

# the Sillerman Center

FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PHILANTHROPY

## YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: A Guide to High Impact Investments

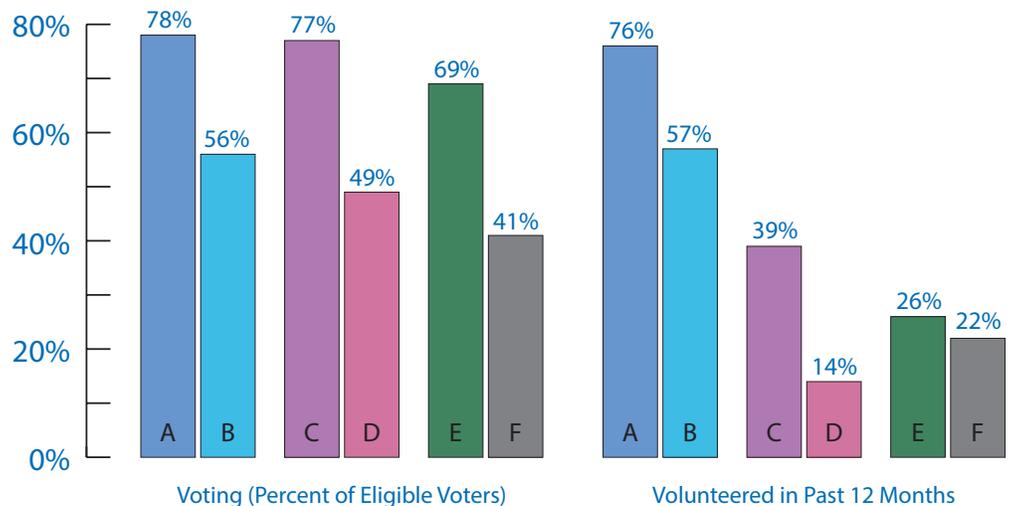


Today's young adults are less engaged in civic and political activities than the generation before them. Fewer are entering adulthood with the civic knowledge and skills needed for active and engaged citizenship.

- A large share of youth are only minimally engaged in their communities, and many others remain uninvolved in civic or political life.
- Civic engagement, as measured by activities such as voting and volunteering, becoming increasingly stratified by age, education, and income. There are significant gaps in the levels of civic participation between older and younger adults, richer and poorer, and citizens with greater and lesser levels of education.
- While most students in US schools continue to be exposed to Civics and American History, the large majority of young people graduate high school with only a basic level understanding - or less - of key concepts and institutions in American Democracy.
- Active and informed youth are significantly more likely to vote, volunteer and support their communities as adults. Civically engaged youth are also less likely to engage in risky behaviors and more likely to succeed in school.\* As stakeholders in our communities, young people also bring an important perspective to civic life and public policy.

### Voting and Volunteering by Income, Education, and Age

- A) High Income (>\$100K)
- B) Low Income (<\$40K)
- C) BA Degree or Higher
- D) HS Diploma or Less
- E) Older (45 yrs +)
- F) Younger (18-24 yrs)



\* Study from the Center for the Study of Social Policy (November 2011)

For more information on youth civic engagement please see: [Fault Lines in Our Democracy](#) (2012), [Civic Engagement and the Changing Transition to Adulthood](#) (2009), and [The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2010](#).

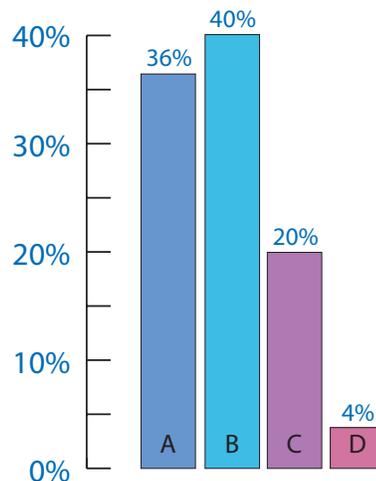
Citizenship requires both knowledge about government and the ability to be involved in governance. It means knowing how to identify and inform yourself about issues, explore and evaluate possible solutions, and then act to resolve problems. It demands that you know how to interact respectfully with others. And it asks that you accept responsibility for meeting your community's and the nation's challenges.\*\*

—Congressman Lee Hamilton,  
U.S. House of Representatives (1965–1999)

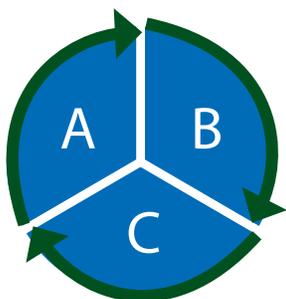
\*\*Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools

### 12th Grade Civics Proficiency 2010 Nation's Report Card

- A) Below Basic
- B) Basic
- C) Proficient
- D) Advanced



### Strong Youth Civic Engagement Programs Should:



A) Create opportunities for youth voice and involvement in governance

- Support expansion of student participation in school governance.
- Promote youth voter registration, including youth voter registration drives.
- Support policies aimed at increasing youth voter participation.
- Promote youth involvement in community governance, including creation of youth advisory councils and youth representation on local governing boards and planning groups.

B) Expand and improve civic education

- Incorporate civics into state and national education standards.
- Support professional development for teachers focused on civic learning.
- Promote web-based learning experiences
- Develop curriculum that incorporates current local, national, and international issues
- Support authentic assessments of civic learning (performance evaluations and portfolios)

C) Provide more hands-on, authentic civic learning opportunities in school and the community.

- Support in-school and after-school programs that include voting, mock trials, debate, legislative deliberations, and diplomacy (model legislatures and UN).
- Expand youth service and service-learning programs that engage youth of all ages in working to solve real-world problems

To help youth become active citizens, communities need to provide multiple opportunities for civic engagement and learning, beginning at an early age. The most effective strategies combine civic learning with opportunities for youth to apply their knowledge and skills to their communities.

For more information please visit:

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Prepared in partnership with the [Center for Youth and Communities](#)

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+ The Sillerman Center draws upon scholarship and practitioner experience to engage and inform members of the philanthropic community committed to moving social justice work forward.