

Summary of YPP Network Findings and Implications for Action



Rates of engagement in participatory politics among youth are sizable and growing.

- In 2012, sixty-seven percent of youth engaged in social networking sites in a manner consistent with participatory politics.
- Enactment of participatory politics is also growing. For example, between 2008 and 2012, the number of youth who posted political news on a social networking site grew from 13% to 32%.
- Whether engaged in flash activism, #hashtag activism, or more traditional social movement strategies, participatory politics offers youth (even youth who lack resources, are under 18, or are not citizens) significant opportunities for voice and, at times, influence.

Implication: Participatory Politics deserves attention from those hoping to support and improve youth engagement in civic and political life.

Participatory politics are equitably enacted across race, class, and ethnicity.

- YPP's nationally representative survey indicates that youth of color are as likely or more likely than white youth to engage in most online forms of participatory politics.
- Both YPP's survey and qualitative studies of engaged youth in groups such as the DREAMers and the Black Youth Project (BYP)100 demonstrate the significant potential of participatory politics with respect to civic and political voice and influence.

Implication: Those hoping to promote greater political equality should support effective youth engagement in participatory politics.



Participatory politics also present risks.

- YPP's detailed case studies as well as in depth interviews with youth have highlighted numerous risks, including surveillance, hate speech, misinformation, corporate influence on public affairs, and unintended impacts to one's identity throughout cyberspace.
- YPP's in depth study of 70 highly active civic youth found that 32% had silenced or quieted their online civic expression just two years later. Many said this was due to fears of negative consequences from sharing their perspectives online.
- Quantitative and qualitative studies reveal that youth value support from peers, mentors,



and educators. For example, when YPP survey respondents were asked, “Do you think people like you and your friends would benefit from learning more about how to tell if news and information you find online is trustworthy?” 84% said “yes.”

Implication: It is important to understand the risks associated with participatory politics and to identify ways platform design, educational efforts, mentoring, and the creation of networks and communities for exchange of ideas can provide meaningful supports.



Supports for and pathways towards participatory politics take multiple forms.

- YPP research has found that engagement in interest-driven participatory culture tied to games, hobbies, and fandom, for example, often develops skills, shared commitments, and social networks that foster participatory politics.
- Youth who were highly involved in nonpolitical, “interest-driven” activities were more than five times as likely to engage in participatory politics as those infrequently involved in such activities.
- YPP studies show that digitally oriented civic education promotes greater overall engagement in school, as well as later engagement in participatory politics. In an experimental test, class sessions that focused on the importance of assessing credibility significantly improved youth’s ability to judge the accuracy of online information. Targeted learning opportunities also increased interest in finding multiple perspectives on issues.
- Platform design can also substantially support greater participatory engagement among youth. YPP researchers have integrated insights from across the YPP Network into a clear set of 10 platform design principles to promote engagement in participatory politics.

Implication: It is important to recognize the value of interest-driven participation, to improve platform design, to create educational and mentoring opportunities in and out of schools, and to support communities where those engaged in participatory politics can interact.

