that "fake news" exists is significant and consistent across genders and generations.

Three-quarters of respondents in all three categories – overall, gender and generation – believe "fake news" – information and opinions presented as fact that are not factual – exists. Moreover, nearly three-quarters said "fake news" has some level of influence on their own opinions and considerations of issues.

In all three categories, nearly 90% of respondents think social media messages contain "fake news" somewhat often, often or very often.

When asked if "fake news" will influence the 2020 presidential election, 73% of respondents said yes. Females responded yes at 76%, compared to males at 70%, and Gen Z said yes at 76%, compared to millennials at 71%.

What level of trust do you have that the information shared on **social media** about causes, social issues and organizations that work on behalf of these causes and social issues is **accurate** and **truthful**?

	Overall	Female	Male	18-24	25-30
A great deal of trust	15%	10%	19%	15%	15%
Some trust	40%	43%	37%	40%	40%
Little trust	30%	31%	28%	30%	30%
No trust	10%	10%	9%	9%	10%
Unsure	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%



77% of respondents believe in the existence of **fake news**

Frequency With Which Respondent Believes Social Media Platform Messages Contain **Inaccurate** or **Untruthful** Information or "fake news"

	Overall	Female	Male	18-24	25-30
Never	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%
Not Often	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%
Somewhat Often	36%	36%	35%	36%	35%
Often	29%	32%	27%	32%	28%
Very Often	23%	20%	26%	22%	24%

Do you think "fake news" will influence the upcoming 2020 **presidential election**?

	Overall	Female	Male	18-24	25-30
Yes	73%	76%	70%	76%	71%



LOOKING TOWARD AND BEYOND 2020

Empowerment. It's a concept that affects every step along a young American's journey from social-issue awareness to supportive action. People who feel empowered – who feel they hold the power, the right or the authority to do something – are far more likely to act than people who do not.

When a young American initially learns about an issue, how empowered they feel in relation to that issue will dramatically influence whether they continue on the awareness-to-action journey or choose not to move forward because they don't believe their contribution matters.

Thus, before any company, cause, movement or government agency can influence how young Americans view an issue, it must first help shape and reinforce the individual's belief that they can make a difference. An individual may believe in a cause because they've been in a personal situation involving the issue. They had breast cancer, or their father developed Alzheimer's. Or, an individual may personally believe in an issue

4. Young Futurists: Victoria Pannell. The Root. <https://youngfuturists.theroot.com/victoria-pannell-1792933240>, accessed 15 October 2019.

even if they have no experience with it – for instance, they believe that human trafficking is wrong, even though they've never known a victim.

"Young people should have a say in what goes on in the community because we are members of the communities," said Chicago native and teen activist Victoria Pannell⁴.

In 2018, millennials and Gen Z who felt empowered chose to act at the ballot box. In 2020, these generations will participate in elections for president, 32 U.S. Senate seats and all 435 House seats, as well as 11 state governors. Based on this research, most will be voting on their beliefs in the need for change relative to the climate, immigration, healthcare, women's rights, gun safety, civil rights and racial discrimination. They will do so because they believe voting is the most effective way to create change.

"That's part of what the U.S. is about – making a stand and knowing that you love this country," said one respondent.

For more insights on the social issues, moments, and campaigns, please visit: CauseAndSocialInfluence.com/research