



## Arizona Youth Survey Results Overview

Inspired by the legacy of U.S. Senator John McCain and his family, the McCain Institute's mission is to fight to advance freedom, prosperity, security, and human dignity for the benefit of all Americans and the world. Uniquely positioned to champion the voices of the next generation of Arizonans, the McCain Institute collaborated with SocialSphere, Inc., to develop a benchmark survey aimed at providing fresh insight and perspective into the attitudes, opinions, and interests of young 18-29- year-old-Arizonans as they pertain to democracy, politics, and civic engagement.

More specifically, the study sought to understand young Arizonans' views toward:

- The most recent midterm elections
- The most important issues related to the future of Arizona
- Barriers to civic engagement and voting
- The degree to which state and federal officials understand their values and vision

This survey of N=1,502 18-29-year-old Arizona residents was conducted online between November 22 and November 30, 2022. Data from the U.S. Census Current Population Survey and the Arizona Secretary of State's Office were used to weight the survey respondents based on gender, age, race and ethnicity, region of the state, educational attainment, voter registration and non-coverage factors associated with online surveys. The survey carries a credibility interval of +/-2.5%. An interactive display of data is available [here](#).

## Key Findings

**1) Indicating an era of activism that we see across the United States, we found significant numbers of young Arizonans engaging in [civic life](#) – especially young people of color and Generation Z (18–25-year-olds, the youngest cohort in the sample).**

- a) Forty-three percent (43%) of young, registered Arizonans indicated that they voted in the midterm elections (which translates to 31% of eligible Arizonans under 30).
- b) A majority (51%) of all young Arizonans indicated that they had spent time researching candidates or political issues that were unfamiliar to them. Gen Z (53%), young people aged 25 and younger, were slightly more likely to conduct research than those in their later 20s (47%); women (54%) were more likely than men to do the same (47%).
- c) Showing a commitment to helping others, 44% of young Arizonans reported volunteering for community service (44%) in the last two years. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of college students and nearly half of college graduates (49%) engaged in this way – as did more than a third (35%) of those not in college and without a degree.
- d) Additionally, we found that 36% shared or posted political content on social media and 24% attended a politically event, rally, or demonstration. Young men of color (35%) were more likely than their counterparts to have attended events like these and to have volunteered on a political campaign of some kind.

**2) Inflation and abortion motivated young Arizonans to vote in November; cost of living, housing, health care, the protection of rights and freedoms, and mental health are central [concerns for the future](#).**

- a) When asked to choose which issue was most important to their vote in the midterm elections for Congress, young Arizonans ranked inflation (32%) and abortion (30%) above all else – with democracy (12%), climate change (11%), immigration (7%), and crime (7%) following behind. Republicans (47%) were more than twice as likely as young Democrats (22%) to be motivated by inflation; Young Democrats (35%) were twice as likely as Republicans (15%) to cite abortion.
- b) Changing the frame to the future of Arizona, over three-quarters (78%) of young Arizonans reported that the cost of living is a “very important” issue – which topped a list of more than 20 issues. Overall, two-thirds of young people in the state believe that the following issues are very important: housing (74%), health care (73%), protecting individual rights and freedoms (72%), mental health (70%), K-12 education (68%), reproductive rights (68%) and the economy (67%). It is notable, that while 42% of young Arizonans find immigration very important, it ranked near the bottom of the list of issues tested.

- c) Along with economic concerns, mental health is an issue that transcends most divides. A solid majority of Democrats (74%) and Republicans (59%) believe this is very important — as do men (68%), women (72%), and young whites (70%), Blacks (80%), and Hispanics (71%) in the state.

**3) In a year of historic voter turnout, most young Arizonans were encouraged by someone to vote; among those who did not vote more than a third regret their decision.**

- a) Nearly three-in-five (57%) young Arizonans were encouraged to vote in the midterm election by a family, peer, political candidate, organization. Young Democrats (65%) and young Republicans (65%) were encouraged in equal measure — while those not affiliated with either party (53%) were less likely to say they were encouraged.
- b) Among young Arizonans who are not registered to vote or did not vote in the 2022 midterm elections, 36% say they regret not voting. Women (45%) were more likely than men (27%) to regret not voting; progressives (50%) were more than moderates (27%) and conservatives (38%) to regret not voting; and Whites (45%) were more likely than Hispanics (29%) to regret not voting.

**4) Nearly half of young Arizonans cite perceptions of poor candidates and lack of information about candidates/issues as the top [barriers to voting](#); one-fifth cite intimidation or harassment at the polls.**

- a) When provided with a list of barriers to voting, young Arizonans indicated that poor candidate choices (47%) and a lack of information about candidates and issues (46%) — were the most significant barriers to voting. This was followed by a lack of information about the voting process (34%) and concerns about the time commitment (34%).
- b) Importantly, one-in-five Arizonans cited intimidation or harassment at the polls as a barrier to voting (27% Democrats; 20% Republicans; 17% independents). Perceived barriers to voting differ based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Young people of color (Blacks 31% and Hispanics 21%) are more likely than Whites (17%) to say intimidation or harassment at polling or ballot drop box locations is a barrier to voting.

**5) Most young Arizonans do not believe that elected officials, whether local or in Washington, [value their views and perspective](#).**

- a) Most young Arizonans do not believe or are unsure if elected officials in their state (40% valued “a lot” or “some”), or in Congress (33% “a lot” or “some”), value their views and perspectives. While nearly equal numbers of Democrats believe their political officials value their perspective (46% for Washington and 47% locally), young Republicans from Arizona are far more likely to believe that local officials are in touch with them. More than half (56%) of Republicans indicated that local officials value

their views while only 38% said the same about members of Congress.

- b) In the most recent midterm elections, 61% of young people who felt their views were valued “a lot” voted – compared to only 35% of those who believed their views were not valued at all.

**6) Despite these positive signs of civic engagement, only half of young Arizonans believe that the [midterm elections were legitimate](#) and reflected the will of the people.**

- a) Only 50% of young Arizonans say the most recent 2022 election in Arizona was legitimate – the remaining half were split as nearly a quarter (23%) of young Arizonans do not believe it was legitimate, while 27% were not sure. More Republicans under 30 thought the midterm election was not legitimate (47%) than thought it was fair (36%); by a 9:1 margin, Democrats believed it was fair (72% to 8%) – and a plurality of independents thought the same (47% to 26%).
- b) Two-thirds (67%) of young people who voted believe the midterm election reflected the will of the people, compared to 52% of those who registered and did not vote, and only 34% who are not registered to vote. When looking ahead to the 2024 presidential election in Arizona, less than half (41%) of the sample expressed confidence that it will reflect the will of the people. More than a quarter – across the political spectrum – say that “it depends.”

**7) The middle school and high school period, before turning 18, is when nearly half of young Arizonans say their political values took shape. Across party lines, young Arizonans credit their parents as their [biggest political influence](#).**

- a) Forty-two percent (42%) of young Arizonans indicated that their political beliefs began to take shape in their pre-teen or teenage years before turning 18. Parents, more than anyone else, were credited as having the greatest influence on their children’s political beliefs and values.
- b) For both Democrats (40% parents) and Republicans (42% parents), parents were regarded as about twice as influential as other groups and individuals such as: college professors (16% Democrats, 17% Republicans), friends (23% Democrats, 16% Republicans), teachers (20% Democrats, 12% Republicans), social media influencers (16% Democrats, 15% Republicans), and celebrities (13% Democrats, 10% Republicans).
- c) The experience and culture of one’s hometown was particularly prevalent in shaping young Arizonans political outlooks – especially for young people of color. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of young Blacks, 27% of Hispanics say this experience had a lot of influence on them – compared to 18% of whites who said the same. The survey also

found that young African Americans (36%) and Hispanics (27%) were more likely than Whites (16%) to cite historical figures as highly influential in shaping their political beliefs.

**8) Among the many attributes that young Arizonans find important, Black and Hispanic Arizonans prioritize race and ethnicity, while Whites prioritize country in their [identity](#).**

- a) Young Arizonans confirmed that the question of personal identity is complex, nuanced, and influenced by many factors including gender, race, ethnicity, level of education among other factors. When considering the important attributes of their identity, young Arizonans overall said their country (42%), education status (39%), job or profession (38%), race and ethnicity (37%), and gender (37%) were “very important.” Black (68%) and Hispanic (50%) Arizonans say their race and ethnicity are “very important,” which ranked this at the top of the list; White Arizonans say their country ranks highest (36%).
- b) Additionally, it was found that: Hispanics (42%) are more likely than Whites (34%) to say their job or profession is “very important” to their identity; Blacks (51%) are more likely than Whites (28%) and Hispanics (33%) to say religion is a “very important” aspect of their identity.

**9) YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram are dominant [news sources](#) for young Arizonans, while Fox News and Facebook are the most partisan.**

- a) Well more than half 62% of young Arizonans follow local Arizona news very or somewhat closely, and 61% of young Arizonans tell us that they follow national news very or somewhat closely. A majority (54%) of young Arizonans regularly turn to YouTube for news, 45% regularly rely on TikTok and Instagram, 34% Snapchat, and 30% Twitter.
- b) Young Republicans are more likely than young Democrats to rely both on Fox News (+16 points more likely) — as well as Facebook (+18 points more likely). Additionally, it was found that men (35%) are more likely than women (25%) to regularly use Twitter for news; college students (40%) are more likely than those with a college degree (27%) and those without a degree or who are not in college (29%) to regularly use Twitter for news; and young Democrats (31%) are more likely than young Republicans (19%) to regularly turn to local TV news sources.

**10) Half of young Arizonans have [felt down, depressed, or hopeless](#) “at least several days” in the last two weeks; about a fifth have had thoughts of self-harm or suicide; LGBTQ+ Arizonans are significantly higher on both measures.**

- a) More than three-in-five (62%) of young LGBTQ+ Arizonans have felt down, depressed, or hopeless “at least several days” in the last two weeks and 29% have had thoughts

they would be better off dead or thoughts of hurting themselves in some way. This striking statistic is compared to 50% of all young Arizonans polled who have felt down, depressed, or hopeless and 21% who have had thoughts they would be better off dead or thoughts of hurting themselves in some way “at least several days” in the last two weeks.

- b) These numbers also spike when looking at those who are financially struggling and those without a college degree or who are not enrolled in college. A quarter (25%) of young Arizonans who claim to be “comfortable” financially have felt down, depressed, or hopeless “at least several days” in the last two weeks compared to 47% of those “getting by,” 67% of those who claim to be “stressed or struggling” with their finances and 78% of those who are financially in “crisis.” Over half of young Arizonans without a college degree or who are not in college (58%) have felt down, depressed, or hopeless “at least several days” in the last two weeks compared to 46% of college students and 36% of those with college degrees.

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