



COVID-19 and Racial Inequality Among Top Election Issues Motivating College Students to Vote

Almost half of all students (49%) indicated social media will directly impact their vote

October 27, 2020 (Seattle, WA) - Nearly half of all college students (40%) between the ages of 18 and 23 consider COVID-19 and racial inequality the top issues in the upcoming 2020 election, according to a new survey by BestColleges. Click below for more information:

<https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/college-student-voter-survey-covid-19-racial-inequality/>

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, college students have remained engaged with social and political issues. A majority of college students (62%) report that 2020 has impacted the issues that are most important to them. To help stay informed, 36% of respondents said they use social media as their primary source of news about the 2020 election, and 49% said social media will directly impact their vote, trailing only televised debates (52%).

"This is just further evidence that, despite historically voting in lower numbers, college students are not politically apathetic or disengaged," said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., a college instructor and advisor for BestColleges. "College students are concerned about the issues, most especially those focused on social injustice, racial inequality, and the ongoing effects of the pandemic."

Although college students are engaged with the issues in the upcoming election, their top issues differ between those who identify as either Republican or Democrat. While 52% of Democratic students identified racial inequality as the most important election issue, only 17% of Republican students did the same. Furthermore, 42% of Republican students listed the economy as the most important issue to them, compared to only 20% of Democrat students.

While college voters are divided along partisan lines on many issues, education is about equally important to Republican (23%) and Democratic students (20%). The importance of education is even more pronounced among students who do not identify with a political party (27%) or chose not to share it (29%).

"Education here could encompass a number of related issues, including college affordability, the student debt crisis, or even the need to provide quality education to everyone," said Venable. "It's remarkable that roughly equal percentages of Republican, Democratic, and nonpartisan students value education in our survey. This shows that college students place considerable value on their education, regardless of party affiliation."

Beyond differences in party affiliation, top issues also vary by gender. Nearly half of all women (44%) listed racial inequality as the most important issue, compared to only 33% of men. Additionally, women are more likely than men to identify gender and sexual orientation inequality (22% vs. 11%) and abortion (20% vs. 10%) as top issues.

“These gender differences aren’t surprising,” explained Venable. “Overall, college students are similar to other voter blocs. They represent a variety of demographic groups with shared and often opposing viewpoints based on their unique backgrounds and experiences.”

Methodology

The survey was conducted September 10-15, 2020. All respondents were fielded by Lucid LLC. Survey participants included 1,002 college students nationwide. Respondents were 18-23 years of age; attending a community college, trade/technical school, or college/university; and pursuing an associate, bachelor’s, or trade/technical degree.

About BestColleges

BestColleges empowers students to make smarter educational decisions and find schools that best fit their needs through proprietary research, user-friendly guides, and hundreds of unique college rankings. As a trusted education advisor, they also provide a wide array of college planning, financial aid, and career resources to help students realize life goals and overcome educational challenges as they prepare for careers after college.