

# Young registered voters aged 18-34 exhibit different voting behavior based on their top issue and their media sources.

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: HIT Strategies, HeadCount

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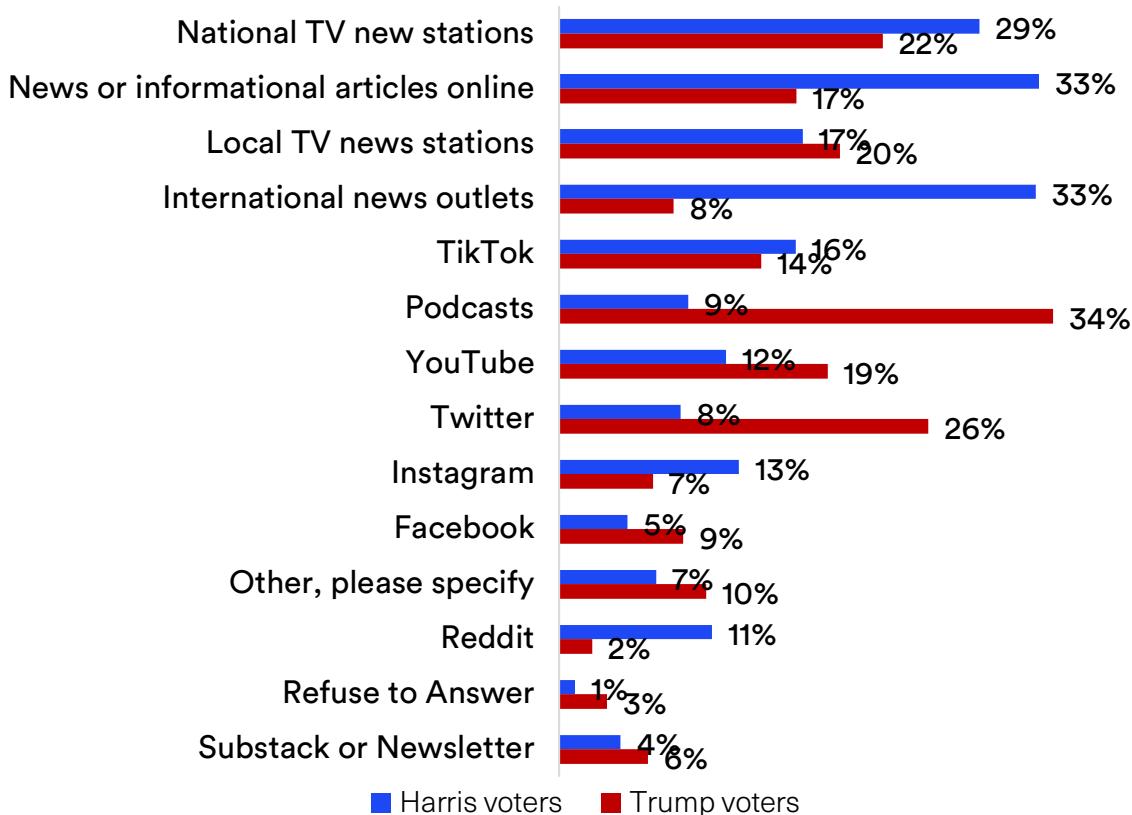
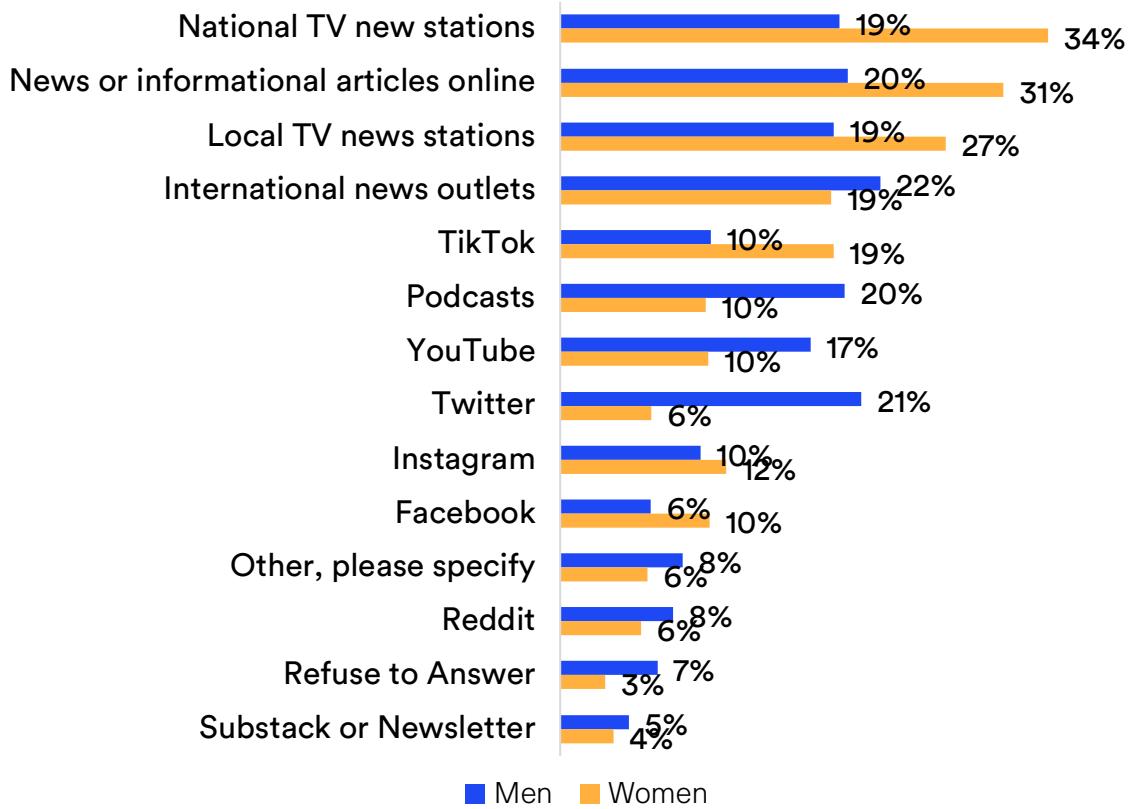
HeadCount commissioned HIT Strategies to conduct a post-election poll with the goal of understanding what made young registered voters decide whether or not they would participate in the election this year. Our survey showed that young registered voters across the U.S. are not a monolith, with gaps in perspective, priorities, and ideology by gender, race, generation, and media source. Young registered voters need to be convinced of their vote's power to make change on the issues that matter most to them, or we risk losing their participation in the electoral process. Young registered voters in this survey and throughout the report are defined as registered voters under the age of 35.

## Media Behavior

**Young men and young women are consuming political news from different media sources, likely contributing to the ideological gender gap.**

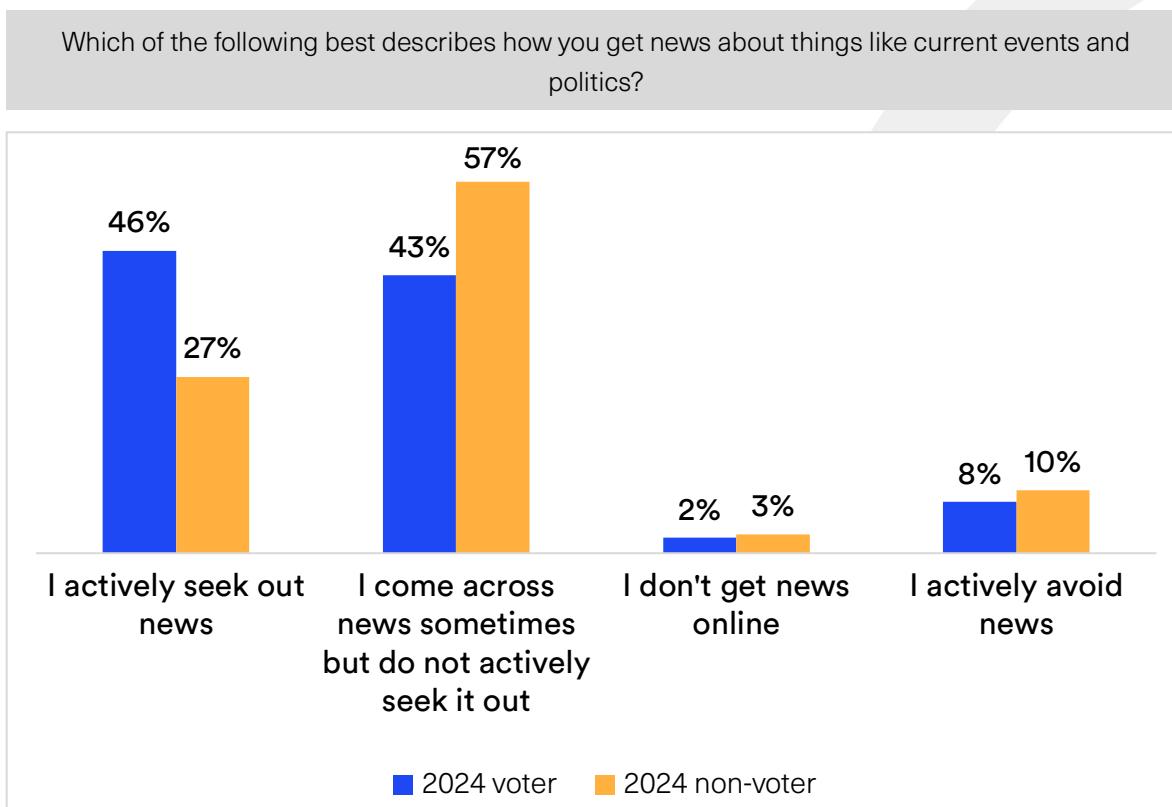
- Young men were twice as likely than young women to trust podcasts for political news (20% men, 10% women), as well as Twitter/X (21% men, 6% women), and YouTube (17% men, 10% women). Young women tended more towards TikTok (19% women, 10% men), national TV news stations (34% women, 19% men), local TV news stations (27% women, 19% men), and informational articles online (31% women, 20% men). The sources where young registered voters are trusting the news influence the type of information they are consuming, and therefore their frame of thinking going into the elections.
- Top media source for political news correlates with vote choice as well: Harris voters trust news from articles online (33%), international outlets (33%), and national TV new stations (29%). Trump voters are more likely than Harris voters to trust podcasts (34% Trump voters, 9% Harris voters) and Twitter/X (26% Trump voters, 8% Harris voters).

Thinking specifically about political news, which media sources do you trust to get the best information? You may choose two.



**Young people, especially non-voters, tend to engage with news on politics and current events passively: they do not seek it, but come across it in their algorithms.**

- 38% of young registered voters report actively seeking out news about politics and current events, while almost half (49%) say they come across news sometimes but do not actively seek it out. Those who did not vote in the 2024 general election were even more likely to consume news in this passive manner (57%). Incorporating messaging and outreach into the algorithms that young registered voters are already engaging with will be important to reaching them.



**Young people see a role for celebrities in diffusing information on voting and domestic and global issues but are less united on wanting that role to be partisan.**

- During this election cycle, we saw celebrities and influencers popular among young people speaking out and endorsing candidates, such as Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, and Billie Eilish for Kamala Harris, and Joe Rogan, Elon Musk, and Jake Paul for Trump. When it comes to politics and voting, about half of young people want celebrities and influencers to do the following: encourage their audience to vote (56%), share information on how to register to vote (51%), speak out on domestic issues (50%), and speak out on global issues (48%). However, much less (28%) think celebrities should endorse specific candidates or ballot initiatives. Simultaneously, few say celebrities shouldn't talk about politics at all

(18%). Most young people want celebrities to use their platforms to promote civic engagement, but there is disagreement about celebrities taking a partisan stance on candidates and ballot initiatives.

## Issue Priorities and Vote Power

**Just over half (56%) of young registered voters report having voted in the November 2024 general election, while 44% report that they did not. Young registered voters that turned out were motivated by immigration and abortion access.**

- Comparatively, according to census data, 57% of 18–34-year-olds voted in 2020 and 49% voted in 2016. When looking at groups who reported voting at higher rates in this election than the average of young registered voters overall, young white Democrats (75% voted), college-educated young voters (73%), LGBTQ+ young voters (71%), young Latino Democrats (71%), and young white men (65%) stood out the most.
- When asked to choose just one issue, the most important issue facing the country for young registered voters overall was inflation/cost of living (39%). However, young registered voters whose top issue was immigration (67% voted) or abortion access (66%) voted at higher rates, giving insight into the issues that pushed young voters to the polls this year. These issues also influenced vote choice: Those whose top issue was abortion access (91% voted for Harris) or racism (95%) almost unanimously voted for Kamala Harris, while those whose top issue was immigration (65% voted for Trump) or inflation/cost-of-living (71%) tended towards Trump.
- When looking at groups who reported NOT voting at higher rates in this election than the average of young registered voters overall, the following groups were less likely to have voted: young Independents (71% reported not voting), non-college educated young women (56%), young Black voters (56%), and millennial women (51%). Young registered voters who did not vote attributed this to not liking either of the candidates (24%) or being too busy and not having enough time to vote (23%). Some also reported not voting due to not residing in the state where they were registered (12%), which was especially true among current students (23%), highlighting a need to address this discrepancy on college campuses and at trade schools.

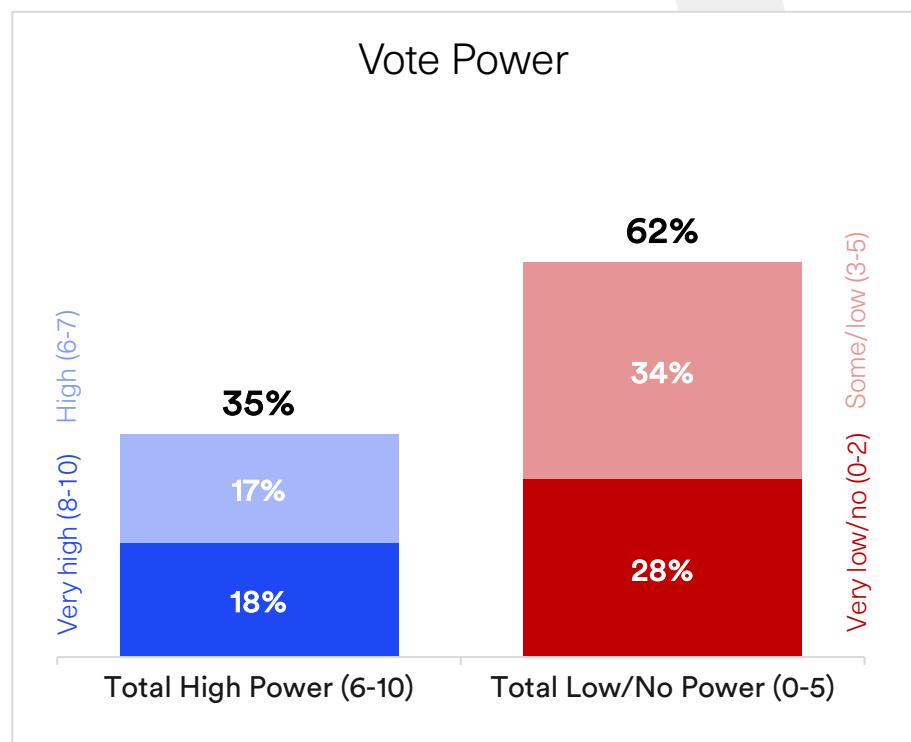
**Young registered voters lack faith that their vote has the power to make change on issues that matter to them, but see elected officials as having power over their lives.**

- Only 35% of young registered voters rated their vote's power a 6 or above on a scale of 10, and 62% rated their vote's power a 5 or below, of which 28% rated their vote's power as very low (0-2). Additionally, those who rated their vote's power as low (0-4) were less likely

to vote in this election (47% voted, 53% did not vote) compared to those who rated their vote's power as high (6-10) (68% voted, 32% did not vote). Low sense of vote power is a possible explanation to lower turnout among young people compared to other generations. This survey, along with previous research on young voters, suggests that restoring confidence in voting's ability to make tangible change on issues that matter to them is fundamental to engage young people in voting.

- While feeling lack of vote power themselves, young voters see elected officials as having power to make change in their lives, for better or worse. Strong majorities say the president (73% a lot/some change), U.S. Congress (65%), their local government (64%), the governor of their state (63%), and their state Congress (62%) are able to make some or a lot of change in their lives.
- The sense that this power is one-sided – that government officials can make change on their lives, yet young registered voters do not feel power to incite change on issues through their vote – is likely a barrier to turnout, as well as generalized cynicism. Young registered voters feel positively about their own futures (66% very or somewhat positive), but negatively about the future of the country (41% very or somewhat negative) and planet (47% very or somewhat negative).

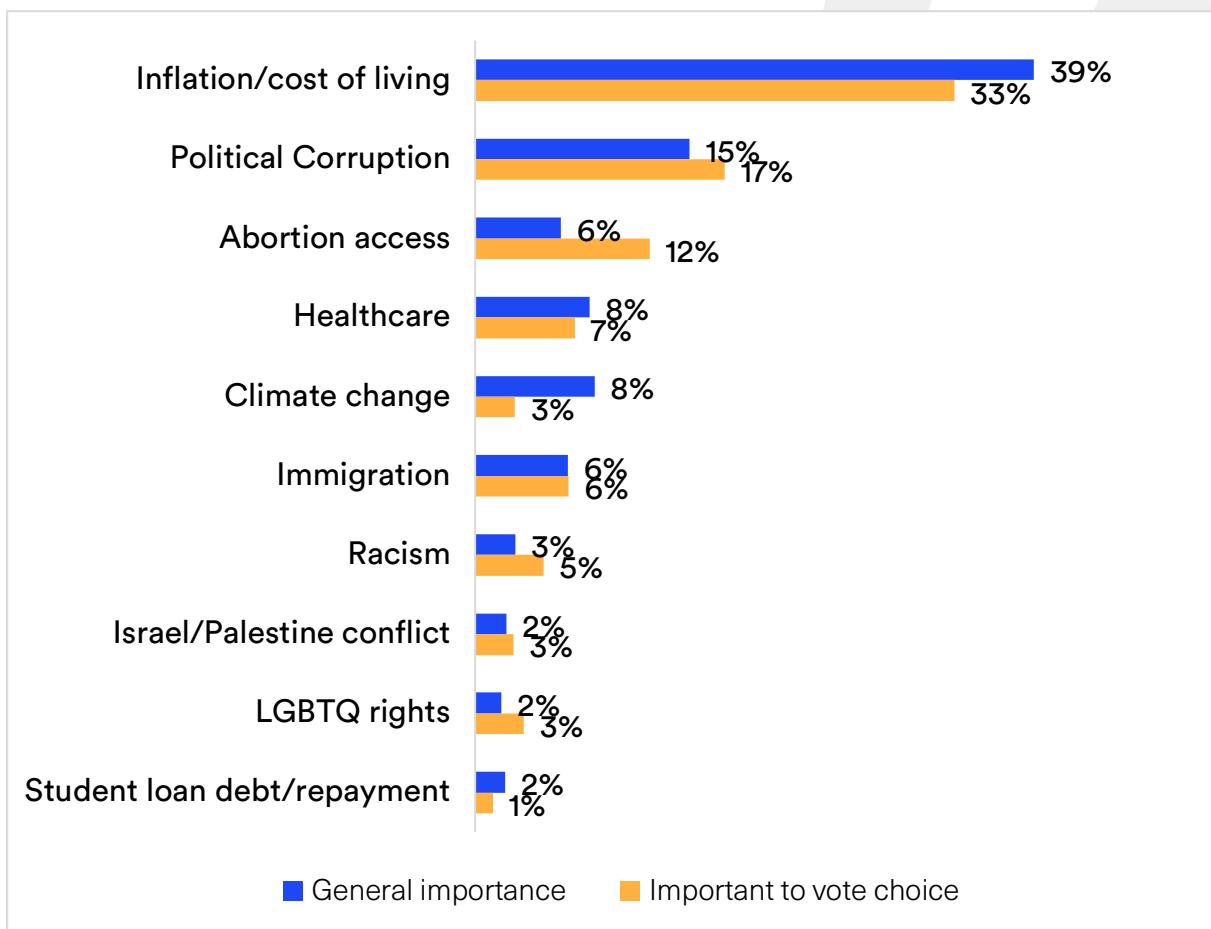
No matter how frequently you vote in elections, how much power do you feel your vote has to make change on issues that are important to you? Please rate the amount of power you feel your vote has on a scale from zero to ten, where zero (0) means your vote has no power at all, and ten (10) means your vote has a lot of power.



**The top issue for young registered voters overall was inflation/cost-of-living; however, different issues emerge when thinking about voting specifically.**

- The most important issue for young registered voters both in general facing the country and when it comes to vote choice was inflation/cost of living (39% and 33% respectively). The frame of general importance versus importance to vote choice yields some differences in perception. For example, abortion access was only selected by 6% when asked to choose the one most important issue facing the country, but this number doubles (12%) when we asked the most important issue in vote choice, indicating this was more of a factor when considering candidates. Interestingly, political corruption was the runner up for most important issue both generally and for vote choice (15% and 17% respectively). This does not differ by party affiliation: 17% of Democrats, 18% of Independents, and 16% of Republicans say this is a top issue when it comes to voting.

Of these issues, which do you think is the most important facing the country today?  
 Of these issues, which was the most important to your decision on whether and how to vote in 2024?



**Survey Methodology:**

*These findings are from a proprietary survey conducted by HIT Strategies and HeadCount. This survey consisted of 1000 registered voters ages 18-35 nationwide. The survey fielded via online web panel, phone and text to web from November 13-27, 2024 and the margin of error is +/- 3.35%. Margin of error is higher among subgroups.*