

League of Women Voters Discovery Report

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Presented by
Kristin Brighton

Project Overview

- New Boston was hired to help LWV achieve two goals:
 - Increase voter turnout in Riley County
 - Increase membership and participation in the local LWV chapter, especially among younger adults

Focus on Under 45-Year-old Voters

- Under 45 is where we see the biggest drop:
 - In 2012, 46.7% of registered voters 45 and younger voted, compared to more than 80% of those older than 45.
 - In 2014, 26.6% under 45 voted, compared to 73% of those older than 45.
- Riley County has a median age of 24, compared to state average of 36. The youngest voters, who vote the least frequently, pull down our averages.

Relevant Secondary Research Findings

- Voting rates for 18- to 34-year-old voters have trailed older Americans in every Congressional election since 1978.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2014, 23.1% of 18- to 34-year-old voters voted, compared to 59.4% for those 65 and over.

A Story of Multiple Generations

- **Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964)** — for the most part, these are the parents of the under 45 voters
- **Generation X (1965 to 1980)** — the most educated generation in history, parents to some of today's youngest voters
- **Millennials or Generation Y (1980 to mid 1990s)** — the most diverse generation in history
- **Generation Z (late 1990s to today)** — first generation to live entire life with Internet

But...Generation Z (under 20 years old) is the largest population segment in the US! 25.9%

It is good to keep in mind
that someone born in 1998
turns **18** in 2016!

The Millennials

- Children of the later Baby Boomers — largest age cohort in 100 years.
- Most racially and ethnically diverse generation, due to increases in immigration rates and changes in social norms.
- One in five Millennials is Hispanic.
- Haven't seen rates of immigrants and second-generation children of immigrants since the turn of the 20th century.

The Millennials

- Most are in their 20s and 30s, and have become eligible to vote over the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections.
- In 2016, they will be the biggest age cohort in the under 45 group, although some of the younger Generation X and older Generation Z adults will figure into the mix.

Three Main Factors that Impact How a Generation Votes:

According to Pew Research Center:

1. Racial diversity — Race is a big factor in how people vote and party affiliation. For example, 64% of blacks identify as Democrat or lean Democratic, while only 25% of whites do.

Today, 58% of Millennials are non-Hispanic whites, compared to 79% in the Silent Generation, those born mid-1920s to mid-1940s.

Three Main Factors that Impact How a Generation Votes:

- 2. Popularity of the President and two political parties at the time someone turns 18** — Those who came of age around time of FDR tended to be Democrats, while those who came of age under Truman and Eisenhower swing more Republican.

The majority of today's under-45 electorate came of age under Clinton or Obama, with a smaller percentage that came of age during the George W. Bush-post 9/11 years.

Three Main Factors that Impact How a Generation Votes:

- 3. Broader societal changes occurring during a person's life cycle also dramatically influence their political stances** — Those who grew up during the Great Depression have different financial values than those who grew up in the affluent 1990s, or those who suffered through the Great Recession of the late 2000s.

Also see this in regard to social issues, such as greater acceptance of homosexuality or interracial marriage.

About Millennials

- Live in a world of blended cultures, from food to entertainment.
- Willing to try new things and expand their comfort zones.
- Very concerned about financial issues because they entered the workforce before or during the Great Recession of the late 2000s.
- Affiliate or lean Democrat (51%), compared to 35% who are Republican or lean Republican.

About Millennials

- Distrust government and the political system in general, and that trust continues to decline.
- Only 39% today trust the president to do the right thing, opposed to 44% who did in 2010.
- Just 18% of voters under 30 trust Congress, compared to 25% in February 2010.

About Millennials

“The hyperpartisanship and gridlock that has befallen Washington D.C. is having a traumatic effect not just on our nation’s status at home and abroad, but on the political health of tens of millions of once (and hopefully future) idealistic young people.”

— John Della Volpe,
polling director,
Harvard Institute

About Millennials

Only have to spend a little bit of time on social media to observe first hand the country's current cynicism, lack of respect, and jadedness toward our country's current leaders.

About Millennials

- Race and ethnicity play a huge factor in this generation's political leanings.
- White Millennials who affiliate with a party are fairly evenly split (45% Republican and 43% Democrat), but not true for non-whites.
- 51% of 18 to 34 are Democrat or lean Democrat.
- 35% are Republican or lean Republican.

Compared to Other Generations

Generation X

- 49% Democrat
- 38% Republican

“If we do not start competing for the youth vote in 2016, we will be doomed as a party by 2020.”

— J.P. Moran, Catholic writer and frequent conservative radio talk show guest

Baby Boomers

47% Democrat

41% Republican

The Millennials: Not Joiners

- Relish their independence
- 50% claim to be politically independent
- Only 1/3 are affiliated with any religious organization

Why Is This Generation Different?

- History has shown us that as each age cohort ages, they typically vote in greater numbers.
- Experts in this field are holding their breath about whether this trend could change with this age group.
- Afraid this disenchantment with our two-party system could lead this generation to be permanently disengaged.

Already Making a Big Impact

- 12,000 new adults turn 18 every day. Largest population bubble we've seen in decades.
- Already having major impacts on elections — in the last two presidential elections, McCain and Romney lost because they ignored younger voters. Had either carried 45% of the younger demographic, they would have won.

Gender and Younger Voters

- Growing voting gender gap.
- Since 1996, women vote at higher rates than men in nearly every age group, EXCEPT the oldest voting block.
- There was a 20-point gender gap in the last election. Obama won by 12 points with women, but lost by 8 points with men.

Gender and Younger Voters

- Millennial women are more likely to lean Democrat or be Democrats, while men more likely to be Independents.
- When campaigns talk about wanting to swing Independent votes to Republicans, they are talking about focusing on men.

Media and Younger Voters

- Young voters consume news online rather than TV.
- They trust online news more than traditional news.
- Don't share their politics as much on social media as older voters, and claim what they read on social media doesn't sway their opinions.

Education and Younger Voters

- The more educated a person is, the more likely he or she is to vote.
- Those who have been to college are 66% of the vote, compared to 35% of non-college educated citizens.
- Young people with bachelor's degrees make up 30% of the population, but 40% of young voters.
- People with more education are more likely to vote Democrat.

Voting Rates Among Young Kansans

- Young voters (18 to 32) vote in lower percentages in Kansas than nationally.
- National average = 45% Kansas = 38.3%.
- For adults 30+, 70.3% of Kansans vote, compared to 66.3% nationally.

Voting Rates In Riley County

Used American Community Survey counts to estimate population for the 2012 and 2014, so we could find out the actual population 18 to 44 who voted in **Riley County**, not just the percent of registered voters.

- 2012 — 24%
- 2014 — 12.3%

However, we don't know how many voted elsewhere.

Focus Group Findings

Focus Group Overview

- Two focus groups — one with eleven women, one with ten men.
- All variables stayed the same, except compensation was higher for group #2.
- Filled out demographic questionnaire before discussion began.

A Note About Social Desirability Bias

- This is when a respondent says they do something they know they SHOULD do because it is socially expected of them.
- People generally think of themselves in a favorable light.
- Can result in post-election polls being millions off actual votes cast.
- Have to keep this in mind when analyzing focus group answers.

Who Were Our Participants

- Age: 38% were 30 and under, 48% were 31-40, and 14% were 41-45.
- 11 women, 10 men
- 47% married, 43% single, 5% divorced, 5% didn't answer
- 52% had children at home, 48% didn't have children
- Two was the most common number of children, but ranged from one to five.
- 20 were white, one was African American.

Who Were Our Participants

- Well-educated — 43% had bachelor's degrees, 19% had master's degrees, 5% had a PhD.
- All live in Manhattan.
- Most work in Manhattan, although one at Fort Riley, one in rural Pottawatomie, and one reported “student at KSU.”
- Work in diverse industries.
- Of the 21, only three reported they were not registered to vote in Riley County.
- Of those three, two said they were registered elsewhere.

Who Were Our Participants

- Five claimed to vote always, nine said they vote frequently, three sometimes vote, three rarely vote, one never votes. (Social desirability bias?)
- Of these, nine of the 11 women vote frequently or always, while only five of the men classified themselves the same way.

Who Were Our Participants

- As a whole, not very active in social organizations.
- Seven member of Chamber and eight of a church.
- PEO (3), and one person in Rotary, one in Junior League, one in Manhattan Alliance for Peace and Justice, one in a college fraternity/sorority. Plus several write-in professional organizations.
- Nine of the 21 reported not being a member of any organization. Of the 10 men, six were not a member. Of the 11, three were not a member of anything, and two only belonged to a church.

Who Were Our Participants

- When they are members of groups, the most popular reason why is to “meet people/social reasons.”
- The main reason they claim not to belong is being too busy.
- The good news is that 13 of the 21 see themselves joining an organization as they get older, and six said “maybe” they’d be interested in the future.

What Issues Are They Most Interested In?

Federal: Health care reform (13), income inequality (13), national debt (12), gun control (12), gender equality (12), entitlement programs (12), international affairs (11), federal budget (11), immigration (10), Homeland Security (10), same-sex marriage (10), and job creation (10).

State: K-12 (19), higher ed funding (16), social services funding (13), expanding state economy (11), reproductive rights (10), gender equality (10)

What Issues Are They Most Interested In?

Local: Economic development (17), Parks and Rec enhancements (15), public transportation (15), controlling city debt (10)

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Women were more likely to vote than the men, including in the 18 – 30 age group.
- Four basic reasons why they don't vote:
 - Too busy and forget to go to the polls
 - Don't know how (or don't take the time) to request an advance ballot
 - Confusion or problems with registration
 - I often don't know who to vote for, so I just don't go

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Men less likely to affiliate politically than the women.
- Nine of the women affiliated with one of the two major parties, while of the men, only two reported being Republican or Democrat.
- Of the 21 participants, three were self-reported Independents, two Libertarians, and one Democratic Socialist.
Nearly 30% didn't affiliate with one of the two major parties.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Did not hear a lot of cynicism or lack of trust in the political process as a deterrent for people participating.
- Participants reported they believe it is important to vote, that voting makes a difference, and that this opinion doesn't change because they live in Kansas.
- Slightly more likely to say they were “sort of” interested rather than “very interested” in political issues on all levels. (Social desirability bias?)
- Men more interested in federal issues than women.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Women were less willing to run for office than men. Women focused on reasons why they wouldn't want to run, such as the amount of time it takes, the lack of thanks and pressure of being in the constant spotlight, and the toll on their families.
- Men were more willing to run and less concerned about personal impacts. Four of ten said they'd consider running some day. More inspired by changing the world and concerned about the influence of special interests.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- People claim they don't have enough information to make informed decisions, which is ironic in today's media age.
- Most media they consume is nationally focused. Eleven of the 21 reported using local news regularly, but only seven of the 21 reported local radio, five read a local print newspaper, and nine read local online news. Nearly all get their news from online news sites and national TV.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Very few are active in organizations, but were willing to join an organization “someday.”
- Didn’t know much about the LWV. 14 of 21 had heard of it, but only six of the 21 knew we had a local chapter.
- Women seemed to have a better understanding than men about what the organization does and stands for, but see its members as “older ladies who have time to participate in a group like that.”
- Men assumed they wouldn’t be welcome.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Participants didn't affiliate the LWV with a political party.
- Most hadn't been to an LWV event or were even aware of them.
- Time of day and week, lack of making attendance a personal priority, and ability to get information from such events through media coverage were all reasons people said they did not attend LWV events.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- To get more younger adults to vote, they recommended:
 - Increasing social media use.
 - Putting together and distributing a community resource to educate voters (pamphlet or website) about candidates and issues on the ballot.
 - Booths at more community events.
 - Getting people emotionally charged up so they turn out.
 - Making events fun and social.
 - Partnering with other organizations that work with the target audience, including campus organizations.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- To get more younger adults to vote, they recommended:
 - Using competitions to increase turnout.
 - Doing more to publicize advance voting.
 - Better telling the organization's story, both locally and nationally.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Should the LVW rebrand/rename?
 - Not a good idea to turn into an acronym.
 - Men just aren't comfortable joining an organization with "women" in the name.
 - Women felt the League needs to look closely at its mission and decide whether it wants to be a women's organization or one focused on getting both genders more involved. The name should reflect that focus.

Discussion Questions: Biggest Takeaways

- Gave us good response to the idea of a “young members” committee, similar to the young professionals group of the Chamber of Commerce.
- Asked if willing to be a part, and said it had to do with whether meetings fit into schedules.

Recommendations

Recommendations

1. Branding

- While name is from your history, today it is excluding half of the population from joining. Need to be inclusive, not deterring people from participating.
- Men aren't comfortable joining; many thought of overly "feminist" stereotypes when hear the name.
- Consider tackling this issue from within your national organization. Do you want to remain a women's organization, or is it time to rename yourself?

Recommendations

1. Branding, cont.

- Given the challenges getting younger voters “tuned in and turned on,” might be better to change your name in hopes of furthering your goals.
- If stay a women-focused group, what can the League do to encourage more women to run for public office? Seems to go hand-in-hand with your mission and membership. How can we get more women to envision themselves as leaders?

Recommendations

- 2. Advocacy** — Getting younger adults to vote has three main pain points:
- Getting people registered
 - Getting people inspired to want to vote
 - Getting people to actually vote



Recommendations

- Getting people registered seems like the easiest to solve and most antiquated. Most western democracies automatically register all adults when they become of age.
- One central system consistent across every state would be a major advancement. We recommend LWV study this possibility and advocate for it nationally.
- It's a matter of combining existing databases and creating a process of sending ID cards on people's 18th birthdays.



Recommendations

- Would save a lot of money on personnel processing forms and allow us to focus less on informing people HOW to vote, and more on making informed choices.
- Might not increase the numbers who vote significantly, but would eliminate one unnecessary obstacle.



Recommendations

3. Kansas Younger Voter Challenge

- Younger adults live in a competitive world and generally respond well to challenges and contests.
- Recommend creating a competition to challenge other LWV communities to see which can increase their under-45 voting percentage the most.
- Contact ASAP to see who will participate.
- Hold a joint press conference and educate the media and public about the problem.
- Involve local units of government and come up with some sort of bragging rights trophy for the photos.

Recommendations

4. Partner Up to Win the Challenge

- Meet with groups in the community that work with this population. Ask what they are planning for 2016 and try to coordinate efforts. Groups could include:
 - All local high schools
 - K-State Young Republicans and Democrats
 - K-State Governmental Relations
 - K-State Student Government
 - K-State Residence Halls and Greek Affairs
 - Manhattan Chamber — YP, Board of Directors and Public Affairs
 - Local political party organizers

Recommendations

5. Create a Young Voters Committee (YVC)

- Active working group to collectively organize and run your campaign
- Include high school seniors, working adults 18 to 44, adults enrolled in formal education (K-State, MCC, MATC, etc.)
- Chair should be comfortable giving presentations
- Two subcommittees: Education and Events

Recommendations

Education committee would use social media and their own personal networks to share nonpartisan information during the campaign, as well as help promote meetings and events and distribute voter education materials.

Events committee should plan several social events involving candidates with food and drink. Minimal formal presentation, but more of a time to socialize. Not fundraisers, but networking events.

Recommendations

Getting young adults actively representing the organization as part of the YVC is a great way to increase your visibility among younger generations in the community.

This should be considered your first step in growing a younger membership base.



Recommendations

- 6. Use your YVC to create key messages for motivating younger voters — help them see how the choices of the electorate affect them personally.**
- 7. Send out your YVC leaders to make presentations — in the community and videotaped for online use. Make voting a personal issue for young adults.**
- 8. Expand reach of local voting guides — See how to get The Mercury's Voting Guide in more hands. Maybe partner with The Collegian. Print more copies. Put online for non-subscribers. Reproduce content on LWV site. Whatever it takes.**

Recommendations

9. Enhance social media on all platforms

- Expand number of followers using YVC members and paid posts asking people to follow for nonbiased 2016 campaign information.
- Create a monthly editorial calendar to help organize and distribute content, determine graphics that are needed, share blogs and other online resources, etc.
- Get additional members contributing to the feeds.
- Goal: Three to four posts per week, more closer to the elections.

Recommendations

10. Move public forums to more family-friendly times

- Try lunches or weeknight evenings.
- Consider filming or broadcasting them for later viewing or sharing online via social media tools like Periscope.

Recommendations

- 11. Partner with K-State residence halls and Greek living units to better educate students about voting while living in Manhattan.**
- Use your YVC to reach out.
 - Possibly print door knocker cards with easy to follow information about registering in Manhattan or how to request an advance ballot from home.

