



HOW TO REACH GEN Z SWING VOTERS

A report by MurMur.

MurMurImpact.com

Written by Brian Rolling, MurMur's Co-Founder + Chief Video Officer based on research done in partnership with Lake Research Partners



Summary

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Gen Z voters are critical to the success of President Biden and the Democrats in this election cycle. President Biden won young voters by 24 points in 2020. However, recent polls have shown troubling erosion of the youth vote. A recent Harvard youth poll shows Biden leading Trump among registered young voters by only 8 points. It is estimated that the Gen Z and Millennial vote will make up over 40% of the electorate. Motivating uncommitted voters to vote for Joe Biden will be critical. If the Biden campaign is unable to widen his margin with young voters, Donald Trump will be the next president.

Recent polling from Socialsphere estimates that about 30% of the youth vote falls into this “uncommitted” or “swing” category. MurMur worked with Lake Research Project (LRP) to better understand the best way to motivate young uncommitted voters in the 2024 election. The following report lays out our findings about the issues these voters most care about, their opinions of Biden and Trump and what types of messaging are most effective at reaching them.

Biden won young voters by 24% in 2020

Recent polls show only a 8% lead.

(Harvard Youth Poll)

Key Findings:

- Gen Z uncommitted voters are not happy with their choices in this election.
- Economic issues are the highest concern.
- Very little awareness of Biden’s accomplishments exists.
- Gaza/Israel is not a major issue for this bloc.
- Personal impact of policy is critical
- The messenger is more important than the message

Recommendations:

- Focus on the economy: affordable housing, healthcare, cost of living and gun violence.
- Make policy about people, not politicians.
- Personal testimonials from (their) peers are essential.
- Use contrast content to highlight Biden’s accomplishments in contrast to what Trump will or has done.

Current Landscape

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This work was undertaken based on the following understanding about Gen Z:

1. Since 2014, youth voter turnout has been on an upward trend. Youth voters have also overwhelmingly preferred Democrats. In 2022, voters between the age of 18 to 29 preferred Democrats over Republicans by a 28-point margin. In 2020 Biden won the youth vote by 24%. In the key swing states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Arizona, the youth vote was the only age demographic that Joe Biden won outright. In 2024 the Gen Z and Millennial vote will make up over 40% of the total vote. This trend has made the youth vote a critical voting bloc in both the race for President, as well as the race for the Senate and House majorities.
2. A recent [Harvard Youth Poll](#) has Joe Biden leading Donald Trump by 8% among young registered voters (that number increases to 19 points when filtering for “likely voters”), well under his previous 24-point advantage from 2016. In an election that will be decided by a handful of votes across a few states, a 16-point swing in youth support would be fatal.
3. Younger votes are particularly vulnerable to third party candidates. According to the same Harvard Youth Poll, when expanding the field to include 3rd parties, Biden’s lead over Trump shrinks to 3% among young registered voters.
4. A majority of Gen Z spends at least four hours on social media, with most of their attention going to TikTok. 60% of Gen Z prefers to watch videos under 60 seconds in length.
5. The battles of the 2024 election are going to be waged under a very different media ecosystem. The most important political conversations are now happening in small peer-to-peer settings through text chains, group chats, WhatsApp, and shared short-form videos. The prime era of the mainstream media and the large social platforms is over. **The best way to reach young people is through social media, and through their peers.**

**Peer-to-Peer Communication is the
best way to reach young voters**

Research Objectives and Methodology 04

Given this environment, MurMur wanted to better understand the best way to motivate young voters in the 2024 election. Since Gen Z relies heavily on social media for information, MurMur translates the attitudes and beliefs of young people into guidelines for effective messaging on social media. Our research provides organizations, both national and local, with information that can assist groups in engaging young people in the 2024 election.

An advisory council, consisting of people working with various Gen Z-focused organizations, was assembled to help inform the research.

Key questions:

- How do we motivate young people to support Democrats in the 2024 election?
- Which issues really move the needle?
- What kind of content best connects with young people?
- Who are the best messengers?

To answer some of these questions, a focus group of 50 registered, swing voters between the ages of 18 and 27 was conducted on April 9, 2024. LRP used Remesh, a relatively new online qualitative platform. The platform uses AI to analyze verbatim responses for all open-ended questions and synthesizes the information to identify the major themes (coming through from the group) in real time. Remesh allows researchers to adjust questions in real time based on participant response and uses a combination of qualitative research with some quantitative capabilities

The Findings

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The following takeaways combine what was learned from the focus group with other polling and data that has been made public.

Gen Z swing voters are not happy with their choices.

The young voters we heard from are VERY negative about both Biden and Trump. Their feelings towards Trump are passionate, using words such as criminal, evil, crazy, joke, and narcissist. Their feelings about Biden are more tempered, but they view him as old and ineffective.

This trend remains pretty consistent with other polls about young voters. In the broader Harvard Youth Poll, only 44% of Biden's supporters enthusiastically support him.

The main takeaway here is that young voters simply don't think Joe Biden has accomplished anything as president. At worst, they view him as an incapable and ineffective politician, and at best, he's a guardian of the status quo, which is viewed as a big negative.

“Disappointed and disgusted that in the 4 years since the last election, our country couldn't give us 2 better candidates. I feel doomed and defeated that that is the best that the country has to offer.”

- Focus group participant, College Woman in the West

The Findings

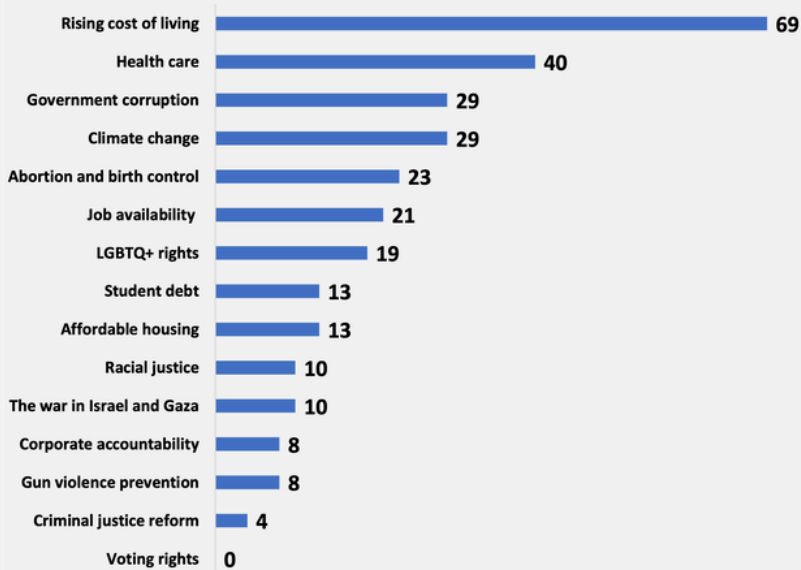
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Economic issues are the highest concern.

It isn't surprising to hear that economic issues are front of mind for all young voters, especially this cohort of swing voters.

In reality, young voters' concerns about the cost of living, housing, and health care top their concerns over climate, reproductive rights and Gaza.

Most Important Issues



Source: MurMur's Gen Z Research Report

Talking about the Biden administration's affordable housing policies, defense of the ACA, student debt forgiveness, and efforts to bring down inflation are critical to winning back these Gen Z swing voters. These are also issues where Biden has a good record of accomplishments and stands in stark contrast to what Trump did as president and is promising to do in his second term (tax cuts for the wealthy, repealing the Affordable Care Act, tariffs, and gutting the Department of Housing and Urban Development).

We found that Biden is much more aligned with the values of the young swing voters on these key issues. They just don't believe he has addressed these issues as president. Fortunately the reality of Biden's record contradicts that belief.

The Findings

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Personal impact of policy is more important than who passed it.

Conventional thinking suggests that Gen Z is much more community-focused than individually-focused. That may be true among the more active, politically engaged crowd, but our focus group told a different story. Our participants were much more concerned with the impact policy has on their lives than overall society.

Messaging about policy that focused on them and the impact on their lives connected much more than messaging focused on the community in general. This group found messaging that talked about coming together and making a change in a broader sense “unrealistic.” So, when looking to connect with the cohort of young voters who are less engaged with politics, a focus on personal impact is critical.

Messengers Matter

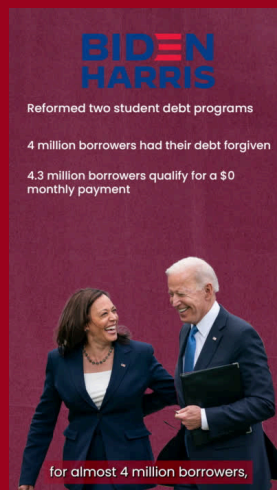
The messenger is more important than the message. It’s not enough to say the right things. In order for young voters to be receptive to the message, it must be delivered in a way they trust and believe.

To learn more about this, we tested three different videos, all on the same subject - Student Debt Reform.

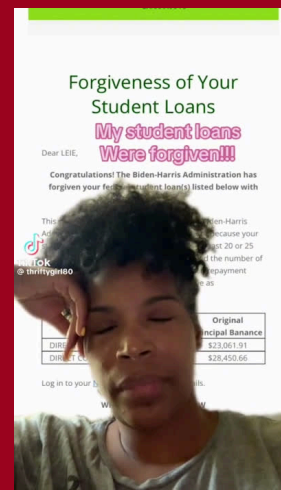
Pro Biden



Contrast



Testimonial

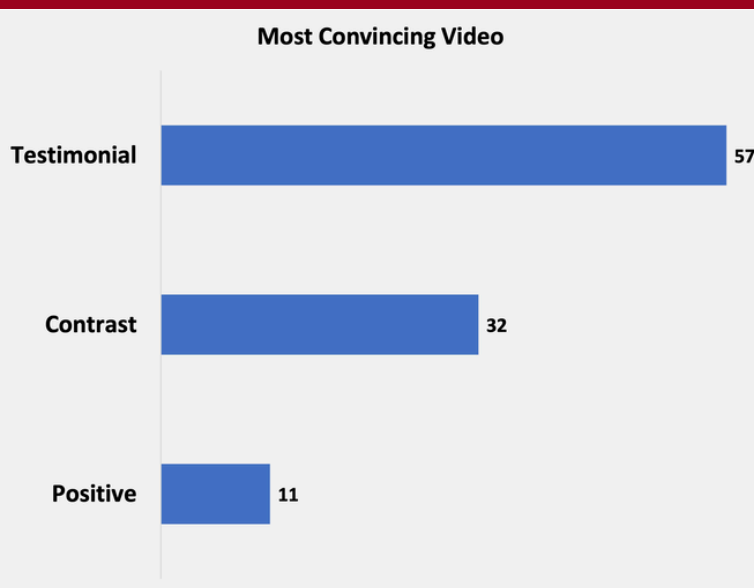


The Findings

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Messengers Matter cont'd.

Unsurprisingly, video 3 was by far the favorite, and video 1 was by far the least favorite.



"It feels more organic, it appears to be produced by an unbiased regular person as opposed to a political campaign."

- Non-College Man in the West

"I liked that the policy actually impacted someone's life and made it better, because sometimes policies sound good but don't actually do anything."

- College Woman in the South

Hearing testimonials, directly from people that have been impacted by a policy, checks all the boxes. This peer-to-peer style of communication builds trust, shows impact and comes from trusted messengers.

Contrast content should still play an important role, especially when talking about Biden's accomplishments more directly. It's notable that college-educated members of the focus group slightly preferred the contrast content over the testimonial, although it's important to state that this was a small sample size.

Recommendations

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Economy, economy, economy

We need more messaging about the cost of living, the ACA and what Biden has done to strengthen the ACA, Trump's tax cuts for the wealthy, and Biden's efforts to lower housing prices and protect renter's rights. Issues like Marijuana legalization or the war in Gaza, seem like they are front and center for young voters. But our research suggests that at least for uncommitted Gen Z voters, they are not. Young people are feeling the stress of housing costs and inflation. In order to win uncommitted young voters back, a strong economic message is critical. That message should highlight how Trump's policies have benefited the wealthiest through tax cuts for the rich, and how Biden's policies have benefitted working class Americans by lowering the cost of healthcare, student debt relief and bringing down inflation.

Make policy about people, not politicians

Message to the individual and talk first about how policy has or will impact them personally before talking about which politicians passed it. For instance, when talking about the Biden administration's change to federally held mortgages, emphasize first how it is estimated to save the average family \$800 per year.

Testimonials

We need way more testimonials and personal stories. [Republican Voters Against Trump](#) is a great example of peer-to-peer messaging. This type of content puts the right messenger front and center. Young people, talking to other young people about these critical issues is the best way to reach swing young voters.

Young people need to have permission to vote for Biden. His reputation and approval is so low among young voters that the social permission to vote for him is just not there. The Biden campaign, as well as the larger Democratic ecosystem, are not the right messengers for this. On the other hand, hearing from young people talking about why they support Biden will help provide that permission structure these uncommitted voters need.

Use contrast content

As a way to talk more directly about Biden's accomplishments. This will both raise the threat level of Trump, which helps with uncommitted young voters, and deliver a pro Biden message in a more palatable way to them.

About MurMur

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MurMur supports both individual young people looking to have an impact on the 2024 election, as well as Gen Z focused organizations at both the national and local level.

MurMur's Gen Z Activist Network offers young people the technical and strategic support to ensure their voices are heard throughout the 2024 election and beyond. We provide technical training on how to create effective content, strategic support on how to craft persuasive messages and guidance on how to share those messages with their peers so they can advocate for the issues they care about.

Contact rochelle@murmurimpact.com if you are interested in adding your voice and joining the Activist Network.

MurMur's Advisory Council:

Jessica Siles – Voters of Tomorrow

Morgan Stahr – Blue Future

Katie Bates – YVote NYC

Dara Deines – Forward Montana

Sohali Vaddula – College Democrats

Patrick Kelly – Content Creator

MurMur's current partners include:

