

Supermajority Ed Fund: Young Women Empowerment & Engagement Survey 2023

TO: Supermajority Ed Fund

FROM: HIT Strategies – Roshni Nedungadi, Ashley Aylward, & Erica Tebbs, Pollsters

Young women hold enormous, often overlooked potential and electoral power. As a rapidly growing share of the electorate, as well as volunteers, donors, and activists, young women could soon become the most influential voting bloc in the country. Despite growing frustration and cynicism, young women maintain hope and a belief in their own collective power. But this power is only possible if young women feel represented by the political system and are engaged by trusted sources with the right messaging.

In brand new quantitative research on behalf of Supermajority Ed Fund, HIT has found that messaging framed in a collective context around their shared experiences and identity as women have high mobilization potential for young women. What's more, according to this polling, the most important issues for young women in the United States today are the economy and the cost of living (56%), followed by abortion access (42%) mental health (41%), and healthcare (40%). This research, which focuses on infrequent and non-voting women ages 18 to 35, is the first of its kind and analyzes an understudied and high opportunity segment of the electorate.

Key Takeaways

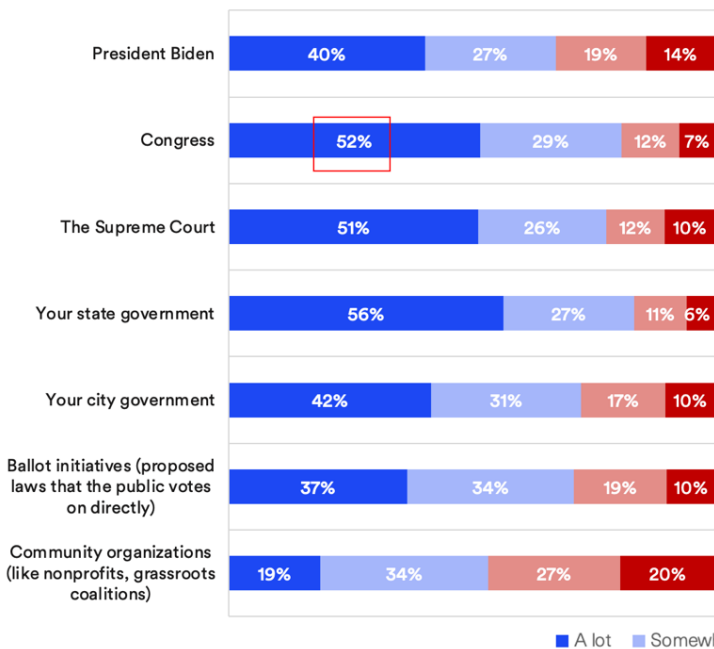
Low-propensity young women are less engaged because they are disappointed in the government and political system.

- ***Cynical But Hopeful:* Despite seeing the flaws in the current government and political system, most young women do believe it could improve.**
 - Over 90% of low-propensity young women do not believe the government and political system work effectively, but most (60%) are hopeful that it could in the future, indicating an opportunity to engage them in participation towards the change they'd like to see.
 - College-educated (56%), AAPI (56%), LGBTQIA+ (55%), white Gen Z (61%) and white Millennial (57%) low-propensity young women were more likely to be discouraged about the future but believe it could change. Black Millennials (32%) and Latina Gen Z (31%) were more likely to feel negative about the future and to have lost hope in the system's ability to change.

- Fed Up: Most low-propensity young women are feeling disappointment/sadness (61%) and anger/frustration (56%) toward the political system.**
 - These feelings are also reflected in predictions about the future: Low-propensity young women feel negatively about the future of the country (76% negative) and planet (69% negative). However, the figures are practically flipped when it comes to feelings about their own personal future (77% positive).
 - This finding suggests that a negative outlook is not generalized and is instead a response to their lived experience and what they're hearing about the state of the country and planet. This negative external outlook could stem from a perceived lack of control over futures outside of their own.
- Low Trust for Those in Power: Though low-propensity young women perceive that the decisions made by the government greatly affect their personal lives, they have very low trust that those in power will make change on issues that matter.**
 - The more distant and powerful the entity tested, the less trust low-propensity young women express, while local groups closer to home garner higher trust. The dissonance between high impact and low trust of federal institutions like Congress and the Supreme Court is more drastic among women with pessimistic future outlooks. This again suggests that disengagement and distrust may be correlated with feelings of lack of control, if low-propensity young women believe that they may have more influence over local politics than the federal government.

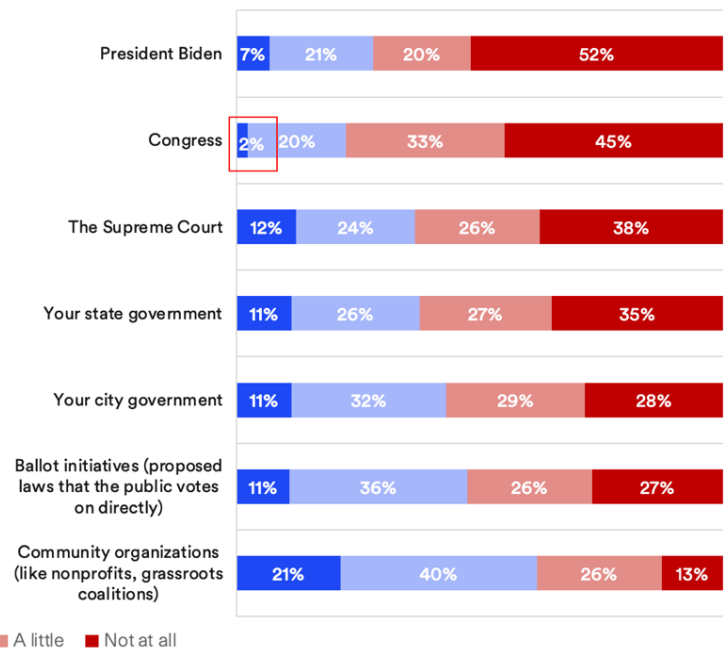
17. [SSA] How much do you think decisions made by the following affect your personal life? Do their decisions affect your personal life a lot, somewhat, a little, or not at all?

Affect Personal Life



18. [SSB] How much do you trust the following to make change on the issues that matter to you? Do you trust them a lot, somewhat, a little, or not at all?

Trust



Low-propensity young women are clear-eyed about the underlying problems and know who is to blame.

- ***Out-of-Touch Politicians and Corporate Greed:*** Young women blame government ineffectiveness on politicians seeking power and the excessive influence of corporate money on our political system.
 - When asked why the government is currently not working effectively, most low-propensity young women blame it on politicians being out of touch with the daily life of most people (50%), power-hungry politicians seeking control (48%), or corporate money having too much influence (48%).
 - Pessimistic low-propensity young women in particular are more likely to believe the problem is corporate money (53%) and too many old white men in power (53%).
 - Additionally, Black low-propensity women also pointed to systemic racism (47%) and too many old white men in power (43%), which resonated with young women who identify as Democrats as well (46%).
 - This insight into the roots of low-propensity young women's cynicism also provides insight into potential pathways to engagement: Organizations or elected officials that recognize and work to address these systemic issues have an opportunity to connect with young women.

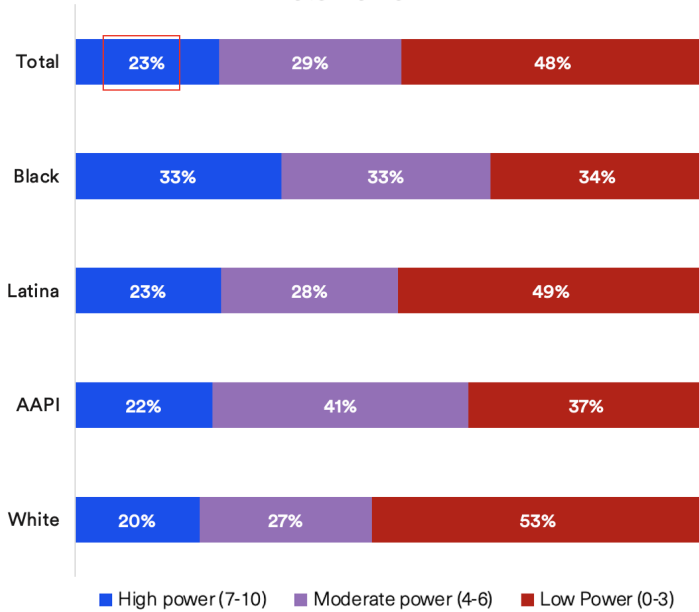
Low-propensity young women believe in their own collective power to make change.

- ***Collective Power:*** The perceived change-making power of young women as a collective is higher than their individual personal vote power, highlighting potential to engage and mobilize this group based on their collective identity of womanhood.
 - 42% gave a rating of "high power" to young women (between 7-10 on a scale of 10), while only 23% gave the same rating to the power of their individual vote. Latina women were especially likely to indicate high collective power of women (53%).
 - Outlook about the future of the country and planet corresponds with perception of power to make change: Young women with the most pessimistic future outlook indicated the lowest power of both their individual vote (61% low power) and young women (37% low power), while the young women that feel more optimistic about the future indicated highest power of both their individual vote (44% high power) and young women (65% high power). To inspire action and hope in the future, low-propensity young women need to feel empowered in that their collective actions can result in meaningful change.

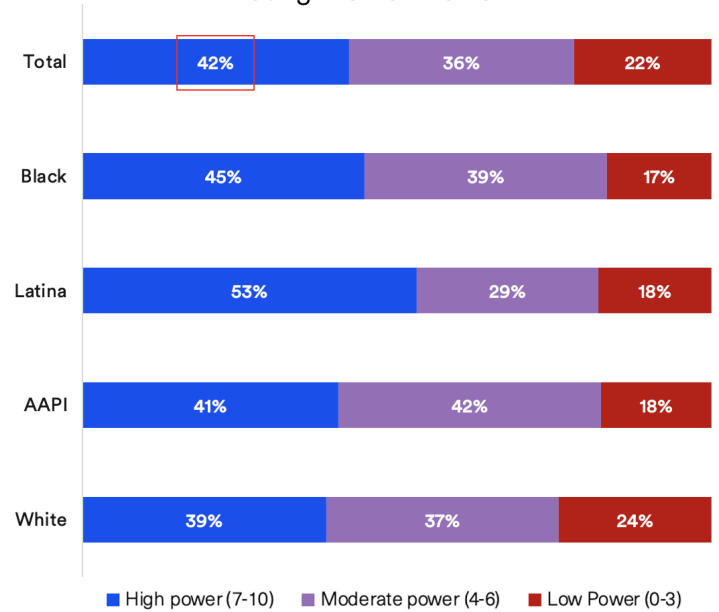
Q8. [SSA] No matter how frequently you vote in elections, how much power do you feel your vote has to make change on issues that are important to you? Please rate the amount of power you feel your vote has on a scale from zero to ten, where zero (0) means your vote has no power at all, and ten (10) means your vote has a lot of power.

Q9. [SSB] How much power do you feel young women have to make change on issues that matter most to their community? Please rate the amount of power you feel young women have to make change on a scale from zero to ten, where zero (0) means young women have no power at all, and ten (10) means young women have a lot of power to make change...

Vote Power



Young Women Power



- **Womanhood and Identity:** There is an opportunity to build collective power through the identity of womanhood.
 - When we asked low-propensity young women what traits are most important to their identity, their role in relationships (like being a mother, caregiver, wife, friend) stood out as the trait that resonated with most young women (57%), especially for moms (73%).
 - Being a woman was also one of the most important identity traits (39% of total audience selected this, 53% of Black women), alongside personality (40%) and spiritual/religious beliefs (39%).
 - In particular, being a woman was the number one most important identity trait for pessimistic low-propensity young women (55%), followed by their personality (52%) and role in relationships (52%).

Q13. Which of the following traits are most important to your identity? You may choose up to three.

| | TOTAL | | MILLENNIALS | GEN Z | BLACK | LATINA | AAPI | WHITE |
|---|-------|--|-------------|-------|-------|--------|------|-------|
| Your role in relationships (like being a mother, caregiver, wife, friend) | 57% | Moms more likely to select (73%) | 60% | 52% | 50% | 56% | 50% | 60% |
| Your personality | 40% | | 41% | 38% | 33% | 41% | 52% | 40% |
| Being a woman | 39% | | 39% | 39% | 53% | 39% | 36% | 36% |
| Your spiritual/religious beliefs | 39% | | 38% | 42% | 46% | 42% | 24% | 38% |
| Your profession | 27% | College+ educated more likely to select profession (40%) | 27% | 27% | 25% | 28% | 37% | 26% |
| Your hobbies or interests | 26% | | 27% | 24% | 13% | 25% | 37% | 29% |
| Being American | 22% | | 20% | 26% | 15% | 16% | 12% | 27% |
| Being a member of your racial/ethnic group | 10% | | 9% | 12% | 29% | 11% | 22% | 2% |
| Your sexual orientation | 7% | LGBTQ+ more likely to select sexual orientation (23%) | 6% | 8% | 8% | 4% | 7% | 8% |
| Being young | 4% | | 3% | 5% | 4% | 6% | 1% | 4% |
| Don't know/Ref | 2% | | 2% | 2% | 1% | 3% | 1% | 1% |

Low-propensity young women need to feel reflected and represented to engage politically, and they are looking for action on the issues that matter most to them.

- **More Representation and Action Needed:** The barriers preventing low-propensity young women from voting and engaging are not logistical. Disillusionment largely centered around politicians and candidates creates voting barriers.
 - When we asked about voting barriers, most low-propensity young women either selected they did not know enough about candidates (32%), that candidates did not represent their values (31%), or that voting doesn't change things that matter to them (21%).
 - Those who had rated women's power as low initially were more likely to select candidates not representing their values (45%) as a top barrier to voting, suggesting that not having values-aligned candidates correlates with a low sense of power.

- **Engage on Issues That Matter:** Though young women indicated a broad range of important issues, economic well-being is the top issue for low-propensity young women and a high priority in their personal lives.
 - When framing issues that matter in a collective context ("important issue *to young women in the U.S. today*") rather than a personal context ("important issue *to you*"), responses coalesced, and abortion access and mental health rose in importance.
 - When it comes to important issues to young women in the U.S. today, 56% said economy and cost of living, 42% said abortion access, 41% said mental health, and 40% said healthcare.
 - Pessimists (those who have a pessimistic attitude toward the current state of the world and who have less faith that change is possible) especially prioritize mental health (52%) and are more likely than other groups to find abortion access important to young women (55% important). This suggests a continuing role for reproductive freedom, both for civic participation and future outlook.

- **Go Beyond Voting:** While low-propensity young women do rate voting as an action they would take, they are also interested in participating in a range of other actions to engage civically and make change.
 - In addition to voting, low-propensity young women also say they are likely to sign petitions (86% likely) and share their opinions with friends and family in person or on social media (79% likely).
 - The low-propensity young women with more pessimistic future outlooks believe boycotting a company and protesting are as effective as voting, and Gen Z women were especially likely to boycott a company.

- Emphasizing low-effort actions and resources that make participation more convenient are important aspects of engagement; actions that were easier to complete had higher likelihood of participation.
- It's also important to engage low-propensity young women outside of traditional media outlets. In particular, pessimistic young women are as likely to get news from Facebook (31%) or TikTok (29%) than traditional news (28%).
- **Message to Empower: Center young women as the catalyst for change and empowered heroes of the narrative.**
 - Messaging should validate pain points and reflect the shared emotions of anger and disappointment, but pivot to activation and proof points of hope.
 - Address the sense of lack of control with messaging that uplifts how young women can and have influenced the future of the country and planet through collective action.

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Survey Methodology:

These findings are from a proprietary survey conducted by HIT Strategies on behalf of Supermajority Coalition. This survey was conducted via and phone and text-to-web and consisted of 1,300 young women nationwide, ages 18-35, Registered Sporadic Voters (Voted in 50% or less of the last 6 federal elections they were eligible for, registered prior to 2022 general election). The survey included oversamples of 100 Black women, 100 Latina women, and 100 AAPI women. The survey fielded from August 15th to September 5th and the margin of error is +/- 3.1%. Margin of error is higher among subgroups.