

**Project Vote Smart
General Population and Youth Survey
on Civic Engagement:
Summer, 1999**

Preliminary Results of a Nationwide Survey



Project Vote Smart

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Executive Summary

A number of noteworthy findings from the *Project Vote Smart/Pew Charitable Trusts 1999 Survey* deserve special attention. This report sets forth a complete listing of survey findings from telephone interviews completed (July 12 to August 10) with 454 eighteen to twenty-five year olds and 872 persons of age twenty-six and over. These findings concerning younger voting-age citizens deserve special attention:

- ◆ **Attention to Civic Affairs:** Younger respondents pay less attention to government at all levels than older respondents. Although each group attends most to national affairs, the gap between younger and older respondents is especially pronounced about national government, where 22% of younger and 37% of older respondents indicated they pay “a lot of attention.” Among younger respondents, 12% said they pay “no attention” while only 4% of older respondents indicate that level of (in)attention.
- ◆ **Trust in Government:** A striking similarity noted is that both age groups express most trust in local government, though another 24% (younger) and 19% (older) indicate trust in “none of them.”
- ◆ **Important Problems:** Younger respondents express more concern than older respondents about jobs and the economy, about equal concern on education and crime, and less concern on health, moral concerns, and Social Security. This applies both to views of “the two most important issues facing our country today” and “the two most important issues facing your age group today.”
- ◆ **Sources of Issue Information:** The two age groups judge the most useful information sources similarly, except that younger respondents choose the World Wide Web as their most useful information source while older respondents rank it sixth. Neither group believes the news media do a very good job “reporting on issues important to you,” with only 13% of each age group indicating very good, 31% indicating good, and the remaining 56% indicating fair or poor.
- ◆ **Registration and Voting:** Participation differences are pronounced between the two groups, as nearly all research suggests: Younger respondents are less likely to be registered, 65% versus 78% of older respondents. An even larger gap appears concerning voting. Only 45% of younger as against 64% of older respondents indicate they “definitely will” vote in the 2000 elections.
- ◆ **Political Information:** Among five information questions about government and issues included in the survey, younger respondents score lower on all questions, averaging 2.88 correct vs. 3.40 for older respondents. The most correct answers for each group occurred in response to the open-ended question “do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by Al Gore.” The fewest correct answers for both groups respond to the question “What has happened to the national government deficit in recent years? Has it become larger, stayed about the same, or become smaller.” Among older respondents, 49% correctly indicate it has become smaller, as against 38% of younger respondents. The relatively low levels of information found in this survey reflect a pattern found in other studies as well

Introduction

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted by trained university student interns and *Project Vote Smart* staff under the supervision of university faculty at *Project Vote Smart's* former national headquarters in Corvallis, Oregon. The survey was designed by staff at *Project Vote Smart*, *MTV*, *The Pew Charitable Trusts*, the *Medill News Service*, and researchers at *Washington State University* and *Oregon State University*. Funding for the survey was provided by *The Pew Charitable Trusts* as part of a national program to identify the issues of most interest to young voters, and to learn how to engage those young voters more fully in the upcoming national presidential election.

There are two principal components to this survey: 1) a nationwide random sample of 1015 adults (18 years of age or older) constitutes one survey element; 2) an additional subsample of 312 young people in the age group 18 to 25 represents the second component. The nationwide survey effort resulted in a total sample of 454 eighteen to twenty-five year old respondents, and 872 respondents twenty-six years of age and older. The telephone survey was conducted during the period July 12 to August 10, 1999. For results based on each sample group, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is approximately plus or minus 4.7 percentage points for the eighteen to twenty-five year old cohort, and 3.4 percentage points for the twenty-six and older group. As with all opinion and attitude survey efforts, the wording of questions, respondent misinterpretation and other difficulties associated with implementing survey research efforts can result in some error or unintended bias beyond that attributable to the size of the samples employed.

Survey Methodology

The sample for the Project Vote Smart survey represents a random digit dialing-generated sample of telephone numbers selected from all telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The nationwide probability sample was provided by *Survey Sampling Incorporated* (Fairfield, CT) and was pre-screened to exclude businesses, government offices, and PBX/interchange numbers. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid “listing” bias, and provides proportional representation of both listed and unlisted residential household numbers.

A minimum of four separate attempts (and a maximum of eight attempts) were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The calls made to households were staggered over times of the day and days of the week in order to maximize the likelihood of making personal contact with potential respondents. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the person eighteen or older in the home who most recently celebrated a birthday. For the youth sub-sample, conventional screening techniques were used to identify the 18 to 25 year old living at home (if any) who celebrated the most recent birthday. If a person in the 18-25 year old category lived in the household but was not at home at the time of the initial call, four callbacks were used to make the survey contact and conduct the interview. The overall response rate for the entire survey effort was 63 percent. Terminated interviews were considered refusals, and they were not included in the analyses. It should be noted that this survey includes only households in the continental United States that contain a telephone. In the several tables reported in this report, responses may occasionally total to 101% or 99% due to rounding error.

NOTE: In comparisons of percentages across groups of 400 and 800, respectively, differences of approximately 6% are required to be confident that the differences observed are statistically significant (or unlikely to occur by chance) at the 90% level of confidence.

Self-Reported Respondent Characteristics

Respondents to the 1999 Project Vote Smart/Pew Charitable Trust survey are quite representative of the nation with regard to gender, race and ethnicity, and with respect to household income vis-à-vis census parameters. In addition, the self-reported partisanship of respondents closely resembles findings reported recently by the Gallup Poll based on over 10,000 telephone interviews conducted in 1999 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr990409c.asp>).

Respondent Gender

	18 to 25 age group	26 and older
Female	53.7%	49.1%
Male	46.3%	50.9%

Respondent Race/Ethnicity

	18 to 25 age group	26 and older
White/Non-Hispanic	70.5%	70.2%
African American/Black	12.5%	12.2%
Latino/Hispanic Origin	11.1%	10.2%
Asian/Pacific Island	4.1%	5.5%
Other	1.8%	2.0%

Respondent Annual Household Income

	18 to 25 age group*	26 and older
Below \$25,000	25.7%	15.9%
\$25,000 to \$50,000	35.6%	30.9%
\$50,001 to \$75,000	27.1%	31.0%
\$75,000 and Above	11.6%	22.3%

*Note: many in this age group still lived at home or were dependent on their families for economic/educational support.

Respondent Partisanship

	PVS Survey: 18 to 25 age group	Gallup Poll: 18 to 29 group	PVS Survey: 26 and older	Gallup Poll: 30 and older
Republican	22.3%	24%	26.1%	28%
Independent-Other	46.3%	41%	38.7%	38%

Democrat

31.4%

35%

35.2%

34%

Section 1: How Interested in Politics are Young Voters?

The first section of the survey asked respondents several questions on their past and current interest in political matters.

In regard to the degree to which younger and older cohorts discussed politics, government, and current events with their parents or guardians while growing up we find few differences, with about a quarter of respondents of both age groups saying they discussed politics “often.” When asked how often both groups at present discuss political issues and current events with family and friends, forty-one percent of the 26+ age group “often” discuss politics compared to thirty-five percent of the 18 to 25 year old age group.

What is most striking about the results in this section of the survey, however, is the contrast in the level of attention the two age groups pay to national, state and local politics. **For all three levels of government younger respondents are significantly less likely to pay “a lot of attention” when compared to the 26+ age group.** For the national government only twenty-six percent of the 18 to 25 age group say they pay “a lot of attention” compared to forty-five percent of the older age group. When asked about state government, twenty-two percent of the younger survey respondents compared to thirty-seven percent of 26+ citizens surveyed say they pay a lot of attention. These responses are similar for local government as well, where twenty-two percent of the 18 to 25 age group and thirty-five percent of the 26+ age group pay a lot of attention to local government issues.

When asked about what level of government—national, state, or local—can be most trusted to make the best decisions for them, we find that both the 18 to 25 group and the 26+ group are least likely to designate the federal government as their most trusted agent of governance. **Local government comes out on top for both groups.** What is interesting (and disturbing), however, is that almost one quarter of the younger age group indicated that they trust

“none” of the governments to make the best decisions for them, and nearly one in five of the 26+ age group selected this *disaffection from government* option in the survey.

INTEREST IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND TRUST IN GOVERNMENT QUESTIONS

Q-3 When growing up, how often did you talk about politics, government or current events with your parents or guardians?—would you say you talked with them (1) often; (2) sometimes; (3) not very often; or (4) never?

	Often	Sometimes	Not Very Often	Never
18 to 25 age group	24%	33%	27%	16%
26 and over	26%	27%	27%	19%

Q-4 What about now, how often do you talk about politics, government or current events with your family, friends, or other acquaintances?—would you say you talk with them (1) often; (2) sometimes; (3) not very often; or (4) never?

	Often	Sometimes	Not Very Often	Never
18 to 25 age group	35%	46%	11%	8%
26 and over	41%	44%	8%	7%

Q-5 We are interested in how much attention you pay to different levels of government.

a. How much attention would you say you pay to the national government and politics including the President, House of Representatives, Senate, and the Supreme Court? (1) a lot of attention; (2) some attention; (3) little attention; or (4) no attention

	A lot of attention	Some attention	Little attention	No attention
18 to 25 age group	26%	44%	24%	7%
26 and over	45%	41%	13%	1%

b. How much attention would you say you pay to state government and politics which includes your governor and state legislature? (1) a lot of attention; (2) some attention; (3) little attention; or (4) no attention

	A lot of attention	Some attention	Little attention	No attention
18 to 25 age group	22%	41%	24%	12%
26 and over	37%	37%	22%	4%

c. How much attention would you say you pay to local government and politics which include cities, counties and school boards? (1) a lot of attention; (2) some attention; (3) little attention; or (4) no attention

	A lot of attention	Some attention	Little attention	No attention
18 to 25 age group	22%	35%	29%	14%
26 and over	35%	36%	20%	9%

Q-6 Which level of government—national, state, or local—do you most trust to make the best decisions for you?
1) National 2) State 3) Local 4) All of them equally 5) None of them

	National	State	Local	All equally	None of them
18 to 25 age group	9%	16%	26%	25%	24%
26 and over	12%	14%	31%	25%	19%

**SECTION 2: What are the Policy Issue Interests and Information Sources
Used by Young Voters?**

In this section of the survey respondents were asked which policy issues were of most importance to the nation and to their particular age group. They were also asked to designate those issues about which they would like to receive more information.

The first question in this section of the Project Vote Smart/Pew Charitable Trusts survey asked respondents what they thought were the two most important issues facing the country. Because these questions are *open-ended*, researchers coded the results and classified them into approximately 60 discrete categories. The list below sets forth the twenty most frequently mentioned categories designated by respondents as among the two “most important issues facing our country today.” Coding categories mentioned by fewer respondents are listed at the top of the next page.

Q-7 Now, thinking about life here in the U.S., what do you think are the two most important issues facing our country today?

The items are listed in descending order, based on responses of the 18 to 25 year old age group.

<u>Coding category</u>	<u>Age 18-25</u>	<u>Age 26+</u>
Jobs, economy, wages	26%	16%
Education, schools.....	20%	17%
Crime, violence	16%	19%
Homelessness, poverty, hunger.....	11%	8%
Foreign affairs, policy	10%	4%
Environment, pollution, global warming	9%	6%
Drugs.....	9%	4%
Moral concerns.....	7%	12%
Family issues and family values.....	7%	9%
Guns	6%	13%
Health care	5%	12%
School violence	5%	3%
Racism.....	5%	2%
Social Security	4%	13%
Size of government	3%	4%
Taxes	2%	8%
Honesty in politics.....	2%	4%
Welfare.....	2%	2%
Health insurance.....	1%	5%
Medicare.....	1%	4%

Items mentioned by fewer respondents (the order is alphabetical)

Abortion	Gangs
Agriculture-farm-ranch issues	Government size
AIDS	Government spending
Childcare	Growth-underdevelopment
Children's issues	Home ownership
Clinton	Immigration
College fund-affordability	Peer pressure
Congress	Personal debt
Cost living	Politicians
Cuts in government	Religious concerns
Deficit	Retirement
Freedom speech	Senior citizens

The next question presented in the survey (Q-8) set forth a list of issues that reflect the contemporary public affairs agenda as presented in the mass media. For each issue the respondents indicated whether they were very interested, somewhat interested, or not interested at all. The two age groups are compared with each other in the following section of the report. Overall, the two groups responded similarly on many of the current affairs agenda issues. At least sixty percent of each age group indicated they were very interested in education issues, with sixty-eight percent of the 18-25 age group and sixty-three percent of the older age group indicating a high level of interest; the same observation can be made for the question of family values, with sixty-one percent of each group expressing a high level of interest. Health care, violence, crime, jobs and economic opportunity, and funding for college education are other issues of high interest to at least fifty percent of both groups.

However, the two age groups differed in their level of interest concerning several issues. With regard to wages, fifty-seven percent of the 18-25 age group indicated they were "very interested" as contrasted with forty-eight percent of the older age group. Those 26 and older, not surprisingly, showed more interest in Social Security, with fifty-one percent compared with forty-four percent of those 25 and younger. For campaign finance, twenty-eight percent of the older and only nineteen percent of the younger respondents were very interested. The biggest differences of interest between the two groups occurred in relation to elections, where a larger number of the older respondents indicated they were very interested in elections at all levels of government:

	18-25 age group	26 and over
Local elections	51%	63%
State elections	53%	64%
National elections	57%	70%

The differences observed are in some ways less surprising than learning that both groups expressed very similar levels of interest on so many issues.

The issue areas and level of interest responses for each issue area were as follows:

Q-8 I'm going to read a list of issues that many people believe are important to the country. For each one, please indicate whether you are very interested, somewhat interested, or not interested at all? [leave blank if no opinion]

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested at all
a. Jobs and economic opportunity			
18 to 25 age group	55%	37%	7%
26 and older	51%	41%	8%
b. Wages			
18 to 25 age group	57%	38%	5%
26 and older	48%	43%	9%
c. Education			
18 to 25 age group	68%	31%	1%
26 and older	63%	34%	2%
d. Funding for college education			
18 to 25 age group	52%	39%	9%
26 and older	51%	39%	10%
e. Crime			
18 to 25 age group	56%	40%	4%
26 and older	56%	41%	3%
f. Social Security			
18 to 25 age group	44%	46%	10%
26 and older	51%	44%	5%
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested at all
g. The environment			
18 to 25 age group	46%	47%	6%
26 and older	47%	45%	9%

h. Drugs			
18 to 25 age group	46%	47%	7%
26 and older	49%	43%	8%
i. Violence			
18 to 25 age group	57%	40%	2%
26 and older	55%	39%	6%
j. Guns			
18 to 25 age group	51%	42%	6%
26 and older	48%	44%	9%
k. Gangs			
18 to 25 age group	43%	45%	12%
26 and older	45%	42%	13%
l. Health care			
18 to 25 age group	58%	36%	6%
26 and older	59%	39%	3%
m. Welfare and poverty			
18 to 25 age group	44%	47%	9%
26 and older	45%	45%	10%
n. Family values			
18 to 25 age group	61%	31%	7%
26 and older	61%	32%	7%
o. Homelessness			
18 to 25 age group	38%	51%	11%
26 and older	37%	49%	13%
p. AIDS			
18 to 25 age group	40%	48%	12%
26 and older	38%	42%	20%
		Very interested	Somewhat interested
			Not interested at all
q. Abortion			
18 to 25 age group	43%	37%	19%
26 and older	39%	40%	22%

r.	Foreign policy			
	18 to 25 age group	35%	48%	17%
	26 and older	37%	47%	16%
s.	Campaign finance			
	18 to 25 age group	19%	35%	46%
	26 and older	28%	33%	39%
t.	Local political elections			
	18 to 25 age group	51%	33%	16%
	26 and older	63%	26%	11%
u.	State political elections			
	18 to 25 age group	53%	34%	12%
	26 and older	64%	26%	9%
v.	National political elections			
	18 to 25 age group	57%	36%	7%
	26 and older	70%	24%	6%
w.	U.S. involvement in foreign wars			
	18 to 25 age group	51%	41%	8%
	26 and older	48%	43%	9%

The next question in this section asked respondents what they thought were the two most important issues **facing their age group** today. Because these questions are *open-ended*, researchers coded the results and classified them into approximately 60 discrete categories. The list below sets forth the most frequently mentioned categories designated by respondents as among the two “most important issues facing your age group today.” Coding categories mentioned by fewer respondents are listed at the end of the ranked listing of frequently designated concerns.

Q-9 Now we would like to know what you think are the two most important issues facing people in your age group today?

The items are listed in descending order, based on responses of the 18 to 25 year old age group.

<u>Coding category</u>	<u>Age 18-25</u>	<u>Age 26+</u>
Jobs, economy, wages	29%	16%
Education, schools.....	19%	16%
Crime, violence	14%	11%
Drugs.....	14%	3%
Health care	13%	25%
Environment, pollution, global warming	9%	3%
Social Security	9%	29%
School violence	8%	1%
College affordability	7%	3%
AIDS	6%	2%
Family issues and family values.....	6%	8%
Moral concerns.....	5%	7%
Homelessness, poverty, hunger.....	4%	2%
Taxes	4%	5%
Guns	3%	8%
Health insurance.....	1%	11%
Medicare.....	1%	10%
Retirement.....	1%	11%

Items mentioned by fewer respondents (the order is alphabetical)

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Abortion | Government spending |
| Agriculture-farm-ranch | Growth-underdevelopment |
| Childcare | Home ownership |
| Children’s issues | Honesty in politics |
| Clinton | Immigration |
| Congress | Peer pressure |
| Cost living | Personal debt |
| Cuts in government | Politicians |
| Deficit | Racism |
| Foreign affairs | Religious concerns |
| Freedom speech | Senior citizens |
| Gangs | Size of government |
| Government size | Welfare |

NOTE: While the 26+ age group is most likely to express concern for Social Security and health care issues, the younger voters are only partially interested in these top concern issues. Perhaps the lower level of interest displayed by the youthful cohort in elections at all levels of government is due to the fact that the usual public agenda does not mirror their concerns as fully as it does the concerns of the more senior population

SECTION 3: What information Sources do Young Voters See as Most Useful?

This section of the survey asked respondents what information sources would be most useful to use in finding more information on the issues listed above.

Respondents were asked whether they found various “sources” useful or not useful when seeking more information about public policy issues. Both age groups similarly found some categories more useful than others. Among the five most frequently mentioned news sources for each age group, all were the same except that the World Wide Web and the Internet for the younger respondents replaced radio news, which was listed among the highest five for the group of older respondents.

	18 to 25 age group	26 and over
World Wide Web-Internet.....	70%	48%
Talking with family members.....	68%	59%
Newspapers	63%	66%
TV news programs	61%	67%
Talking with friends	59%	55%
Radio news programs	55%	55%

Q-10 Let’s say you are interested in trying to find out more information about some of the issues I mentioned a moment ago. Which of the following *sources* would you find useful?

a. Television news programs on networks such as ABC, CBS, NBC, or CNN

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	61%	38%
26 and over	67%	33%

b. Radio news programs

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	55%	45%
26 and over	55%	45%

c. Newspapers

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	63%	37%
26 and over	66%	34%

d. News magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S News and World Report*, etc.

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	46%	53%
26 and over	47%	53%

e. MTV

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	46%	54%
26 and over	27%	72%

f. World Wide Web or the internet

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	70%	29%
26 and over	48%	52%

g. Mail received at your home

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	34%	66%
26 and over	37%	63%

h. Talking with family members

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	68%	32%
26 and over	59%	41%

i. Talking with friends

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	59%	41%
26 and over	55%	45%

j. Information from political parties

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	41%	59%
26 and over	38%	62%

k. Information directly from political candidates

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	47%	53%
26 and over	40%	60%

l. Information from interest groups

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	42%	58%
26 and over	42%	58%

m. Factual information about issues and candidates received through a free phone call to a non-partisan political library

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	55%	45%
26 and over	49%	51%

n. Printed material containing factual information on issues and candidates from this non-partisan political library

	Useful source	Not a useful source
18 to 25 age group	49%	51%
26 and over	53%	47%

Q-11 Do you believe that the news media does a very good, good, fair, or poor job reporting on the issues that are important to you? (1) very good (2) good (3) fair (4) poor (5) DK/uncertain

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/Uncertain
18 to 25 age group	13%	31%	34%	20%	1%
26 and over	13%	31%	33%	22%	1%

SECTION 4: What is the Pattern of Political Participation Displayed by Young Voters?

In this section, respondents were asked whether they were registered to vote and, if not, why they were not registered. We also asked whether each respondent was likely to vote, and what kind of information they would find useful. Finally, we asked what kinds of policies or procedures they believed would increase voter turnout.

We found that sixty-five percent of the 18 to 25 age group reported they were registered to vote compared to seventy-eight percent of those 26 and older. (There is typically substantial over-reporting of voter registration and of actual voting in national surveys; see Raymond Wolfinger, “The Political Implications of Higher Turnout,” at <http://www.igs.berkeley.edu>, Paper 99-5.) When those who were not registered were presented a list of possible reasons for not being registered to vote, the most frequent reason given by younger respondents was that they “find the process too much of a hassle” (39%). The second most common reason was that they “have not had time to register yet” (38%). Almost a third (31%) of these young respondents also indicated

that registering was “not a priority right now.” Similar results were obtained for the older respondents, with thirty-nine percent saying they had “not had time to register yet,” thirty-five percent indicating that the process was “too much of a hassle,” and thirty-two percent responding that “it’s not a priority right now.”

Respondents were asked what types of information would be *very useful* to them, assuming they would vote in the 2000 presidential election. At least forty percent of younger respondents indicated that factual information about each of the following would be *very useful*: “where and when to vote” (50%), presidential candidates (49%), state and local ballot measures (48%), state level candidates (41%), where and when to register (40%), and local level candidates (40%). On the other hand, information about “how to vote early by mail” and the amount and source of money spent on campaigns were considered much less useful, with fifteen percent of the younger respondents and twelve percent of the older citizens surveyed indicating that both of those kinds of information would be “not at all useful” to them.

The last question in this section asked respondents about policies and procedures that might encourage people, including possibly themselves, to become more active voters. Over seventy percent of 18 to 25 year old respondents said that each of the following would make people become more active voters: being able to register and vote online (72%), being able to register and vote at work or school (71%), having better candidates to choose from (72%), having candidates that address issues “important to me” (71%), and having more trustworthy information on candidates’ backgrounds and issue positions (79%). While a majority of the 26 and over age group agreed that these procedures would increase participation, in each instance a larger proportion of younger respondents thought the proposal for improved voting participation would make a difference than was the case for older survey respondents.

Q-12 Are you currently registered to vote?

YES [go to Q-14];
 NO [continue];
 Unsure or don't remember [continue]

	Yes	No	Unsure/DK
18 to 25 age group	65%	32%	3%
26 and over	78%	20%	1%

Q-13 What is the main reason that you have not registered to vote? Is it because you...[read and rotate options]

a. Have not had time to register yet

	Yes	No
18 to 25 age group	38%	62%
26 and over	39%	61%

b. Have just recently moved

	Yes	No
18 to 25 age group	16%	84%
26 and over	18%	82%

c. It's not a priority right now

	Yes	No
18 to 25 age group	31%	69%
26 and over	32%	68%

d. Do not have an interest in voting

	Yes	No
18 to 25 age group	19%	81%
26 and over	7%	93%

e. Don't really know how to register

	Yes	No
18 to 25 age group	19%	80%
26 and over	29%	71%

f. Have been living away from home

	Yes	No
18 to 25 age group	17%	83%
26 and over	10%	90%

g. Find the process too much of a hassle

	Yes	No
18 to 25 age group	39%	61%
26 and over	35%	65%

Q-14 How likely are you to vote in the next general election in 2000? (1) Definitely will; (2) Probably will; (3) Probably will not; or (4) Definitely will not

	Definitely will	Probably will	Probably will not	Definitely will not
18 to 25 age group	45%	24%	16%	15%
26 and over	64%	25%	7%	3%

Q-15 Let's assume that you will vote in the upcoming general election in the year 2000. Which of the following *types* of information would you find useful—would it be (1) very useful; (2) somewhat useful; (3) not very useful; (4) not at all useful; or (5) unsure? [“unsure” omitted for this table]

a. Where and when to register.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	40%	40%	7%	11%
26 and over	32%	39%	14%	15%

b. Where and when to vote.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	50%	40%	3%	6%
26 and over	42%	44%	6%	7%

c. How to vote early by mail.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	33%	39%	12%	15%
26 and over	29%	44%	15%	12%

d. Factual information on presidential candidates' backgrounds and positions on issues.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	49%	44%	2%	3%
26 and over	46%	49%	3%	2%

e. Factual information on congressional candidates' backgrounds and positions on issues.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	39%	52%	3%	3%
26 and over	40%	53%	3%	2%

f. Factual information on state level candidates' backgrounds and positions on issues.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	41%	52%	3%	2%
26 and over	40%	53%	3%	3%

g. Factual information on local level candidates’ backgrounds and positions on issues.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	40%	51%	3%	4%
26 and over	42%	50%	4%	3%

h. How special interest groups rate candidates’ voting records.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	23%	44%	16%	13%
26 and over	23%	47%	16%	12%

i. How much money candidates have spent on their campaigns and the sources of their campaign money.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	22%	41%	22%	15%
26 and over	22%	48%	17%	12%

j. Information on state or local issues placed on the ballot for approval or disapproval.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	48%	43%	3%	5%
26 and over	43%	50%	3%	3%

k. Information on where to call to get additional assistance and information concerning the election.

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
18 to 25 age group	33%	53%	7%	6%
26 and over	30%	56%	8%	6%

Q-16 Which of the following do you feel would make people become more active voters? You may choose multiple answers.

a. Being able to register and vote online.

	Yes	No	Uncertain
18 to 25 age group	72%	20%	8%
26 and over	57%	27%	16%

b. Being able to register and vote at work or school.

	Yes	No	Uncertain
18 to 25 age group	71%	24%	5%
26 and over	59%	23%	18%

c. Having better candidates to choose from.

	Yes	No	Uncertain
18 to 25 age group	72%	20%	7%
26 and over	67%	15%	17%

d. Candidates who address the issues important to me.

	Yes	No	Uncertain
18 to 25 age group	71%	20%	9%
26 and over	65%	17%	18%

e. Having more trustworthy information on the candidates' backgrounds and issue positions.

	Yes	No	Uncertain
18 to 25 age group	79%	16%	5%
26 and over	68%	15%	17%

SECTION 5: How much information do Young Voters Possess About Civic Affairs?

Five questions on knowledge about politics—four items from Delli Carpini and Teeter, and one new question of federal government finances.

In the final section of the Project Vote Smart/Pew Charitable Trusts survey, we asked respondents five information questions. Four of these were standard questions suggested by Delli Carpini and Keeter in *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 305-306), and one asked whether the national government deficit has increased, decreased, or stayed the same in recent years. We found that more voters age 26 and over were correct on each of the questions, with a mean number correct of 2.88 (of five) for younger respondents and 3.40 for older respondents.

The four standard information questions were answered correctly by sixty percent of the 26 and over age group. The percent indicating correct responses for each of the four questions to this survey, and for earlier surveys reported by Delli Carpini and Teeter, are as follows—with the percent stating “don’t know” indicated in parentheses for each question and for both age groups.

Question	Age 18-25	Age 26+	Earlier surveys reported in Delli Carpini and Teeter, with year
Do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by Al Gore? (open ended) 1) Vice President 2) Other response 3) Don't know	72% (DK = 23%)	81% (DK = 13%)	74% (1989)
Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not...is it the President, the Congress, or the Supreme Court? 1) President, 2) Congress, 3) Supreme Court, 4) Don't know	62% (DK = 12%)	73% (DK = 7%)	68% (1991)
How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto? 1) Fifty-one percent, 2) Two-thirds, 3) Three-fourths, 4) Don't know	58% (DK = 21%)	71% (DK = 12%)	63% (1985)
Which party is more conservative—the Republicans or the Democrats? 1) Republicans, 2) Democrats, 3) Other response, 4) Don't know	57% (DK = 24%)	66% (DK = 11%)	58% (1992)
What has happened to the national government deficit in recent years? Has it 1) Become larger, 2) Stayed about the same, 3) Become smaller, 4) Don't know	38% (DK = 15%)	49% (DK = 8%)	Not asked

Total number correct (of 5 possible)	<u>Age 18-25</u>	<u>Age 26+</u>
None correct (%).....	11	4
One correct (%).....	9	6
Two correct (%).....	16	13
Three correct (%).....	23	22
Four correct (%).....	26	30
All five correct (%).....	14	24
Mean number correct (number).....	2.88	3.40

The fewest people in either age group responded correctly to the question concerning the size of the national government deficit. Even though there has been a great deal of recent media coverage concerning the elimination of the deficit and the emergence of a revenue surplus that could be allocated to programmatic purposes and/or tax cuts, only thirty-eight percent of the younger respondents and forty-nine percent of the older respondents answered this question

correctly. Among the younger respondents, thirty-two percent believed the deficit had grown, and among older respondents 30 percent indicated it had grown. Fifteen percent of the younger respondents and eight percent of older interviewees indicated they did not know. It is important to recognize that some people confuse the word *deficit*—which has been eliminated—and the term *(national) debt*—which has grown; consequently, these results should be interpreted cautiously. Nonetheless, this finding corresponds with other surveys which show that members of the public have been slow to recognize the disappearance of budget deficits and acknowledge their replacement by budget surpluses.