

Young Americans: Where Are They Politically?

The conventional wisdom has it that young people are a “TV Generation” that doesn’t pay much attention to day-to-day politics and is low on political information. Recent survey findings, shown here, generally support this assessment. But the young challenge the common view of them as pessimistic about their personal life choices and down on the political system. They express the same high satisfaction with the way things are going in their lives that their elders do for theirs, and show greater confidence than their elders in the nation’s direction. They give little indication of political estrangement.

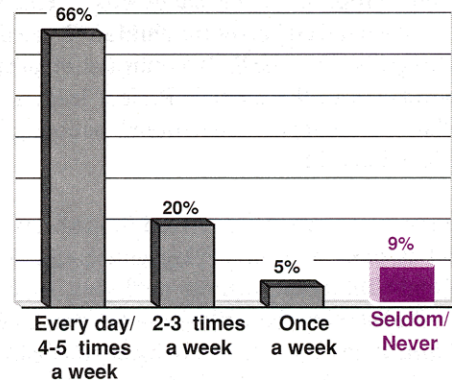
...Of Course, They’re a Television Generation

Question: Where do you get the majority of your political information?

Political Info. Source:	Percent
Television	54%
Radio	4%
Newspaper	19%
On-line or computer	0.5%
Magazines	3%
Parents	6%
Friends	2%
College	5%
High School	3%
Teachers/Instructors	3%
Other	2%
DK/Refused	0.5%

Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

Question: How often do you watch local or national news on television?



Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

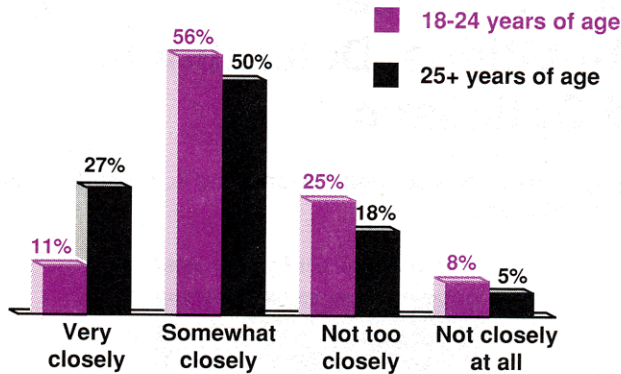
Data Sources

The data revealed in this section comes from seven polling sources explained below. Abbreviated sources from this list will be used throughout this section.

1. Seven combined Gallup/CNN/*USA Today* surveys from January-May 1996. N = 764 18-24 year olds.
2. Gallup Youth survey. Omnibus surveys of youth ages 13-17. Most recently, the 1994 sample taken throughout the year is 1,544.
3. Youth Voices survey conducted by Lake Research/Buffalo Qualitative Research/Research Strategies Management, April 14-24, 1996. N = 1,000 18-24 year olds.
4. Youth Vote '96 survey conducted by Global Strategy Group, February 1-3, 1996. N = 800 18-30 year olds.
5. ABC News & Channel One survey, February 2, 1996. N = 505 12-17 year olds.
6. College Senior survey conducted by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, April 18-25, 1996. N = 500 college seniors.
7. Third Millennium survey conducted by Luntz Research Companies/Mark A. Siegel & Associates, September 8-10, 1996. N = 500 18-34 year olds.

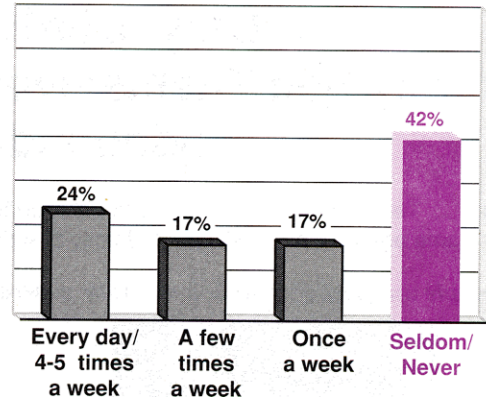
... For Many Youth, Politics is Far From Central

Question: Overall, how closely would you say you follow news about national politics...?



Source: Gallup Organization combined.

Question: How often do you discuss politics with your friends and family?



Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

And For Many, Political Knowledge is Scarce

Question 1: Do you happen to know which political party is currently in the majority in Congress?

	Republican	Democrat	DK
Total	79%	11%	10%
Male	83%	9%	8%
Female	75%	13%	12%

Source: The College Senior Survey

Question 2: How many United States Senators are there?

	100 (correct)	Incorrect answer/DK
Total	44%	56%
Male	55%	45%
Female	34%	66%

Source: The College Senior Survey

Question 3: Would you please tell me who was president of the US at the beginning of the Korean War?

	President Harry Truman	Incorrect answer/DK
Total	16%	84%
Male	22%	79%
Female	11%	89%

Source: The College Senior Survey

Question 4: When the US entered WWII, do you happen to know which two major nations were allied with Germany?

	Italy & Japan	Italy only	Japan only	Neither/DK
Total	24%	15%	15%	46%
Male	36%	18%	13%	33%
Female	14%	12%	17%	57%

Source: The College Senior Survey

Question 5: What is the source of the following phrase, "Government of the people, by the people and for the people"?

	Gettysburg Address/Lincoln	Incorrect answer/DK
Total	8%	92%
Male	8%	93%
Female	8%	93%

Source: The College Senior Survey

Question: History/Government Index (Questions 2-5).

Questions Answered Correctly	Percent of Students
4 of 4	1%
3 of 4	7%
2 of 4	17%
1 of 4	34%
0 of 4	41%

Source: The College Senior Survey

Confidence and Mood

Young Americans Think Their Elders See Them as: Lazy, Confused and Unfocused They See Themselves as: Ambitious, Determined, Independent and Optimistic

Question: Tell me which word you think older people use most often to describe **your generation**—that is, people who are about the same age as you?... which word best describes **you and your friends**?

...older people use most often to describe **your generation**...

Word Used Most Often	Older People
Ambitious	6%
Worried	2%
Confused	18%
Determined	4%
Discouraged	5%
Optimistic	5%
Uninformed	5%
Misunderstood	10%
Independent	5%
Apathetic	4%
Unfocused	12%
Lazy	22%
DK	2%

Source: Youth Voices [18-24 year olds]

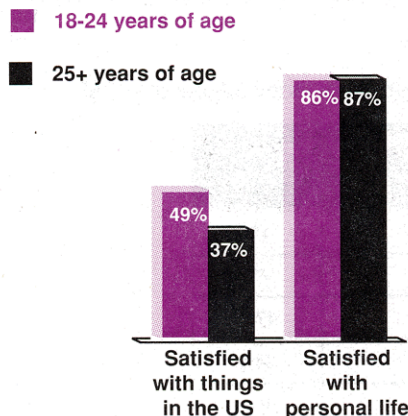
...describes **you and your friends**...

Word Best Describes:	Myself & Friends
Ambitious	25%
Worried	3%
Confused	5%
Determined	20%
Discouraged	5%
Optimistic	15%
Uninformed	2%
Misunderstood	5%
Independent	16%
Apathetic	1%
Unfocused	2%
Lazy	1%
DK	1%

Source: Youth Voices [18-24 year olds]

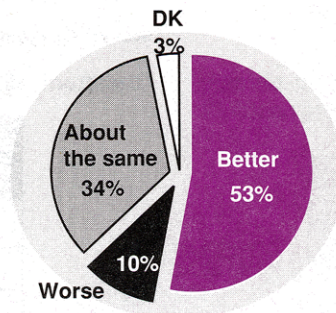
The Young Are Confident About Their Personal Positions

Question: In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in **the US at this time**? ...in **your own personal life**?



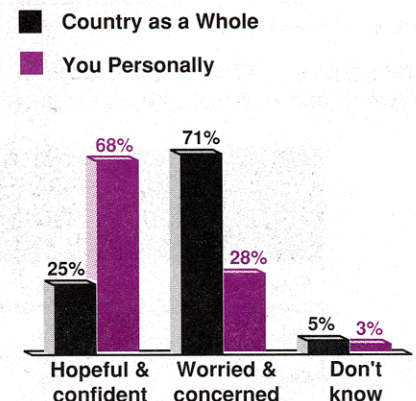
Source: Gallup Organization combined.

Question: When you are your parents' age, do you expect to be better off than they are, worse off, or about the same?



Source: Youth Voices [18-24 year olds]

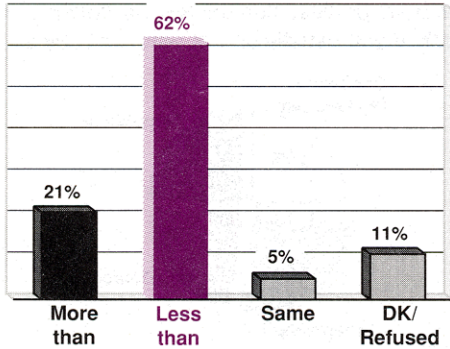
Question: ... what the next five year will be like for **the country as a whole**,... for **you personally**, do you feel more hopeful and confident, or more worried and concerned?



Source: Youth Voices [18-24 year olds]

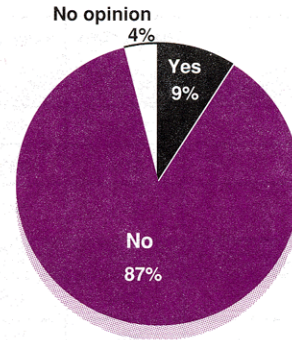
They Aren't Confident, Though, About Social Security

Question: Do you think people now receiving Social Security are getting back more or less than they paid into the system over their lifetimes?



Source: Third Millennium [18-34 year olds]

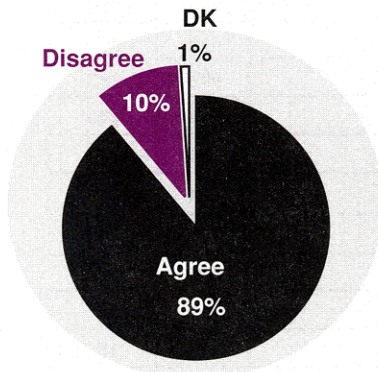
Question: Do you think the Social Security system will have the money available to provide the benefits you expect for your retirement?



Source: Third Millennium [18-34 year olds]

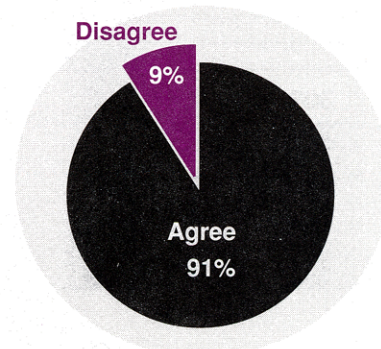
No Sense of Political Estrangement Here

Question: How do you feel about... My vote can make a difference?



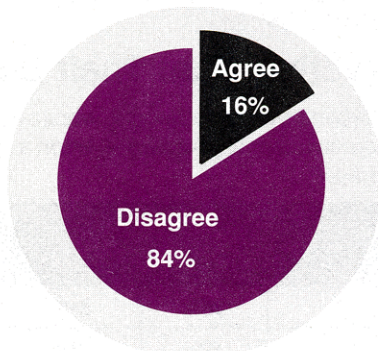
Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

Question: How do you feel about... I feel that I should vote. It is my duty as an American citizen?



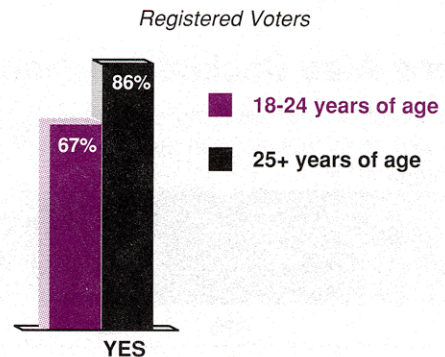
Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

Question: How do you feel about... I just don't care at all about politics?



Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

Question: Are you now registered to vote in your precinct or election district, or not?



Source: Gallup Organization combined.

Political Preferences

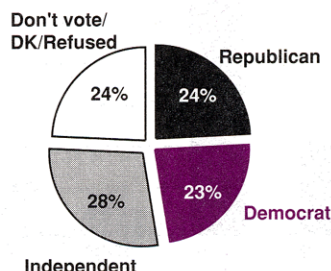
Young VOTERS Are Evenly Split In Party ID...

Question: In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself...?

Party ID:	Republican	Democrat	Independent
18-24 yrs. of age			
Total	30%	30%	37%
Male	35%	23%	39%
Female	24%	38%	35%
25+ yrs. of age			
Total	33%	32%	33%
Male	36%	27%	35%
Female	29%	37%	31%

Source: Gallup combined [18-24 year olds]

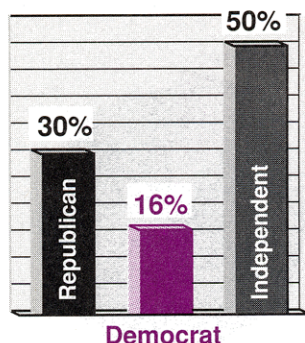
Question: Which of these phrases best describes how you usually vote? Usually Republican; sometimes Republican, equally for both parties, sometimes Democratic, or usually Democratic? If you usually do not vote, just say so.



Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

...But TEENS Show a Republican Edge

Question: Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as...



Source: ABC News/Channel One [12-17 year olds]

Question: When you are old enough to vote do you think you will be a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Political Preference Trend	GOP	Democrat
1977	21%	32%
1982	33%	45%
1983	38%	39%
1984	41%	38%
1985	52%	28%
1986	51%	31%
1987	45%	35%
1988	44%	36%
1989	52%	32%
1990	48%	38%
1991	NA	NA
1992	30%	26%
1993	32%	30%
1994	38%	24%

Source: Gallup Youth [13-17 year olds]

Teens Also Declare Themselves More Conservative Than Their Elders

Question: Which do you think is more important: balancing the federal budget or maintaining the current level of service in domestic programs?

	Balance budget	Maintain current level of services	No opinion
Teens	60%	33%	7%
Adults	52%	41%	6%

Source: ABC News/Channel One [12-17 year olds]

Question: From what you know about it, whose position on the budget issue comes closer to your own--Clinton's or the Republicans' in Congress?

	Clinton	GOP	No opinion
Teens	36%	53%	12%
Adults	57%	36%	7%

Source: ABC News/Channel One [12-17 year olds]

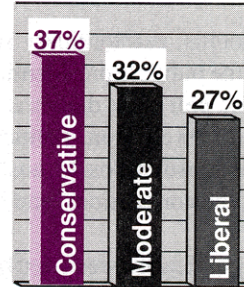
Young Women Are Less Likely Than Young Men to Say "Conservative" Over "Liberal"

Question: How would you describe your political views...?

	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
18-24 yrs. of age			
Total	34%	40%	24%
Male	39%	36%	24%
Female	28%	45%	25%
25+ yrs. of age			
Total	41%	41%	15%
Male	45%	39%	13%
Female	37%	42%	17%

Source: Gallup combined [18-24 year olds]

Question: Thinking of your general outlook politically, would you describe yourself as conservative, somewhat conservative, moderate, somewhat liberal, or liberal?

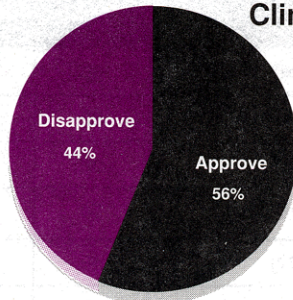


Source: Youth Vote '96 [18-30 year olds]

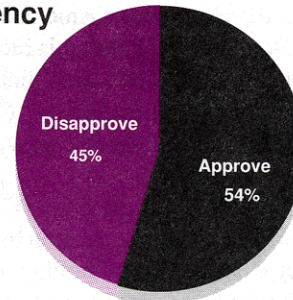
Campaign '96: At This Stage, Young Americans Closely Resemble Their Elders in Rating Clinton and Expected Vote

Approve or Disapprove of Clinton's Handling of Presidency

18-24 years of age



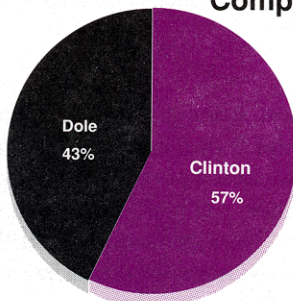
25+ years of age



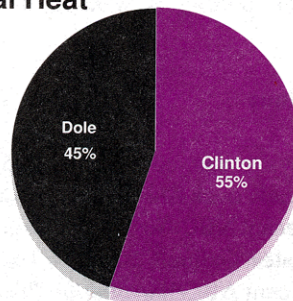
Source: Gallup combined

Composite: Dole vs Clinton Trial Heat

18-24 years of age



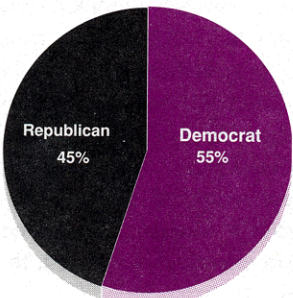
25+ years of age



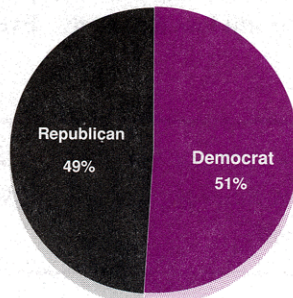
Source: Gallup combined

Question: If the elections for Congress were being held today, which party's candidate would you vote for in your congressional district—the Democratic Party's candidate or the Republican Party's candidate?

18-24 years of age



25+ years of age



Source: Gallup combined