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HOW YOUNGER VOTERS WILL AFFECT THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN POLITICS

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**KAMARCK:** Good afternoon to those of us on the East Coast and good morning to those of us joining us from the West Coast. And welcome to the Brookings Institution webinar on How younger voters will affect the future of American politics. A big and fascinating topic. My name is Elaine Kamarck. I'm a senior fellow here at Brookings and editor of our blog called FixGov, where we try and bring the best scholarship available to contemporary issues of politics and government. Thanks for joining us today. We have a very distinguished panel to speak with you and they will offer a great deal of interesting data. To save time, we've listed a series of links to this event page, which you will be able to see at the end of this webinar, so you can link to them for more information and for actual PowerPoints. In addition, I want to remind everyone that you can send questions to [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu) or via Twitter at [@BrookingsGov](https://twitter.com/BrookingsGov) by using [#YoungerVoters](https://twitter.com/hashtag/YoungerVoters). With that, let me get started and explain where this came from.

A few months ago, Mike Hais, Morley Winograd, and Doug Ross penned a piece for our FixGov blog titled, "Younger voters are poised to upend American politics." The piece hit a nerve and we received a lot of positive feedback and more and more questions. So, we decided to do an entire series on this topic following the first piece, with pieces on young evangelical voters, younger voters and social media, younger voters and their behavior as consumers in the marketplace, younger voters and their impact on the gender gap, younger voters in the two political parties and how they differ, and many others. You can find the articles in this series on the Brookings site at [how younger voters will impact elections](https://www.brookings.edu/topics/how-younger-voters-will-impact-elections/).

Today, we have with us a panel of three scholars and two activists in this area. We'll begin, and I'm going to introduce them all now, so we can then move through opening statements pretty quickly. We'll begin with Mike Hais. Mike is the former president of research at Frank N. Magid Associates. Some years ago, now, Mike and his coauthor, Morley Winograd, wrote a book called "Millennial Makeover" identifying the large generation of young people, at that time, who came of age in time to vote for Barack Obama. Since then, they have been leading researchers on young voters, even though, frankly, they are old enough to be the grandparents of the people that they study and promote. Then I'm going to call on Dr. Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, the Newhouse director of CIRCLE at the Jonathan Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University, where she oversees a wide portfolio of research and impact programs involving young people. CIRCLE was founded approximately 20 years ago and is one of the oldest organizing-- oldest organizations looking at the impact of young people

and their involvement in civic life. Next, we'll turn to Dr. Ray Block. He's an associate professor of political science and African American studies at Penn State, where he has published a lot of academic articles at the intersection of race, and politics, and even culture. After him, we'll go to another activist, Dakota Hall, executive director, Alliance for Youth Action, the nation's largest network of youth ed—youth-led organizations dedicated to building power year-round. He cut his teeth as an organizer when he was at the University of Wisconsin. And last but certainly not least, our own Dr. Gabe Sanchez. He's a David Rubenstein fellow here at Brookings and a professor at the University of New Mexico, as well as a principal at Latino Decisions, the nation's leading survey firm focused on the Latino electorate. His most recent book is being revised as we speak, "Latinos and the 2012 Election: The New Face of the American Voter." So, I want to start by going to Mike. Mike, give us some of the findings from your research on young voters going back to your first book on millennials.

**HAIS:** Thank you, Elaine. Well, as you mentioned — first of all, thank you for having me. And thank you for giving me, Morley, and Doug, an opportunity to contribute to the Brookings series — as you mentioned, Morley and I have written a series of books, wrote three actually, primarily about millennials, and Millennial was in the title of all three of those. But since then, we've expanded our view to look at another younger generation that's coming along. Some people refer to them as Generation Z. We call them plurals, and that is because they are a remarkably diverse generation. There is no one ethnic majority or racial majority within that generation. They're the first majority-minority generation in American history. And so, what we did in our series of articles that we wrote with Brookings is look at those two generations, the millennials and the plurals, and their impact on U.S. politics. As it turns out, those two generations are 45, are under 45. And what we found in our research is that age 45 is truly now the under-over line in American politics. Those under 45 are very distinctively different in their demographic composition, their partisanship, their political attitudes, and their media usage, then voters who are over 45, who are primarily members of Generation X, the baby boom generation, and I have to say, sadly, my own generation, the silent generation. So, we have these, this over-under line where these two kinds of competing forces in American politics are operating.

And I just want to talk about some of the distinctive differences between those two generational settings. First of all, Americans, as is-- this is reflected in this panel, under 45, are remarkably diverse in their ethnicity and the racial background. Plurals, as I mentioned, are the first

majority-minority generation that in American history. Millennials, 40% are either African American, Hispanic, of Asian American, Native American, or of mixed race. And as you go up the generational spectrum, you would find that about two-thirds of Gen X, 75% or so of boomers, and 90% of silent generation are in fact white. So, that's one distinctive difference.

Another difference is the new religious background of these generational cohorts. Millennials and plurals are the least religious and the least Christian generations in American history. About four out of ten millennials and plurals have no religious, formal religious, affiliation. This contrasts to upwards of 90% among members of the silent generation who identify or worship with one faith group or another. And increasingly, as you go up the generational scale, what you will find is more Christians within each group. So, you have this difference as well.

Another very crucial difference among the three among, between these two groups, is that voters under 45 tend to get their news and information digitally, whereas those over 45 changes still use the more traditional methods, in particular television. So, it's a matter of thinking about, on the one hand, TikTok and YouTube, and on the other hand, Fox, MSNBC, and the traditional networks. And so-- and that's how the best way to reach these generations are through those different means. Those under 45, a very key distinction is that those under 45 at this point are solidly Democratic. Just one-- while those over 45 tilt Republican.

So just one figure from the last midterm election in 2022, 59%, according to Pew data that we have access to, 59% of those under 45 voted Democratic for Congress. That contrasts with 56% of those over 45-- of of those 45 and over who voted Republican for Congress. It also made a difference in the Senate races. In five battleground states, that would be Arizona, Georgia, New Hampshire, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, about two-thirds of those under 45 voted for Democratic Senatorial candidates. whereas, by contrast, about 55% of those over 45 voted for Republican candidates. And for that reason, the Democrats won control of Congress. In Dakota's state, actually, the same thing occurred but there were fewer young-- unfortunately more older voters. And Mandela Barnes was not able to win, but he was able to contest the race very carefully, very closely.

One thing Elaine asked about is, were there any surprising findings in our research. And one finding is that among younger voters, the gender gap has disappeared. The gender gap kind of appeared in American politics in the 1980s when Ronald Reagan was first elected president. And for the first time, women and men began to vote differently. Women tended to vote more Democratic,

men more Republican. What we found with the Pew data is that among white, African American, and Hispanic people under 45, there was no gender gap. Male, male and female, males and females of those generations and those ethnic groups tended to vote Democratic in the same numbers. The generation gap continued among white and among Hispanic people, but not among younger voters. In addition, the gen-- the generation gap, a phrase that came about in the 1960s to describe the difference between younger voters, and who at that time were boomers, and older voters, their parents who were members of the G.I. or greatest generation, differed in a variety of ways.

But at least in the 2022 election, and in terms of attitudes, what we found was that younger and older Democrats, those who identified as Democrats, tended to hold the same positions on issues, tended to vote in the same direction as one another. By contrast, among older, among Republicans, there is a gen-- a the generation gap exists. Younger Republicans tend to be more moderate in their beliefs, particularly on attitudes on social issues, and they also voted to a greater extent than older Democrats-- than older Republicans in the 2022 election for Democrats. About one out of ten younger Republicans actually voted for a Democratic candidate for president. So, that was another key and somewhat surprising thing.

So, to conclude, I would simply say that we need to look at how this generation, these two generations, are coming along in terms of the contribution they make to the U.S. population in the U.S. electorate. If they turn out in numbers consistent with their contribution to the population, millennials and plurals, those who are now under 45, will make up almost half of the electorate in 2024, above 49%. They will make up a majority of the electorate in 2028. So, any accounting of what's going to happen in U.S. politics in the next election, and really in the next decade or two decades, is going to have to depend on the growth of this generation, these two generations, and in the distinctive attitudes and media usage that they bring to the American political process.

**KAMARCK:** Thank you, Mike, that's great. And I'm just laughing to myself. Those of you who are political scientists on this panel know that in political science we have a gracious term. It's called people who leave the electorate, i.e., they die... describe to describe this process of the electorate changing by generations. and it's one of the reasons we study generations. I want to turn now to Kei, and Kei has a background in psychology, which I found which was really interesting and use-- probably useful for this, and ask in your work with young people, how do young people get engaged in

politics? And what, if anything, is different about younger generations and the way they come into the political process?

**KAWASHIMA-GINSBERG:** Thank you. That's one of my favorite topic, especially because I focused on youth and adolescence, and I'm a mother of three school-aged kids, so it's a really relevant and current topic. So, the first thing I would say about how young people become engaged in politics is that not nearly enough pathways are available and accessible for young people to be involved in politics. And that's something the CIRCLE has continued to find over the years, is that not only do young people vote at most half of the population in the U.S. electorate, but when you come to thinking about how else young people are engaged in politics, oftentimes single digit percent of young people actually have access to those opportunities or they don't want to. But what we find, though, then, is that this framework that we suggested a year ago or maybe two now called Growing Voters which really aims to help people rethink what it means to engage and mobilize the electorate.

And for us, it starts thinking developmentally about the electorate of young people who are increasingly diverse, gender diverse, not racially diverse. More queer young people are visible in the U.S. electorate. They are also economically divided. They are also precocious in terms of political engagement when they start. But that unique electorate needs different kinds of support than the previous generations. The more diverse they are, the more diverse those pathways and entry points to political engagement needs to be.

So, with that, I want to point to maybe a handful of pathways that tend to be really uplifted when we study young people and their political entry points. First is really the earliest starting point, which is your family, and socialization of values around talking about civic and political, and current affairs in their community. It can start about right in the neighborhood. Who's picking up your garbage, who is keeping up with neighbors, and who's making sure they're showing up to the meetings and bringing issues that matter to that family or to the community? We find over and over that having dinner conversation at your family about political affairs has a predictive value for later civic engagement. So is having friends who seem to be involved and engaged in issues around them. So, that's the earlier socialization about value itself. Is it important? Do you matter? Should we care about what's going in a local community? And of course, when they start school, the key knowledge foundation is supposed to be built, where it's currently not doing great in social studies education in making sure every student has access to great civic education so that they reach proficiency.

Even looking at civic education — civic knowledge tests nationally in eighth grade — less than third, about 21% I think, of eighth graders actually reach proficiency in just a simple test of civic knowledge. So, we have problem there. But it is an really important site. Before college, when most young people are passing through that particular institution, have an opportunity to not only learn about the civic and political institutions, but also actually practice some hands-on democracy. It can start even on the first day of kindergarten, when a teacher might ask, "What should we do about the next field trip? How should we make sure we are all heard in our classroom?" Those are beginning of the democratic citizenship. The more young people have those opportunities over and over of knowing that they matter, they are heard, their opinions and votes — in a sort of nonpolitical way — matter for the community's wellbeing, can build a lot of important agency that young people use when they're teenagers and young adults to become involved in issues.

Third one is associations. So, this is where I actually find both similarity and big difference from previous generations. So, you all know about these community association, the "Bowling Alone" and other important work, that pointed to the importance of social association and social mobility and civil role that those associations play. We're starting to watch more qualitatively, maybe Dakota can tell me more, but a lot more young people are starting to think about different kinds of ways to associate and communicate with one another and unite on different things that they care about. It can be a game platform. It can be a really informal group that meets still and have specific role and discuss many topics that include community and political issues. We're really watching to see what roles those kinds of associations play, but they look very, very different. They're not the membership associations of the sixties, seventies, and eighties.

Finally, I want to mention that something that Dr. Hais mentioned, which is the social media and how young people consume and then utilize media as a mobilization tool for social action. We find over and over that traditional news outlet can provide really great information, but young people often need somebody to mediate that. So, information alone is not enough to mobilize action. But when these groups — like social associations, informal groups, classroom — come into play, young people need somebody to process information with, think about what they should do, and then decide what they can actually do within their own capacity. They could be very young, they could be very limited in different ways, but what can they actually do? And that's what mobilizes action. So, because of that, young people do tend to get media and information from alternative sources, often times

through their friends that they trust or family members. We find that with the youngest voters, those are the most common sources of election information, and that will continue to be the case because they are overwhelmed for the most part by such a sea of information that's bombarding them all the time.

In terms of issues, though, I think Dr. Hais also mentioned the issue is entry point, young people really continue to care deeply about economic issues, both for their own families, and community, and themselves, but also looking at economic equality. So, they tend to really emphasize how economic issues overlay many specific issue, whether it's racial justice issues or climate justice or gun violence prevention. Those issues they care about are often intersected with economic inequality and racial injustice. So, the way that people think about issues these days, we have to we have to change the way we ask about issues of young people because they would often mention, "Why care like about seven issues?" So, we often now ask, "What are your top three issues that you care about?" Because they really live and kind of activate through these intersectional identity that represent this generation. So, I'll wrap here. Thanks.

**SANCHEZ:** Heads up. Elaine, you're on mute.

**KAMARCK:** Let me start that all over again. Ray, I want to go to you. I know you've just finished a major study of African American political engagement emphasizing the role of culture and art in both public narratives and electoral campaigns. Can you tell us a little bit about your study and what you've learned about young African American voters and participants in civic life?

**BLOCK:** Okay. This is great. I always love the opportunity to do things like this and to, whenever possible, just give credit to young people for being amazing and obviously being the future of politics. And so, I want to give a little bit of background in terms of how I got into this work. And I think this is important because it jumps into answering the question. When I was in graduate school, I studied fascination with politics, they called an interest in politics or political interests. And at the time, I had noticed there was a race gap in terms of how interested people would say they are on surveys. And the gap work like this: black people were less inclined to say they were interested in politics than their white colleagues were. And I remember in 2008, and I got my degree before 2008, I do remember in 2008 that pattern started to change. It doesn't take a really smart political scientist to know that some of that might have had to do with Barack Obama being on the political scene at the



time. And the interest gap started to shift, and in some instances, it was disappearing amongst certain groups of people, and that really got me thinking about it.

So, like the colloquial way of thinking about this is: if interest in politics is your way of studying if people pay attention to what's going on in government, I think that people pay attention to what's going on in government when they believe that government is paying attention to them. And the idea that you need to engage people so that they feel like they're connected to the thing that you want them to be politically involved in is very important. That general idea is the reason why I do a lot of what I call community-engaged and applied research. And so, as a political scientist, I do a lot of quantitative work. But the most rewarding work that I've been doing lately is the qualitative stuff, where I work with members of youth groups. And I listen to their needs and hear the things that they care about in their voice and get a chance to think about how they bring conversations about politics into their contexts and translate those things so that they are interesting to people.

And I would say that if it's-- in terms of thinking about how this works, I've been looking lately at how viewing politics from the lens of culture — and put that put that in air quotes — right. Where culture can be entertainment, pop culture, acting, [inaudible], dance, film, music, TV, theater, you name it. Visual arts, architecture, fashion, you name it, right? Viewing politics from that lens is very useful. One thing it can do. is it can nurture a relationship between a young person's civic identity and their civic action. And I've seen that happen in real-time in some of the recent projects that I've been lucky enough to be involved in it. And so, what does that research say? Several case studies that I've worked on and had the opportunity to be in looked at how youth-led community organizations emphasize the role of politics and use the lens of art and culture to do so.

And that research suggests that we need to respect youth activism. And I feel like a lot of energy around how we frame youth activism needs to shift. And this is stuff that both Michael and Kei talked about, but it's this idea that there's a tendency to view young people as somehow falling short of older generations in some kind of comparison between the two. Or there's a tendency to talk about young people as being the victims of political decisions that were made without their input. And I want to add to those framings, the idea that young people have a lot of political agency, and young people can be really effective in getting things that they care about done in politics and effecting social change. And one of the ways that that could happen, is by bringing politics to them through the use of art and culture. And I've seen youth-led community organizations to do just that.

And there's a reciprocal nature to this. I talked about civic identity and civic activism, and they go together. And so, I can-- as an anecdote, I became politically involved because somebody invited me to a voting drive, and I registered people at a community college. I didn't care much about politics but being invited in and having that part of me nurtured, created future investment in me to be politically involved. And some of the organizations that I was lucky enough to interview participants of and members of, talked about this process that way where the civic identity that was nurtured from being a part of a youth-led community organization focused on social change, actually created a strong sense of civic identity that nurtured future political activism down the road.

And so, I'm going to stop there because I feel like a lot of what I'm talking about, if I can predict, are going to be the kind of things that Dakota is going to be speaking on to. And so, this is, I guess my punch line for all of this is, the community-engaged work that I do, that starts out as academic but is really based on me trying to help out in communities, has continuously brought me back to looking at young people. And I don't think that's an accident. I think the reason why young people are so important to my thinking about political future is that young people are going to set not only standards for how political engagement should work, but also they're going to be redefining what it means to be involved in politics by translating politics into ways that interface with culture. and art, and entertainment, and fashion, food, and you name it. All right, I'll stop there.

**KAMARCK:** Ray, that's wonderful. And I love this notion of being invited in, which can really change people's lives. I want to turn to Dakota now, who is right in the thick of this, organizing, and Dakota, can you talk to us about the energy among young people today? Where is it? And also, while there's a lot written about millennial generation and partially because it's such a big generation — it's more numerous than about anybody else, even including us baby boomers — I'm ask you about the differences between the millennials and their younger brothers and sisters that that you see in your work?

**HALL:** Yeah, I mean, let's start where energy's at with young people. Energy is with young people digitally and on campuses right now. You're right when you think about the Gen Z and millennial populations. They are both digital native generations, with Gen Z being a full generation of digital natives at this current moment, because they've grown up in society where there has not-- been nothing but digital. And then the generations after them, the alphas and the betas, will be even more ingrained into the digital atmosphere, especially including with artificial intelligence and AI in the

future as well we go there. And campuses, we know that young people had to take a significant amount of time away from in-school activities, right? And now that almost every single campus in this country is back to in-person learning after the pandemic, we see a rise of activism on each and every campus, where they're now going back into what they've-- to environments that they're used to. They've taken a lot of knowledge that they gained digitally through different programs, different activism, etc., right?

Most young people are either commenting or learning about the news, over 50% of them at this point are commenting at least almost once a week on political news, right? They're getting that into their feeds on TikTok, on Instagram reels, right? And we think about social media. you know, we're not necessarily talking about Facebook or something like that at this point at this moment, like we're thinking more so Snapchat, Twitch, TikTok, Instagram, is like where you going to find most young people. Facebook is a platform for a mostly older generation at this moment. And so, like that's where you're going to find young people at, right? Like that's where the energy is at, that where political activism is happening in this current moment with young people. They're doing so much, and the information is literally at their fingertips. And I thi-- when you think about how to access the news, they're not waiting until 6 p.m. when the nightly talk shows on, they're not waiting for the paper the next day, they're getting news instantly on these different platforms, essentially. And so that creates a different, different type of generation when information is at their fingertips, where they're no longer waiting to be told what is happening, they can actively go out and search it, right? And so, that is where energy is at right now.

When you think about the difference between millennials and whether you call them Gen Zs or plurals, I think an important distinction in this current moment is that millennials are getting old and they're no longer becoming—they are no longer the young voters that we thought of them eight years ago, right? Like some millennials are in their late thirties at this moment, right? They're no longer the young, spunky kids. They are they're dealing with knee problems and hip problems at this current moment. They are not who we think they are, right? And so, we have to recognize that we are ushering in a new generation, the Gen Z the plurals, who are going to be considered the young voters. And after them, the Gen Alphas. And so, when you think about that, when I think about the younger generation, like you think about some of the values that they have, right? Like, you're thinking about valuing authenticity. They've grown up in a time period of their life where they've only

necessarily seen bad things happen, right? Like, these are folks who are necessarily grown. They saw 9/11 happen, they saw the Great Recession happen, they saw the rise of the pandemic. They've lived through so much before even becoming a voting age that they need authenticity from their leaders, right?

They also have a different outlook on life because they're entering into a job economy that has only probably been bad for them in this current moment, right? Like they saw their their older brothers, cousins, etc., struggle with the financial recession of 2018. They may not understand it, but they're-- as they get into the workforce now, they understand what happened there, right? They saw the ups and downs and they see what is probably some of the worst economic disparities in our country's history between those of the working class and those in the billionaire class at this current moment. We also see more attention and energy put into healthcare and mental health resources amongst young people, right? The mutual aid organizing has grown significantly in this country. And we also see that their ability to adapt to a digital world is so much greater, right? Like, they have the ability to pick up a phone or tablet at the age of two or three and automatically understand and be able to open apps and work them at a pace in which, like, is almost on par with some adults, right?

And so, as we move forward and think-- and like, looking ahead about like, how do we bridge this gap of like, leadership, right? Like, you have this this conglomerate of two generations, millennials and Gen Zs, who are going to be of the largest voting bloc this country is going to probably see in a very long time, right? And we also are seeing the ushering out of an older generation who is phasing out of being a part of the voting community, right? And so, what does that mean in terms of values? We know that every, almost every study and every poll that comes out talks about, what issues are important to young people. We see them focus on climate change and the environment. We see them focusing on racial and social justice. And we also see the rise of abortion access and care in this current moment, right?

And so, we think about energy where young people are at as they're they're building organizations, they're building civic communities and clubs inside of high schools, inside of colleges, but are really focusing on these issues across the country, right? And it's not just in major like, states or, you know, what have you, but there's energy in every state right now, right? We have a scope within our organization across 19 different states, but almost every week, a new state is reaching out to us, whether it's Idaho or Alabama or Louisiana, or places that we not necessarily think of young

people who are doing civic engagement work, they really are. And so, right now, I would say the energy is all over the place, right? And it's and it's really focusing on these three particular issues in this moment that we're working on. And then as far as the characteristics, it's really-- we have to understand that the young generation right now is a different generation than millennials, right? They're going to be-- they're, I think, they're a little bit more bold in terms of what they expect from workplaces, they're a little bit more bold in terms of what they expect this country can be. And every generation seemingly follows this trend where we continuously push society forward just marginally, inch by inch by inch.

And I think because of the experiences that Gen Z and those after them have now, have gone through, they are no longer willing to accept marginal change in this moment. They are looking for transformational change across this country and are not satisfied unless there is big sweeping changes in terms of the economy and change of democracy. right? These are folks who went to high school and witnessed nothing but on news coverage, on their different social media feeds, of Trump, of like dysfunction, of government shutdowns, and then a global pandemic, right? And so, they've seen the worst of what this country can be, and I think they want to push us forward. And so, I'll end there with just that sentiment, that that energy is really there for large, monumental steps in moving us forward.

**KAMARCK:** And of course, that's a wonderful description, Dakota. And of course, we see this in the new environmental activism, right? Where where there's a generation wanting to disrupt ongoing procedures, etc., and ongoing meetings, etc. And and their older generation, particularly liberals in the older generation, just can't figure out what's happening here. Why are they why are they yelling at me, you know, go yell at Republicans? And I think you've really hit on something, with this "being sick" of of marginal change. Last, but certainly not least, is my friend Gabe. You wrote a great series for-- a great piece for our series on young Hispanic voters. Can you talk about that because Hispanics are such a large and growing piece of the United States electorate? And perhaps give us some thoughts on what you've heard so far before we open, go up over media-- audience questions.

**SANCHEZ:** Yeah, I appreciate that, Elaine. Thanks for engaging me in this rock star panel. You know, I've got the, I guess, the fortunate opportunity to come after all these great insights that we've already heard. So, in many cases, I'm going to reinforce what a lot of my colleagues have referenced, but really shed a light specifically on the Latino electorate. And I often say as a scholar of

Latino politics, by definition, given the demographics of the Latino electorate, I'm talking about youth voters, right? So just to put a sharper edge on that sword, you know, when we think about population growth across the electorate, Latinos since 2018 have grown by almost five million eligible voters. That represents 62% of the overall growth of the electorate in the United States over that time period.

So, just as you noted, Elaine, Latinos are an increasingly important segment of the overall electorate, simply because of their age. Obviously, the growth of young U.S.-born Latinos is fueling that population growth of the Latino population and their projected influence. But I often talk about it in terms of a double-edged sword of age and youthfulness. On one side, it fuels the potential influence of the Hispanic or Latino electorate, but because of-- all of my colleagues noting, they largely lack of mobilization rates, young voters tend to not participate in electoral politics at the same rate as the older segments of the population. So, that obviously influences Latinos overall impact or influence on policy outcomes, etc.

Give you a snapshot of what that means for Latino politics: almost a third, 31% of all Latino eligible voters right now, are between the ages of 18 and 29, so under 30. That's roughly 10% higher than the overall electorate. So, it really is a very young population. What that means in terms of thinking about potential turnout and voting behavior is that in essence, my colleagues and I-- I'm no longer at the firm Latino Decisions, but my my colleagues and I at BSP Research have been tracking Latino voting trends since 2020. And one of the things that we found is a robust 56% of all Latinos under the age of 30 voted for the first time in either 2020 or 2022. So, they're very new to the electorate. They're still getting used to the system, how you go about voting. Remember, they had an election in 2020, what opened up access to mail ballots that are not in play anymore in 2022. So, it's a quickly changing electoral space that these young voters are just coming into contact with for the first time.

So, they need more outreach, they need more information, they need more direct mobilization, whether that comes from parties, candidates, nonprofits, etc. But unfortunately, we know Latinos overall as an electorate tend to be the least mobilized population in the United States. And young Latino voters, just like young voters overall, are less likely to be mobilized by any of those different segments of our overall electoral system. A lot of focus group work I did with BSP Research, my team, and EquisLabs, really looked at young Latino eligible voters who did not turn out in 2022. And one of the things that we found that reinforces what we've heard from others is, primarily due to

low mobilization rates. A lot of those young voters, as Dakota noted, hungry for reform, want to see things change in their country, but they don't see how voting influences any of those reform-minded outcomes. So, I think that mobilization has to stress, here's how voting and your engagement in that process can lead to structural reform and change. Because a lot of these folks, as Dakota has noted, have lived through an era where there's not a lot of great examples to show widespread turnout has led to these great changes that you want to see happen. So, we'll have to be mindful of that. The lived experience of these young voters has not provided them with a lot of great examples of the system actually working for issues that they care about.

When we look at overall turnout and voting behavior trends, just a few points that I want to emphasize from some of the blog posts that we've put out on Brookings specific to the Hispanic or Latino electorate. Just as Michael started with, overall young Latinos, just like young voters overall, are more likely to trend democratically. Our data said in 2022, 68% of Latinos 18 to 29 or under 30 if you want to think about that, indicated that they supported a Democratic Congressional candidate in 2022. That's higher than all other age segments among Latinos. So, very much they are fueling, you know, Democratic strength, if you think about it that way among Latinos overall. But a couple of really interesting nuances to point out about young Latinos that might lead to some speculation that that high point for Democrats might not always be there for Democrats unless they work harder for the Latino electorate vote, particularly those folks under the age of 30.

One thing to point out is, although Michael is right, that the gender gap overall is diminishing in the United States, that holds true for for Latinos overall as an electorate. But when we isolate Latinos under the age of 30, the gender gap still remains really significant. One data point for you from the 2022 numbers: while 40% of Latino males under the age of 30 indicated they voted for Republican Congressional candidate 2022, that compares to only 21% among Latinos. So, there's still a pretty significant, almost 20% gap between Latinos based on gender. And so, that is really important for us to think about in terms of the importance that Latinas play primarily to Democratic candidates moving forward as we think about 2024. So, we have to think about their turnout, what's going to make them enthusiastic to participate in the electoral system, particularly on the Democratic side if they're interested in maintaining the advantages that they saw in 2022 among Latinos. Also, thing to think about, right?

Although Democrats have had an advantage among young Latino voters, keep in mind a lot of these folks brand new to thinking about electoral politics. They're still formulating their opinions towards both parties. And as a consequence of that, I'd say the relationship with the Democratic or Republican party among young Latinos is very new and very open to shifting, right? Couple of data points to throw at you to reinforce that trend: when we specifically look at Latinos under the age of 30 and we asked them in surveys, you know, "What are your attitudes towards either the Democratic or Republican Party?" 37% of Latinos under the age of 30 indicate they don't think that the Democratic really cares all that much about Latinos and the policy issues that they care about. So, again, relatively high support for Democratic candidates, but not exactly a strong underlying ideological relationship with the Democratic Party among Latinos. Flipside of that is when we asked folks about the Republican Party, young Latino voters are more likely than the older segments of our population to have positive attitudes towards Republicans, right? So, again, it's a wake-up call if you will for both parties, that although things are trending positively towards Democrats, I would not say that's a that's a finished story. A lot of room for Republicans to make up ground with Latinos if they do a better job of reaching out on issues that young Latinos care deeply about.

Other kind of things to emphasize that I think have been brought up already, but I want to really put a specific focus on the Latino population. We saw in 2022 that abortion was a huge mobilizing force for young Latino voters in particular. So, if we ask folks, "Hey, what was your reaction when the Supreme Court struck down the right to an abortion and allow states to ban abortions?" we saw that 42% of Latino voters in 2022 indicated that was their primary, not one of their top, but their primary motivation to vote in 2022. We're already seeing reproductive health and abortion policy being part of the forefront of our 2024 policy conversations. And so, if that remains a highly important topic, I would expect to see, just like we saw in 2022, that to be an energizing factor that mobilizes young Latino voters. And that's one issue area that trends positively for Democrats more so than Republicans, right?

Other thing that has been emphasized, and I might I might close with this one, everybody has noted social media use among young voters is much higher than it is among those of us that are a little bit older across the electorate. One thing to pay close attention to: Latinos as a population overall, are more likely than anybody else to rely on social media for their political information. And young Latinos, just like young voters across the board, more likely to turn to digital information when



they're thinking about politics and policy. One thing that has not been brought up before is unfortunately, the potential for misinformation to get in the way of enthusiasm, turnout, and wise voting choices, among young voters. Latinos, more so than any other population in the United States, are likely to be targeted by misinformation. That's primarily because of a lack of safeguards and checks in that system, specifically in Spanish language content. So, as long as Latinos are more likely than anybody else to be hit with misinformation, and as long as young Latinos are more likely than anybody else to turn to social media for the information that they utilize to make sound voting decisions, we all have to be concerned with misinformation tactics and try to all be helpful in the process of correcting that misinformation with accurate fact-based info. That-- we know young people are going to turn to digital information to get their their content, so we need to be mindful of trying to overcome misinformation with fact-driven info, specifically coming at them digitally through social media. So again, I had the benefit of listening closely to all of my colleagues who already hit on some of the points. So, hopefully, I leave enough time for for Q&A from folks in the audience. Thank you.

**KAMARCK:** Great. Thank you, thank you so much, Gabe. And I remind the audience, if you want to send in questions, now is the time. Many of you sent in questions ahead of time and I do have two of the more interesting ones. We have seen in this discussion some pretty sharp differences drawn, particularly between the over-45 and the under-45-year-olds in the American electorate. But someone asked, and I think it's a really good question, "How likely are Gen Z voters to change their political beliefs as they age?" And I would I would extend that to millennial voters as well. Mike, you have studied this. There's a lot of political science on this. Can you talk a little bit about this? And then perhaps anybody else who wants to get in there can add their thoughts.

**HAI:** Thanks, Elaine. Generally, political attitudes and maybe the most important one, party identification tend to be formed by young people in their late teens through their twenties. Part of it is influence from parents, and part and part of it is the political events going on around them. Part of it is-- in fact, a Pew study indicated the perceived lack of success or success of a president who is serving as these formative years are occurring. These attitudes take time to form, and as Gabe pointed out, it's the period in the late teens and twenties that things are most in flux. But already, even at that point, young people have begun to form partisan affiliations. Many of them may identify initially as independents, but they lean toward one party or another. But once the attitudes are formed and once people begin to use them in their in their political behavior, in their voting, they tend to firm up pretty

consistently so that -- the University of Michigan has done a series of research studies, of surveys, with panels where you can track the same people over time. And what they find is that once the party identification is formed, about 80% to 90% of people keep that identification throughout their entirety of their lives.

So, as Gabe pointed out, the crucial years are the late teens and twenties. But by and large, people keep those identifications. They don't become more conservative as they age. They don't become more liberal as they age. Now, there are individuals for which that does happen, but as cohorts, as groups, the attitudes pretty much remain the same. So, what does occur and what is formed at this point in the lives of these young people is likely to be the impact going forward for the next several decades.

**KAMARCK:** And you know, what's so interesting about that is it doesn't mean that in every single election, people vote the same. And in fact, some of us can remember the 1972 election where lots of "New Deal Roosevelt Democrats" were still in the electorate. And you would hear them say things like, "I didn't leave the Democratic Party. It left me." And of course, these days we have some Republicans, and the Lincoln Project, etc., who feel the same way about the Republican Party. They're still Republicans, but they feel that the party has left them. So, it doesn't mean every single election, but the tendencies are definitely there and it's really a fascinating piece of work to study how these how these are formed.

**HAI:** Yeah, I think you could say that this is, you know, it's not astrology. It's not you're born under the sign of the Democrat or the sign of the Republican, and you never change. Individuals can go one way or another and do change, perhaps some individuals over the course of their lives. But again, the large portion of the population, 80% to 90%, once those attitudes are formed, they stick with those. They may vote for the other party in a single election, but they're likely to come back in succeeding elections unless that party that they left leave them, as you pointed out, for the long haul.

**KAMARCK:** Which makes the work that Kei and Dakota are doing so fascinating because, of course, they're working with people as these as these attitudes towards politics are being formed. Does anybody else have anything to add on this?

**HALL:** Yeah.

**KAMARCK:** Oh, yeah. Go ahead.

**HALL:** I'll add in like, you know, Gen Z are very much motivated by their social beliefs that tie into their political beliefs, right? And so, a generation that is so big on equity and identity is probably going to have a harder time shifting in any direction to any party that does not welcome that, right? And I think what we're seeing from the far right is a rejection of many of the identities in which Gen Z is a part of, right? And so, I think this like typically, you know, historically perspective, some people do transition into a different party. I just think in this current climate that has been so polarizing since 2008, that it is almost like you're going to see that shift in a trend of people shifting their parties or feeling their party left them behind because it is so stark now that there is no middle ground, right? For folks to-- especially Gen Z who is like so big in identity, more so than in economics or something else, that it's going to be hard to, I think, see that shift in like 50 years when they are then the older voters.

**KAMARCK:** That's right. Fascinating. And believe me, there's a lot of Republicans who are very worried about exactly what you're talking about Dakota. Anything else because I have another question. Yeah, Gabe.

**Sanchez:** I'll jump in really really briefly, maybe to raise a provocative question, a follow-up. I think Michael's dead on in terms of what we know from the political science literature. One of the things that's a multimillion-dollar question, right, that we don't quite know the answer to is given that these young voters are coming into an age where we're more partisan polarized than ever before in history, we're seeing a lot in the data that's turning these young folks off to party politics. So, we know already as a cohort, right, these folks are less likely to be strong partisans.

What I'm curious about is over time, will they maintain that weaker attachment to either party, which in theory could make them a little bit more malleable election to the election, depending on who the candidates are and what the policy stances are of each respective party in any given election. I think that might be one of the unique characteristics about this particular population that's just coming of age at a time when we're more polarized and ever before.

**HAI:** Well, that's a good point, Gabe. I could just say that, again political science literature has indicated that the longer people go with their attitudes, the firmer they become. Now, it's possible that doesn't mean that's going to be the way it is forever. But it would seem to me that as long, that once people's attitudes are formed, if they're given a reason to consistently stick with those attitudes, they will become firmer over time.

**HALL:** And I think one of the attitudes that we're seeing with the young generation is the anti-institution attitude, right? Where they are not attaching themselves to a political party, they're not attaching themselves to a church, they're not even attaching themselves to a job long-term, right? So, I think to your question, you're going to see that continue right? And what does that mean when churches, and political parties, and all these other social entities that rely on membership are not going to be able to recruit them as members? How does that shift the political and social landscape of our country? I think it's going to be an amazing time to see that because I think for so long there's just been the reliability of the, like, you find this, you know, church or religious home and you become a member. You're not seeing that the younger generation, as we previously talked about in terms of like, you know, them just not attaching to religion. So, what does it mean when you have a generation and generations after them who don't believe in membership into institutions?

**KAMARCK:** That's right. Ray, did you have anything? And then Kei, I'll ask you. Go ahead, Ray.

**BLOCK:** I just keep thinking about how young voters and the electoral potential of young voters is forcing us to think about the possible decoupling of political orientation with policy preferences. In other words, like, it's not enough to say that if a person is identified as a Democrat or a Republican, you know how they feel about policy X, Y, and Z. It might mean that recruiting young voters means really focusing on policy. And possibly having conversations that are more about policy and less about partisanship because partisanship might not be the express commitment that a lot of young voters have. And so like, one of the things that I study is how young black voters are swing voters. And I don't mean swing like, go from the Democrats to the Republicans, as much as I mean swinging from the Democrats to being abstainers and not voting at all, right? And the electoral recruitment implications of that means that there are wedge issues that matter to boomers and Gen Xers that might not be the same wedge issues or there might be a different distribution of responses to those issues that need to be put into conversation when thinking about how to recruit young voters.

**KAMARCK:** Right. Kei, any any final words on this? And then we'll go to a quick last question.

**KAWASHIMA-GINSBERG:** Real quick. I tend to agree that kind of the equation of who, when, where, and how much young people would start to vote as their age is changing. But I think it's

in part what Dakota is saying about kind of detachment of association institution, goes both ways. I think the institutions haven't been serving this increasingly diverse multiracial electorate. So, if the young people with older adults can actually shift how the institutions respond to American people, I think this will come back to a more stable electorate and maybe more attachment to partisan politics in a way that's membership-oriented. But until the institutions can come back, I think we will not see that kind of attachment increasing over time. But young people can change that together.

**KAMARCK:** Okay, one final question. Also came from the audience and I think it's a really good question given the discussion today. Do you believe-- and you can be brief on this because we only have a couple of minutes, do you believe that younger voters will provide the foundation for a multicultural democracy? Why don't we, why don't we start with Dakota and go around.

**HAI:** Well, I think in terms of the data that I had presented, it's almost inevitable in a way, as long as the attitudes remain firm, this these younger, this younger, two younger generations are, in fact, very diverse, multicultural, in comparison to the older generations. And as Dakota pointed out, their attitudes go right in those directions. I just want to emphasize that what Dakota said in terms of issue identification with the political party, it behooves the political parties to match up with the beliefs of these younger voters. And in, it's it's really in the best interest of one or the other of the parties doing that. But in answer to your question, yes, I do believe that this these two younger generations will indeed have the possibility and the really probability of moving toward a multicultural democracy based on their demographics and their beliefs.

**KAMARCK:** Okay. Well, let's go Kei, Gabe, Ray, and Dakota. And then we'll we will put an end.

**KAWASHIMA-GINSBERG:** Yes. And I would actually add that capacity for intergenerational collaboration is really ripe to be tapped, I think, as we move forward. And I yield the floor.

**KAMARCK:** Okay, Gabe.

**SANCHEZ:** You know, I certainly hope so. I mean, our democracy is in serious trouble. And so, I certainly hope these younger generations can help reinforce and sustain our democracy well into the future. But I will say, those of us, and I'll say depending on how you cut age, if we're at 45, I still count towards the younger electorate, which I love that cut off for that reason. But I think we have to be, as older folks, comfortable with the fact that as these folks take a stab at reforming our

democracy, it might not look the way that it was when we grew up. And hey, that might not necessarily be a bad thing.

**KAMARCK:** We see that all the time. Ray?

**BLOCK:** I was just going to say what Gabe said. This idea that, yes, we are concerned enough for the preservation of our democracy that we have to do something. Young people are best positioned to do something. We've seen this before. And there's always the argument between what the older generations prefer and what the new generations are doing. But in service of keeping democracy going, we have to yield to young people and let them do their thing.

**KAMARCK:** Dakota. Final word.

**HALL:** Yes, and they're already doing it. When you look locally, they're electing some of the most diverse school boards, city councils, and county boards in our country's history. It is not a matter of if they will do it. It is when they do it to scale nationally.

**KAMARCK:** Perfect. Thank you for all of you for being so concise. Let me remind the audience that there's a lot of information here, but once we go off, if you go to the event page, you'll see links to everybody's work and organizations, and you'll be able to, you know, answer some things that perhaps we didn't do online here because, in the interests of time, I want to thank Mike, our representative of the silent generation here, for your research and fascination with the young people. I want to thank Kei and Dakota for for working in the trenches and getting young people involved in politics and civics. I want to thank Gabe and Ray for your research, which is so valuable to us in these bigger questions. And to everyone who joined us, thank you so much, and have a nice day.