

New Study Reveals Differences Between Gen Z and Millennial Social Activism Ahead of 2020 Presidential Election

What They Agree On: The U.S. is Off Track and 77% Believe 'Fake News' Will Impact the 2020 Presidential Election

New York City (October 24, 2019) - A new research report released today, *Influencing Young America to Act 2019*, examines how two generations – young Americans aged 18-30 – are influenced to care about and act on major movements and social issues. This report, released by the Cause and Social Influence initiative, uses data from social listening research conducted January 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, and surveys sent to 1,100 participants from September 20 to 30, 2019.

This in-depth report offers intriguing insights into the lives and thinking of young Americans, outlining the key voting issues for 18- to 30-year-olds ahead of the presidential election and putting social causes on notice.

"As the 2020 election approaches, Gen Z and millennials have made it clear which issues they care about most, and what they'll do about it: Vote. Voting is the primary way they plan to implement change for what they care about," said founder of the Cause and Social Influence initiative Derrick Feldmann. "We hope this new report helps causes continue to mobilize young people."

As millennials begin to age and Gen Z becomes the youngest generation, subtle differences in how they approach social issues and movements are starting to reveal themselves.

Key Takeaways:

- **Climate change is the social issue of most concern in 2019:** The top five social issues young Americans care about for 2019 are climate change (30%), civil rights/racial discrimination (25%), immigration (21%), healthcare reform (20%) and mental health/social services (16%).
 - **By generation:** Climate change was the top issue among 34% of Gen Z and 27% of millennials.
- **Young Americans trust nonprofits and social movements the most:** 79% of young Americans trust nonprofits most when compared to social movements (77%), local

(72%) and federal (59%) governments, 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.
- **By generation:** For social movements, 11% of Gen Z and 15% of millennials didn't trust them at all. For the federal government, 28% of Gen Z and 35% of millennials had no trust at all.
- **Gender influences social issues of interest:** In 2019, females and males agreed on climate change and civil rights/racial discrimination as the top two issues. They begin to differ once they get to the third top issue.
 - 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 most successful journey from awareness to action is started on social media by news outlets and ends with an individual unsure whether or not their actions make a difference:** 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. Once they became aware of an issue that concerns them, well over three-quarters 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.
 - **By generation:** 25% of Gen Z and 30% of millennials chose not to take any action on any of the top five social movements. When they did act, #AllLivesMatter was higher among Gen Z (21%) than millennials (17%).
- **Voting is a form of social activism and an action that will lead to desired changes:** When action is taken in relation to a social issue of interest, voting is far and away the top action for civil rights/racial discrimination, immigration and healthcare reform.
 - **By generation:** Will voting lead to change? Yes, said 71% of Gen Z but 66% of millennials. Voting is a form of activism: 73% and 70% agreed, respectively.
- **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.
 - More than half (52%) of respondents are dissatisfied with the president, compared to 29% who are satisfied. Not much difference existed between generations.

- **"Fake news" exists and will influence the 2020 presidential election:** More than 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.
 - **When asked if "fake news" will influence the 2020 presidential election, 77% of respondents said yes.**

Methodology:

This research report uses data from social listening research conducted January 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019, and surveys sent to 1,100 participants from September 20 to 30, 2019. This research had a nationally representative panel based on census-projected ethnic and demographic composition. This research method used included 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:** 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.

Results from the full survey has a 95% confidence interval and a margin of error of 3 percentage points = 1,100 participants.

Access to the full report and information on the upcoming Influence Nation Summit in New York City on October 24 can be found at www.causeandsocialinfluence.com/research. Register to watch the summit live and hear more about the report on October 24 at 1:30 pm.

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About the Cause & Social Influence Initiative: The Cause & Social Influence Initiative delivers insights into how the public is moved to action for social change. Our multi-method strategy of research and a peer network for ongoing dialogue includes the Influence Nation Summit. The summit brings together subject matter experts, activists and organizers, and marketing/communications experts to discuss with attendees the drivers and levers for social movements, along with unique networking opportunities. You can find more information at causeandsocialinfluence.com and @causeinfluence.