

## Executive Summary

After a string of violent mass shootings in Buffalo, Uvalde, and Highland Park, along with devastating SCOTUS decisions that reversed progress on issues like gun violence, climate change, and reproductive rights, Voters of Tomorrow/[Generation Labs](#) conducted Youth Survey polling to gauge the stances of young people ahead of the midterm elections. The survey was conducted online after initial outreach via text and email from July 9th to July 11th of a sample of 763 young adults aged 18-29 with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.55\%$ .

The data is clear: young people **fear for their future**. Gun violence and abortion are on the top of young voters' minds. In addition, young voters are particularly mobilized by the threat of future SCOTUS rulings, such as basic human rights for LGBTQ Americans. This upcoming November, despite unfavorable views for the Democratic party (and a devastating rebuke of the GOP), young voters will vote—motivated primarily to fight for abortion rights, gun violence prevention, and LGBTQ rights at the court. Although the Biden Administration is viewed unfavorably, it has avenues to be seen more favorably by young Americans.

Results are organized by key themes shared by respondents: Gun Violence, Abortion, SCOTUS, Elections & Democracy, and Perception of the Biden Administration.

## Gun Violence: Young People Want Action

It's no surprise that young people want to see action on gun reform, considering the recent highly publicized instances of gun violence. **This poll finds that an overwhelming majority (71%) of young Americans say they have worried about themselves or someone they know being a victim of a mass shooting, including a majority of Republicans (54%).** Although on the frontline of the issue, 50% of young people are not aware that a significant piece of gun violence prevention legislation (the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act) became law, indicating a disconnect between young people and the Biden Administration/Congress.

**Young people overwhelmingly support common gun violence prevention policies such as requiring a background check for gun sales (78%), an assault weapons ban (58%), raising the age to 21 to buy an assault weapon (65%), closing loopholes to prevent domestic abusers from having firearms (72%), requiring firearms to be stored safely and away from children (70%), requiring mental health evaluations on firearm purchasers (71%), and allowing police, family members, coworkers, or others to petition a state court to order the temporary removal of firearms from a person who they believe may present a danger to others and themselves (62%).** Only 5% of young people said they support none of these policies.

Despite GOP-led opposition, a majority of young Republicans support requiring a background check for all gun sales (57%), closing loopholes to prevent domestic abusers from possessing firearms (51%), and requiring that all firearms be stored safely in homes, away from children (57%).

Additionally, 68% of young Americans somewhat or strongly oppose the Supreme Court's decision to expand Americans' rights to carry guns in public.

### **Abortion: Youth want Protection**

After the Supreme Court's draft decision on the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case leaked, national outrage and youth-led protests sparked around the country. Since then, SCOTUS officially decided June 24th to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. In a massive rebuke of the Supreme Court, 61% of youth said they **strongly** disagree with the court's decision, with another 18% saying they somewhat disagree.

50% of young people said that they believe that the Democrats can be doing more to protect abortion rights, but aren't. When asked what measures Democrats and the Biden Administration should take, a majority of youth believe that Democrats and the Biden Administration should abolish the filibuster and move to codify the right to an abortion into federal law (52%) and also work to increase access to Plan B, Plan C, and FDA approved medication (61%).

The overwhelming majority (79%) have taken some form of action after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, indicating that abortion is a strong mobilizing issue for young people. Over half responded that they have spoken to family and friends about SCOTUS' decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, showing how much of a kitchen-table issue abortion access is, and just how prevalent it is in the minds of young people. For female youth, 52% listed abortion as one of their top three issues influencing their vote in the midterm elections.

Notably, only 18% said they registered to vote/confirmed their voter registration, placing emphasis on the need to focus on youth civic engagement to transform concerns into power at the ballot box.

### **Supreme Court: Losing Trust Among Young People**

Learning that their right to bodily autonomy and the right to not be shot in public was taken from them by an unelected body of justices, young people fear for the potential of other rights to be taken away. Majorities say they are worried that the Supreme Court will overturn previous landmark cases that protected civil rights, specifically gay marriage (54%), same-sex sexual activity (52%), and contraception (53%).

Young people are losing trust in the Supreme Court, with 53% saying that the Court's decisions do not reflect the values of America as a whole. Only 28% say they have a somewhat or great extent of faith in the Supreme Court as an institution and a lower 19% saying the same with regards to the Supreme Court's non-partisanship.

An overwhelming majority (78%) responded that they believe the Supreme Court has taken us in the wrong direction in the last year.

Young people, faced with a Supreme Court that polling demonstrates they believe is not siding with them on the issues, indicate that they believe that Supreme Court reform is important, and this is supported by 81% of youth in support of some kind of Supreme Court reform, with 56% in support of instituting term limits for Supreme Court Justices.

## **Elections/Democracy and Approval: Engaged, but not Enthusiastic**

As the 2022 midterm elections draw closer, this polling suggests young people are likely to vote, driven by key issues such as abortion, gun violence and LGBT rights and healthcare. Despite this, young people seemingly feel distrustful towards the existing political systems.

Young people are not a fan of the current two party system, with a majority disapproving of both the Democratic and Republican party. 53% of youth said that they have a somewhat or very unfavorable opinion of the Democratic Party, and 77% said the same for the Republican Party, with 47% saying they had a *very* unfavorable opinion. More than half of young voters (56%) say they would vote for the Democratic congressional candidate if the 2022 midterm elections were held today. **This indicates that the disapproval for Democrats does not translate into support for Republicans.**

If the November midterm elections were held today, 69% responded that they would be likely or very likely to vote- this number is higher among democrats, at 79%. Most alarmingly, nearly a quarter of young voters (24%) said they would not vote in the midterm elections if they were held today, pointing to the urgent need for youth outreach.

A strong majority (61%) of young people believe that Donald Trump should be charged with federal crimes in relation to the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol, and 81% expressed worry that another event like January 6th could happen. The fear youth have of more attacks on democracy is indicative of a necessity to protect our democratic institutions.

60% of youth say a candidate must support a woman's right to choose in order for the candidate to receive their vote, and 52% say the same for supporting stricter gun safety laws. As for the issues that are going to influence their vote the most in November, a plurality of young voters ranked abortion (37%), healthcare (34%), and gun policy (33%) as their top choices. Additionally, 64% of youth say they are concerned about book bans, and 67% say they're concerned about legislation to avoid discussing sexual orientation in classrooms, suggesting that addressing these issues may turn out younger voters.

## **Perception of the Biden Administration: Not Great, but can be Improved**

There is further data that shows proof of a disconnect between youth and the Biden Administration. 63% of respondents say they somewhat or strongly disapprove of the job that Joe Biden is doing as President, and only 5% say the Biden Administration fully represents the beliefs of America's youth.

On the other hand, 53% say they believe the Biden Administration *\*somewhat\** represents them and further responses suggest that President Biden can increase his overall perception among young people by implementing various proposals. 43% of young people said their view of the Biden Administration would improve if they established a White House Young American Advisory Council to voice the concerns of young people, and 39% said the same if the Biden Administration were to appoint a Director of Youth Engagement.