



In the upcoming presidential election, over 40.8 million voters will be young people, ages 18-27, marking a [25% increase](#) from the previous midterm election in 2022 with 8.3 million newly eligible voters. The continuously expanding younger voting body, driven by the increasing number of eligible youth voters, reflects a recent trend in the United States. This places voting power and decision-making for the country in the hands of progressively younger audiences with no signs of slowing down in the near future.

Alongside the growing number of youth voters is an increasingly more diverse voting electorate. Data from Tufts Tisch College shows that out of the 40 million youth eligible to vote in 2024, [over 45%](#) of that population will comprise people of color. This percentage jumps even higher to [47%](#) when considering newly eligible voters of color who turn 18 and 19 just before the 2024 election. This younger and more diverse demographic is playing an increasingly influential role in shaping the nation's political landscape.

Despite the increase of younger voters in the electorate, their presence at elections themselves is staggering; according to estimates from Tufts Tisch College [less than four out of 10](#) eligible youth voters ages 18-29 voted in the 2016 presidential election. The low participation

of younger voters follows a precedent set since the passage of the 26th Amendment, which granted voting rights to 18-year-olds. Historically, the turnout rate for younger voters has been far lower than that of older age groups. A prime example of this occurred during the 2014 midterms. According to the US census, only [one in five](#) eligible young people voted, a figure significantly lower than the [36.4%](#) recorded for the general population, as reported by PBS data.

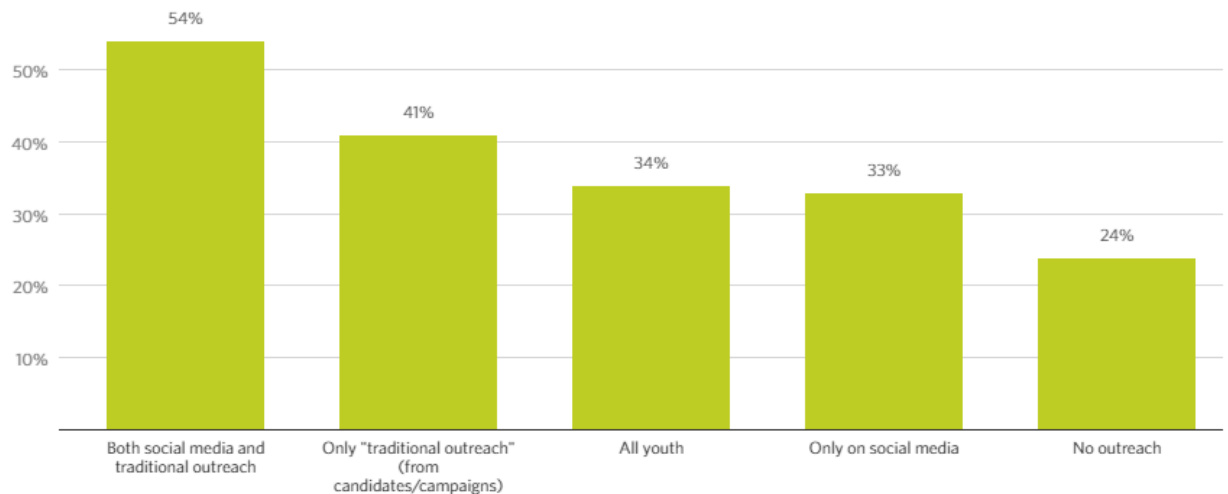
Since 2014, youth turnout rates have significantly increased, experiencing a massive [78%](#) increase in the 2018 midterms, with over 36% of eligible youth voters casting their votes, according to data from the US Census. However, despite the youth turnout rate reaching an all-time high, it still pales in comparison to the overall population turnout rate of [53.4%](#) for the 2018 midterm election.

Recent data from the Tufts Tisch College has revealed that social media is an effective way for politicians to communicate and gain support from younger audiences. Data collected by the Tufts Tisch College from the 2018 presidential elections indicates that [just under half](#) of all youth—14 million of the 18-24-year-olds, who were newly eligible voters—became aware of the election through social media platforms. The increased reliance of the younger generation on learning about politics through social media highlights the challenges traditional campaigns face in attempting to connect with the new generation of voters. According to a survey by Tufts Tisch College, [just under a third](#) of youth, ages 18-24, reported hearing or reading about the election on social media platforms but were not reached by traditional outreach groups.

More importantly, data shows that the increased exposure of youth to political information through social media significantly influences the turnout at polls and results of elections. According to a survey by Tufts Tisch College, youth who exclusively learned about elections through social media were [9%](#) more likely to vote than their counterparts without exposure to information about elections. As the youth vote continues to grow, social media outreach has become increasingly essential for politicians aiming to win elections.

## Youth Who Heard about the Election from Both Social Media and Traditional Outreach Were Likeliest to Vote

The percentage of young people, ages 18-24, who reported that they were "extremely likely" to vote in 2018, grouped by how they heard about the election



Aligning with statistical trends, engaging in conversations with students within this voting group adds a nuance to this evolving phenomenon. Some Monta Vista High School (MVHS) seniors shared insightful perspectives on how they are personally influenced by social media on a day-to-day basis. They emphasized platforms like Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram as their initial glimpses into politics and primary sources for staying informed about current political issues, candidates, and election dynamics. Open political debates and [discussions](#) in the comment sections of these platforms were highlighted as the main contributors to their introduction to politics. One senior expressed how convenient it was to use social media to catch up on political news. "Sometimes, I don't even click onto the actual posts; I just scroll and read the headlines highlighted in the thumbnails, and I basically get the gist."

According to many, open discussions about various political topics offer a comprehensive view, helping individuals form informed decisions about their political stances. The perceived openness of these discussions, free from censorship, appeals to some younger audiences, like those from MVHS. According to many seniors that I talked to, in an internet landscape saturated with censored discussions, participating in political discussions through social media platforms feels like a breath of fresh air, providing an escape from giant media corporations attempting to push their own agendas and suppressing opposing viewpoints.

Similarly, another senior commented on the perceived untrustworthiness of political news from social media, stating, "I feel that accounts who post incorrect information usually quickly get called out and corrected by others due to the sheer number of people who view the posts in a short amount of time."

A prevalent [belief](#) is that social media has a detrimental effect on the voting decisions of youth, who are greatly influenced by the spread of misinformation online. While it's true that misinformation can easily circulate on social media, platforms are taking steps to address this issue. Twitter, for example, introduced the Community Notes feature, allowing reputable members to add clarifications to posts with incorrect information. In a similar effort, economists at Duke have hypothesized a [model](#) to help combat misinformation; the model suggests that to cut down on the spread of false information, the network can set limits on how widely certain messages are shared, and it can do so in a way that is not overly restrictive to users. Despite valid concerns about misinformation's impact on youth voting, ongoing efforts to combat and mitigate this issue online offer promising prospects for the future as technology advances.

MVHS seniors' responses highlight social media's growing influence on political communication with younger voters suggesting that future campaigns may rely on innovative strategies to connect with and mobilize the youth electorate virtually.