

NEW SURVEY FINDS AMERICAN TEENS CIVICALLY ENGAGED, BUT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT COUNTRY'S DIRECTION

Survey asks teenagers what they think about future of U.S., its current political and social situation, and their own levels of civic engagement.

CHICAGO, Feb. 27, 2017 — Teens see their country as divided over critical values, and they themselves face sharp divides by political outlook, race, and other factors, according to a new national survey conducted by [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#). The survey also finds that teens are opposed to a border wall, policies that prohibit foreign Muslims from entering the U.S., and pulling back efforts to reverse climate change, but are more favorable to the repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and to changing trade agreements. The study reveals divisions among American teens around values and concerns over the country's direction, but also finds cautious optimism about America's future:

- 81 percent of American teens (and 80 percent of adults) believe the country is greatly divided over important values.
- Six in 10 teens believe the country is headed in the wrong direction, but 56 percent of teens believe that America's best days are still ahead of it.

This study also looks at teens' broader civic engagement both at school and outside of it, and finds that a majority are involved in improving their communities through fundraising, volunteering, community problem-solving, or online political discourse. Not only are teens helping their communities through civic action, many teens are learning the skills they need to critically evaluate media sources at school.

- 71 percent of teens have volunteered for a cause they care about.
- 67 percent of teens have discussed in class how to tell if the information they find online is trustworthy.
- 61 percent have raised money for a cause they care about.
- 58 percent have talked at school about how to find different points of view on political and social issues on the internet.

Parents play an important role in encouraging teens to be politically and civically engaged; teens whose parents have talked with them frequently about political issues are more likely to help in their community, know what political party they will join, and to believe that they have more in common with people who are different than them.

- 39 percent of teens have conversations about politics with their parents at least once a week.
- 41 percent of teens who have participated in an activity like volunteering, raising money for a cause, or signing a petition at least once talk to parents daily or weekly, compared with 22 percent of teens who have not.

"Parents and schools are playing a critical role in helping our youth become the engaged citizens our country needs them to be," said Amanda Lenhart, senior research scientist with The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. "It doesn't even matter if teens and parents agree—talking with teens about political issues at home, teaching them to be savvy information and media consumers at school, and encouraging them to participate in their community will help build civically and politically engaged adults."

Other Key Findings from the Survey

Teens are split on current policy issues:

- 53 percent of all American teens oppose building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border vs. 25 percent who favor building it.
- 47 percent of teens oppose scaling back efforts to fight climate change while 19 percent favor scaling back.
- 46 percent oppose policies that prevent foreign Muslims from entering the U.S., while 29 percent support such efforts.
- 40 percent of teens favor repealing the Affordable Care Act vs. 33 percent who oppose it.
- 35 percent of teens are in favor of changing trade agreements with other countries while 25 percent oppose doing so.

Sixty-eight percent of teens are favorable toward former President Barack Obama, while 38 percent are favorable toward former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Thirty percent are favorable toward President Donald Trump.

- Girls are more favorable toward Clinton (42 percent of girls vs. 33 of boys).
- Black teens are almost uniformly favorable to Obama, and 76 percent are favorable toward Clinton. Less than 10 percent are favorable toward Trump.
- White teens are much more positive about Trump than their black peers, with 42 percent favorable toward him.

Among teens, use of certain social media sites relates to a greater likelihood of involvement in more activist civic engagement activities.



- Teens who use Twitter, Instagram, or more than six social media platforms are more likely to participate in protests and talk about political beliefs online.

About the Survey

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using AmeriSpeak, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The nationwide poll was conducted between December 7 and 31, 2016, with 790 teenagers age 13 to 17, online and by phone. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.6 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. For more detail on methods for this survey, please see:

[http://www.apnorc.org/PDFs/Teen%20Politics/American Teens Pol Topline FINAL.pdf](http://www.apnorc.org/PDFs/Teen%20Politics/American%20Teens%20Pol%20Topline%20FINAL.pdf)

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Contact: For more information, contact Eric Young for NORC at young-eric@norc.org or (703)



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

217-6814 (cell); Amanda Lenhart for NORC at Lenhart-amanda@norc.org; or Lauren Easton for AP at LEaston@ap.org.