

Chapter 9

Reconsidering the Voting Age in Los Angeles and California

Laura Wray-Lake, Sara Wilf, Benjamin Oosterhoff

Laura Wray-Lake has a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies from Penn State University and is an associate professor of Social Welfare at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

Sara Wilf has a master's degree in public administration from Columbia University and is a Ph.D. student in Social Welfare at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

Benjamin Oosterhoff has a Ph.D. in Life-Span Developmental Psychology from West Virginia University and is an assistant professor of psychology at Montana State University.

Optimal democratic functioning requires that the views and interests of all citizens are represented in political decisions and social policy. In the United States, representation relies heavily on the right to vote for elected officials. The topic of voting rights—particularly *who* is allowed to vote—has been a reoccurring issue throughout US history. Non-white citizens were not granted the right to vote until the 1870s the right to vote for women was withheld until 1920 at the national level. Citizens between the ages of 18 and 20 were unable to vote before 1971. Convicted felons are disenfranchised, and their voting rights are reinstated in only some states. Non-citizens and citizens under the age of 18 are currently unable to vote with a few exceptions.

Recently, researchers and policymakers have raised the question of whether the right to vote should be extended to 16 and 17 year olds.¹ Voting requires certain skills thought to develop during adolescence, including a general understanding of social problems and knowledge of how to navigate the political system.² These skills develop alongside growth in civic participation more broadly, as adolescence is a time when youth are increasingly likely to become actively engaged in community service, environmental behavior, and political actions via social media or protests.³

Advocates for lowering the voting age stress that youth possess the skills to participate in politics and highlight the developmental and democratic benefits for allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote.⁴ Opponents contend that youth are not developmentally mature enough to participate in politics and argue that expanding the voting age will ultimately weaken democratic functioning by introducing more uninformed votes⁵. Interestingly, public opinion on this issue is rarely examined or published, and thus we do not know how youth or adults in general feel about voting age policy change.

Policy initiatives that expand voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds are being actively debated in parts of the US, including in California, where two bills are under consideration by the state legislature at this writing. In Los Angeles, discussion is emerging about changing the voting age to 16 for school board elections. California is the most populous state, and Los Angeles is the second largest US city, and both are notable for their high degree of racial and ethnic diversity. Enfranchising younger voters in Los Angeles or across California would constitute large-scale change to the electorate. Thus, researchers, policymakers, and residents should pay attention to this policy issue.

The purpose of this chapter is to chart the voting age policy landscape in California and Los Angeles. First, we review the history of policy regarding changing the minimum US voting age, highlighting past endeavors to expand the voting age nationally and internationally and then focusing on California and Los Angeles. California policymakers have a long history of legislative attempts to change the minimum voting age, some of which are currently active. After

¹Hart & Atkins (2011).

²Sherrod & Lauckhardt (2009).

³Wray-Lake, Metzger, & Syvertsen (2017).

⁴Hart & Youniss (2017).

⁵Chan & Clayton (2006).

documenting perspectives on implementation and organizing efforts, we provide novel data on public opinion of voting age policy from youth and adults in Los Angeles. In concluding, we summarize implications and policy recommendations for voting age change in Los Angeles and the State of California. Our analysis of what efforts to lower the voting age look like and how the public feels about the issue can inform policymakers, the public, and campaigns for and against the issue as voting age policies continue to gain national attention.

Legislative History of Voting Age Nationally and Internationally

To put voting age policy change in context, recall that the voting age has not always been 18 in the US. Prior to July 1971, the right to vote was limited to US citizens 21 and older. As part of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1970, Congress voted to lower the national voting age to 18, largely in response to student activists whose mantra was “old enough to fight, old enough to vote.” In other words, youth argued that if they were old enough to be drafted into combat in the Vietnam War, they should be given the right to vote.⁶

The path toward securing voting rights for 18 year olds required several additional steps, however. The Voting Rights Act Amendments were challenged in court by Oregon, Arizona, Idaho, and Texas on the grounds that the amendments violated states’ rights. A subsequent 5-4 Supreme Court ruling in *Oregon v. Miller* determined that the Congressional decision could only apply to federal elections, and a constitutional amendment was required to change the voting age to 18 for state and local elections.⁷ Facing the logistical and financial challenges of administering federal and state/local ballots to two different age groups in the impending 1972 election, 38 states (the two-thirds majority required for a constitutional amendment) ratified the 26th amendment to enfranchise 18 year olds in a record time of 100 days.⁸

The 26th Amendment to the US Constitution states: “The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of age.” The precise language of this amendment is quite important for understanding voting age discussions. It guarantees that the right to vote cannot be denied to citizens 18 and older but does not prevent states or cities from lowering the legal voting age.

At the time of this writing, five cities across two states have changed the minimum voting age. Four municipalities in Maryland have changed the minimum voting age to 16 years for local elections by amending their city charters, including Takoma Park (2013), Hyattsville (2015), and most recently, Greenbelt (2018) and Riverdale Park (2018). A descriptive look at Takoma Park’s 2013 local election results suggested that turnout among 16 and 17 year olds (16.9%) was nearly double the turnout of eligible voters 18 and older (8.5%).⁹

⁶Smithsonian (2018).

⁷Oyez (n.d.).

⁸Smithsonian (2018).

⁹CIRCLE (2013).

In 2016, ballot measure Y1 in Berkeley, California, which allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote in school board elections, was put to residents to decide and passed with over a 70% majority.¹⁰ No dissenting arguments were filed with the Alameda County Registrar of Voters, and published arguments in favor of the measure give hints to the opinions that may have motivated voters. Supporting arguments included the importance of increasing voter turnout and civic engagement, offering youth an ability to influence their schools, and providing an incentive to strengthen civics education, as well as noting that 16 and 17 year olds already take on some privileges and obligations of adulthood such as driving, working, paying taxes, and being charged with felony offenses.

Outside California, two other efforts to expand voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds nationally are worth noting. In 2018, a bill was proposed in the District of Columbia's Council to lower the voting age to 16, but currently, this issue has been tabled.¹¹ Legislators in Oregon have proposed an amendment to the Oregon Constitution that would lower the voting age from 18 to 16.¹² If the bill passes, Oregon state voters will decide on the proposal in the 2020 election.

Internationally, the most widely used minimum voting age is 18 years worldwide, yet several countries currently allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote. The minimum voting age is 16 for national elections in 10 countries - Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Malta, Nicaragua, the Isle of Man, Jersey, and Guernsey. Additionally, the minimum voting age is 17 in six countries - East Timor, Greece, Indonesia, North Korea, South Sudan, and Sudan. For many countries, the shift to a lower voting age is relatively recent. Austria became the first European country to adopt a voting age of 16 in 2007.¹³ Argentina approved a minimum voting age of 16 years in 2012.¹⁴ Scotland lowered the voting age to 16 for Scottish Parliament and local government elections in 2015, and in 2018, Malta became the second European Union country to set the voting age at 16.¹⁵ Other countries expanded their voting age to include 16 and 17 year olds much earlier, such as Brazil where 16 has been the minimum voting age since 1988.

These international examples of expanding voting rights to age 16 or 17 offer an opportunity to examine the effects of enfranchising younger voters. The majority of this research has been conducted in Austria and has indicated that (1) 16 and 17 year olds had similar levels of political maturity as older voters, (2) expanding the voting age increased political interest, and (3) voter turnout was higher among 16 and 17 year old first-time voters relative to 18 to 20 year old first-time voters.¹⁶ Research in the US has focused on comparing the political maturity—often measured in the form of political interest, knowledge, efficacy, and attitude cohesion—of 16 and 17 year olds versus adults. This work generally indicates that American 16 and 17 year olds have similar political efficacy, knowledge, interest, tolerance, and skills as 18 to 20 year olds.¹⁷

¹⁰Voter's Edge California (n.d.)

¹¹Thebault (2018).

¹²Griggs (2019).

¹³Paterson (2008).

¹⁴Khazan (2012).

¹⁵BBC (2015); Lavinder (2018).

¹⁶Wagner, Johann, & Kritzingner (2012); Zeglovits & Aichholzer (2014); Zeglovits & Zandonella (2013).

¹⁷Hart & Atkins (2011).

Despite some research support for expanding the voting age, two studies provide evidence that challenges the notion that 16 and 17 year olds are politically mature. Research with British youth found that 16 and 17 year olds had less political interest, were less likely to belong to a political party, and had less factual knowledge about the political system than adults.¹⁸ Similarly, research in Norway demonstrated that 16 and 17 year olds had lower political interest, lower political efficacy, less consistency in attitudes, and weaker links between attitudes and vote choice compared to older adults.¹⁹

Discussion and Policy at the State Level

California has several policies that already demonstrate a commitment to incorporating young people into the electoral process. The Student Voter Registration Act of 2003 was established to increase young voter registration by mandating that the Secretary of State provide voter registration forms to every high school, community college, California State University, and University of California campus.

Additionally, teenagers 16 and older have been able to pre-register to vote since SB 113 took effect in 2016. According to a 2018 report from California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, 281,551 pre-registrations have been completed since the launch of this initiative.²⁰ The state has made the process of pre-registration increasingly easier, creating an online system in 2017 and making the process automatic when requesting a driver's license or state ID since 2018. Thus, 16 and 17 year olds may register to vote, but the voting age in California generally remains at 18, except in Berkeley, where 16 and 17 year olds can cast votes for school board elections as of 2016.

San Francisco's measure F, a city charter amendment that would have allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote in local elections, was put to voters in 2016, failed by a very small margin (52.1% no vs. 47.9% yes), and is expected to be on San Francisco's ballot again in 2020. Measure F would have come with a commitment from the Board of Education to implement new civic curricula. Opponents worried that youth would support unwise spending initiatives, argued that voting is a privilege of adulthood, or expressed concerns that lowering the voting age would create a legal precedent to charging youth as adults for crimes.²¹

Because Article II, Section 2 of the California Constitution clearly specifies 18 as the minimum voting age for the state, any state-level voting age policy change requires a constitutional amendment. California constitutional amendments require passage by two-thirds majority in the state assembly and senate, along with voter approval of the amendment. Interestingly, statewide efforts to offer voting rights to teenagers younger than 18 in California through constitutional amendments have a surprisingly long history.

¹⁸Chan & Clayton (2006).

¹⁹Bergh (2013).

²⁰Padilla (2018).

²¹O'Connor (2016).

From 1995 to 2019, 11 bills to lower the voting age in some form were introduced in the state legislature, but none have yet made it to the ballot box. Table 1 briefly summarizes each bill and its legislative history in order to map out these legislative attempts and the arguments that have animated them. (Tables and figures in this chapter follow the text and references.) These bills have varied in the lower bounds of age at which voting would be allowed (ranging from 14 to 17) and have varied in the scope of elections in which youth would be allowed to participate (from school board to national).

As of this writing, the 2019 bills ACA 4 and ACA 8 are active, having received a two-thirds majority vote in the state assembly and are under consideration in the State Senate. ACA 4 allows 17 year olds to vote in all primary elections if they will be 18 at the time of the general election. A version of this bill has been introduced five other times and passed by two-thirds majority vote in the assembly for the first time in 2019. This modest policy aligns with existing laws in 21 states that allow 17 year olds to vote in Presidential primaries.²² It has a primary goal of increasing election fairness by allowing youth to select candidates who will ultimately appear on their ballots. Allowing 17 year olds who turn 18 by Election Day to vote in primary elections is attempting to solve the problem of an elongated election process, but also acknowledges that 17 year olds possess the capacity to make informed political decisions.

ACA 8 would permit 17 year olds to vote in all elections and succeeded in the assembly with a two-thirds majority vote after similar legislation in 2017 (ACA 10) narrowly failed. ACA 8 is sponsored by Democratic and Republican representatives and is a more modest proposal compared to initiatives in Oregon and the District of Columbia that would lower the voting age to 16 years for all elections. A guiding rationale for selecting age 17 is that this age coincides with government and civics courses in junior and senior year of high school. Although these two bills are different, they share a goal of increasing youth's electoral involvement and giving voting rights to 17 year olds, and the arguments supporting and opposing these efforts tend to overlap considerably.

ACA 4 and ACA 8 are on a parallel timeline for Senate discussion and vote. However, Assemblymembers Kevin Mullin and Evan Low, the bills' authors, respectively, have agreed that if both pass with Senate approval, only one will be put to the voters. The intent of having just one bill is to avoid voter confusion.

Four main categories of arguments appear most notably in published arguments from California state legislative records, archived in the bill analysis available online. (See Table 1.) The four are 1) democratic arguments, 2) education-focused arguments, 3) arguments of precedent, and 4) developmental arguments. Democratic arguments emphasize that enfranchising teenagers would enhance voter turnout in the short and long term and articulate reasons that teenagers deserve to have a say in who represents them. Education-focused arguments center on the opportunities of voting while in high school to amplify classroom civic education curricula. Arguments of precedent point to other localities that already permit teenagers under age 18 to vote. Finally, development arguments involve issues of maturity and capability.

²²Four of these states only allow 17 year olds to vote in the Democratic Presidential primaries.

Whereas the first three types of arguments appear fairly frequently in legislative arguments, only one bill (ACA 7 of 2016) explicitly included a developmental argument that 16 and 17 year olds have the maturity to vote. Nevertheless, this idea arises in broader public discussion of legislation, and scholars suggest its importance in the larger public debate.²³ Later in the chapter, we will review the extent to which these and other reasons figure in the formation of public opinion on the issue.

Only a few opposing arguments have been officially registered in connection with these bills, and recent archived California assembly floor discussions also offer some insights into opposition arguments raised by policymakers and concerned citizens. These arguments emphasize that teens under 18 would be strongly influenced by parents and teachers and unlikely to express independent choices. Opponents also prioritize age 18 as the age of majority, emphasize that 17 year olds are legal minors, and see expanding rights to younger ages as arbitrary or a slippery slope.

Some opponents see a contradiction in allowing younger voting but advocating for raising the age at which youth are tried as adults in the criminal justice system. Additionally, in the one statewide bill aimed at granting 16 and 17 year olds rights to vote in school board elections (ACA 7 of 2016), some lawmakers pointed to inequity in the bill's establishment of two classes of voters based on age, unfairness to school board candidates who would answer to a different electorate from other elected officials, and complications in the administration of different ballots to voters.

The Los Angeles Context

Lowering the voting age became a concrete discussion in Los Angeles when 17 year old Tyler Okeke, the 2018 2019 student member of the Los Angeles Unified School Board, introduced the idea of 16 and 17 year olds voting in school board elections. In an interview with the first author, Okeke shared that he first learned about the issue of lowering the voting age through connecting with student leaders of Berkeley's initiative; together, they were part of California's YMCA Youth and Government program. He was motivated to raise the issue of 16 and 17 year olds voting in school board elections based on his view that school board decisions were sometimes guided by money and politics rather than by student interests.

The idea behind expanding teens' right to vote for school board elections in particular is that high school students are directly and frequently affected by the decisions of this governing body. As California Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez stated in relation to California ACA 7, which would have allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote in school board elections, *"The lack of meaningful representation of these students and in many cases even their parents may mean that these local educational decisions are neglecting a significant part of the community. Being able to vote in local educational board elections would give these young adults a true voice, and force local educational boards to be accountable to their true constituencies."*

²³Hart & Youniss (2017).

On April 23, 2019, Tyler Okeke along with co-sponsoring board members Mónica García and Kelly Gonez put forth a proposal that LAUSD research the feasibility and implementation of a lower voting age for school board elections. The resolution passed and established a task force of community organizations, city and county Registrar staff, and school district staff to inform the feasibility report. This report is in progress and is due to be presented to the school board in fall 2019. Importantly, the LAUSD school board can register its support, opposition, or ambivalence to the idea but it has no authority over elections or authority to put a measure of this kind on the ballot. This is because LAUSD and its elections fall within the purview of the City of Los Angeles based on the city's charter, even though areas of LAUSD fall outside of the City of Los Angeles. If the task force report to LAUSD is favorable, a plausible next step is that the LAUSD school board recommend that the Los Angeles City Council review the issue and place a measure on the ballot for the voters to decide.

How California cities change local voting age laws depends on whether a city is a "charter city" or "general law city." General law cities are governed by state law, even for municipal issues, whereas charter cities have the authority to govern municipal affairs. In charter cities, city law supersedes state law for municipal issues, which includes the governing of municipal elections.²⁴

Los Angeles is a charter city, so a change in law for municipal elections can be done via amending its charter. Based on the city charter, the LA City Council has the authority to change laws "on any subject of municipal control," but in practice, major amendments to the Charter would be put on the ballot for voters to decide. Outside of City Council's direct consideration of the issue, citizens or organizations could also submit initiative or referendum petitions for charter amendments.²⁵ In summary, for Los Angeles to make a change to the voting age, the City Council would need to consider the proposal and ultimately voters would have to decide it.

Implementation Considerations

Several aspects of the Los Angeles voting system are poised to make implementation of a voting age change simpler and more straightforward.²⁶ The first is voter pre-registration. As noted above, voting-eligible 16 and 17 year olds have been allowed to preregister to vote since 2016. The pre-registration process is key to simplifying the steps necessary for changing the voting age because the Registrar's office already has a database of 16 and 17 year olds eligible and registered. If Los Angeles did not have voter pre-registration, the Registrar would need to create registration and database systems from scratch, which would mean a longer, multi-step process.

²⁴League of California Cities (2007).

²⁵Initiatives have a higher bar for success, requiring review and approval by city clerk and attorney, and voter signatures equaling 15% of the number of votes cast for Mayor in the prior election. City Council can approve initiatives or submit them to the electorate for a future election. Referenda require 10% of the total number of votes cast for Mayor in the prior election and the City Council either repeals or submits the ordinance to voters.

²⁶Much of the information for this section came from an interview between Los Angeles County Registrar Dean Logan and author Laura Wray-Smith.

Second, as of the 2020 election, Los Angeles County will migrate to a vote center model. This new voting system is designed to make voting easier and thus increase turnout. It includes the ability of eligible voters to cast a ballot at any voting center in the county, an 11-day voting window, and the use of electronic ballot marking devices to facilitate accessibility. Most notably, the ability of the electronic ballot marking system to personalize each person's ballot to his/her precinct and school district means that the system already has a mechanism for delivering different ballots at any given center. In localities not using electronic ballot marking devices, the logistical processes would be more cumbersome. It would involve preparing separate ballot styles, anticipating voter turnout to print the appropriate number of each ballot style, and training poll workers to ensure the correct ballot is given to each voter.

SB 450 gives Los Angeles County an exemption from a state law requiring all-mailed ballots under certain election conditions. In other words, LA County only prints and mails ballots to voters on request. This exemption means that the costs of adding to the electorate would be significantly reduced due to not having to print a ballot for every single voter. However, this reprieve could be temporary, as the exemption is set to expire in 2020.

In summary, databases and voting systems are already in place in Los Angeles that appear capable of integrating 16 and 17 year olds into the electorate without large procedural overhauls.

Implementation Challenges

Some challenges to implementation are also worth noting. First, to the extent that youth are granted partial voting rights, such as for school board elections only, the back-end technical preparation needed to create distinct databases and ballots prior to the election grows in complexity. Even though ballots will be personalized and printed on-site at voting centers, the Registrar's office would still need to create paper ballots in 13 languages besides English for those who request to vote by mail. This work would be doubled if youth had different ballots as a result of partial voting rights. From this perspective, the statewide initiative to lower the voting age to 17 for all elections appears less cumbersome technically and logistically than a measure to lower the voting age for school board elections only.

Second, if youth were only allowed to vote in school board elections, additional voter education and messaging efforts would be needed to communicate which elections are open to 16 and 17 year olds and which are not. It is possible that having two different electorates could produce confusion at election time. Teenagers might show up to vote in elections for which they are ineligible.

Third, changes would be expected for candidates, namely in the number of signatures needed to get one's name on the ballot. The required number is based on a formula that includes the number of registered voters in an area, and this number would presumably increase if more voters were added to the rolls. If 16 and 17 year olds were enfranchised for school board elections only, school board candidates would have a higher threshold to get on the ballot

compared to candidates for other local offices. Similarly, the threshold for recalling a member of the school board would also increase.

Finally, there are several open questions about implementation for which not enough information is available to gauge impact. First, adding voters to the electorate could have an impact on the number and location of vote centers, although the extent and nature of this impact depends on how many youths turn out to vote and how the teen vote is distributed across Los Angeles. However, any impact due to high volume of youth voters might be fairly minimal, as the vote center placement approach appears prepared to adapt from one election to the next to meet the needs of voters.

Second, as with any new policy, fiscal impact should always be considered. In statewide initiatives, costs have been estimated by appropriations committees to be \$200,000 to cover the necessary printing to list the issue in the voter guide. Berkeley's measure Y1 was framed as cost-neutral. The key costs of adding 16 and 17 year olds to the electorate would pertain to additional technical support staff time required to prepare databases and ballots, additional printing costs of by-mail ballots, and potentially additional training of poll workers.

Other less tangible costs related to equality and democracy could arise in theory, such as increased socioeconomic inequality if voting increases only among more advantaged teens. There might be corruption in elections if youth are unduly influenced. We cannot know the potential for these outcomes until legislation passes and research is conducted.

Third, the lower voting age effort in Los Angeles has not yet materialized into a specific bill, but Registrar Dean Logan pointed out that specificity in the bill language would lead to clearer implementation of the policy. For example, if teenagers are allowed to vote in school board elections, can they also vote in run-off elections, or for school funding ballot measures? It would facilitate implementation to clarify the scope of youth's rights in a given measure.

One additional open question pertains to schools serving as polling places. According to Registrar Logan, national trends suggest increasing reluctance of schools to serve as polling locations due to safety concerns of opening their campus to the public. Schools may decide they want to be vote center locations if more of their student body became eligible to vote. However, from the perspective of voting integrity, it would be important to make sure youth were not being coerced to vote or that adding schools as vote centers does not privilege a particular voting bloc. Given the differing angles of this issue, more concerted dialogue about the role of schools as vote centers is needed.

Community Organizing Motivations and Strategies

Efforts to lower the voting age across the nation are being led by non-profit community organizing groups with missions to empower and engage youth. For example, the national organization Generation Citizen is currently working with local groups in eight locations around

the country and is primarily focused on advocating for a lower voting age for local elections.²⁷ We spoke to individuals representing three Los Angeles-based community organizing groups that are involved in advocacy around lowering the voting age: Community Coalition in South Los Angeles, Inner City Struggle in East Los Angeles, and Power California, a statewide organization that has *Vote at 16* as one of its initiatives.

From four conversations with staff across these three organizations, insights emerged around motivating reasons for organizing around voting age policy as well as organizing strategies being prioritized for these efforts. Three motivating reasons for advocating for voting age change stood out in conversations with community organizers:

- (1) giving voice to youth of color;
- (2) voting as a natural extension of youth's active civic engagement; and
- (3) the current political moment.

First, these organizations are engaging in advocacy around voting age policy as part of broader efforts to mobilize communities of color and amplify the voices of youth and adults who are less often heard. Thus, a key motivation guiding interest in a lower voting age is to engage youth of color in the political process. Organizers hold the belief that earlier political involvement can lead to sustained engagement over the long term, an idea supported by empirical evidence.²⁸ As Luis Sánchez, Executive Director of Power California, put it, *"This is our whole idea around organizing: If you can engage someone at the age of 15, and 16, imagine where they could be at 21."*

Second, these community organizers have first-hand evidence of youth's potential as organizers and civic leaders and see voting as a natural extension of the civic engagement already visible among youth they interact with on a daily basis. As Henry Perez, Associate Director of Inner City Struggle, stated, *"We feel that, that our young people are already civically engaged, they already demonstrate that they care about these issues, they demonstrate that they understand these issues enough to want to participate in the electoral process...Young people are doing that work already. So why wouldn't we give them the right to vote?"*

Third, community organizers echoed the theme that the United States is experiencing a pivotal point in history: organizers believe that Trump-era politics and other national events are activating youth around issues such as immigration, gun violence, police brutality, and climate change. Organizers point to recent national and international events showing adolescents at the forefront of the Global Climate Strike, March for Our Lives, and Black Lives Matter movements, underscoring the power of youth as leading civic actors. These organizers see a youth movement building in their communities and nationally with powerful potential for social change and believe this is the right moment to give young people the right to vote.

²⁷Vote16usa.org.

²⁸ Coppock & Green (2016); Plutzer (2002).

Community organizing groups are focusing on four key strategies to build support for the movement. A first step is political education of youth in their organization about voting rights issues. Youth are leaders within these organizations, and it is important that they are informed about the issues and motivated to extend voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds. A second step is mobilizing youth leaders to engage the broader community around the issue and build support through campaigns, events, and conversations. It is also important to gauge interest and level of support for the issue among youth and community members, and community organizers typically accomplish this through collecting surveys, petition signatures, or pledge cards.

Third, these organizations recognize the importance of collaborating. Power California brings together a coalition of organizations in Los Angeles and around the state that share a common interest in empowering youth through voting enfranchisement. As a final strategy of note for statewide initiatives, Power California is first targeting their *Vote at 16* efforts in small charter cities, where organizing strategies such as door-knocking are more likely to be successful.

Los Angeles Public Opinion Survey

Any next step in Los Angeles or statewide legislation would involve a ballot initiative, so ultimately voters will decide whether to change the voting age. We gathered opinions by surveying adults and 16 and 17 year olds in Los Angeles. Brief informational advertisements about the study were purchased on Instagram and Facebook and targeted to the Los Angeles area. Our study is not representative, although we tried various strategies to increase the sample diversity. A complete description of the methodology used is presented in Appendix A. Sample demographics are shown in Table 2. The sample of 538 respondents (54.2% female) included 16-17 year olds (34.2%), 18-30 year olds (23.2%), adults 31-92 (24.3%), and race/ethnicity was 28.6% White, 25.2% Hispanic or Latinx, 24.5% Asian, 5.3% Black, and 7.9% Other race/ethnicity. Half were liberal, with the remaining conservative (10.0%), moderate (13.4%), or unreported (25.7%).

We asked opinions on changing the voting age to 16 for school board, city, state, and national elections, respectively, with five response options: *strongly oppose* (1), *oppose* (2), *neutral or undecided* (3), *support* (4), and *strongly support* (5). Participants also provided justifications for supporting and opposing a lower voting age. Table 3 provides a full list of these items, which are framed in terms of 16 year olds, and their means and standard deviations. Due to our interest in demonstrating which justifications were more salient in guiding opinions, we examined each justification separately. The full analytic plan is described in Appendix A.

Describing Support and Opposition for Voting Age Change

First, we describe the extent to which respondents supported voting age policy change in general and across different types of elections. The averages for supporting a lower voting age hovered around the neutral point of “3” across each election type, and there was wide variability in levels of support and opposition across respondents. Support was strongest for expanding voting rights to 16 for school board elections ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.33$) and was successively lower for city ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.32$), state ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.38$), and national

elections ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.45$; all means were significantly different at $p < .05$). Thus, overall, support weakens as proposals expand voting rights for youth beyond school-board issues.

To describe the nature of support and opposition further, we created “support,” “neutral,” and “oppose” categories. Figure 1 shows the percentages of respondents falling into each of these categories across each election type. It is again apparent that support is strongest for allowing 16 year olds to vote for school board elections and support weakens successively as election types broaden. Importantly, these findings also illustrate that very few respondents reported neutral views, with neutral responses at 20% of the sample or less across the election types.

We next wanted to capture strength of support and opposition across the four policy opinions, which we did by counting the number of policies supported and opposed for each respondent (see Figure 2). We found that 55.8% of the sample expressed a consistent opinion about voting age policy across the four election types; 23.8% opposed all types of voting age changes, 27.7% supported all types of voting age changes, and 4.3% were consistently neutral. A significant proportion of our sample (44.2%) expressed nuanced opinions that varied across election types.

In examining these patterns, again trends indicated increased support for each policy as it becomes more local. For example, among respondents who supported only one voting age policy change, 85.6% expressed support for expanding school board voting rights to 16 year olds. Likewise, among respondents who opposed one policy, 81.4% opposed expanding national voting rights to 16 year olds. A range of other patterns were evident, although less common, suggesting that some respondents hold complex views on this topic.

Who Supports and Opposes Voting Age Policy Change?

Next, we examined who is more likely to support and oppose voting age policy change by examining demographic differences in policy opinions. Specifically, we examined age, gender, race/ethnicity, political ideology, financial strain, political interest, and self-assessment of being politically active. For a portion of the sample, we also examined differences in voting age policy opinions by prior voting history and parenthood status.

Age. To examine age differences, we divided the sample into three relatively equal groups of 16-17 year olds ($n = 189$), 18-30 year olds ($n = 128$, $M_{age} = 21.7$), and 31 year olds and older ($n = 134$, $M_{age} = 56.1$). We compared these groups on their voting age policy opinions, and findings are summarized in Figure 3. Teenagers (16-17 years old) consistently expressed more support for lowering the voting age than adults 31 and older across all four election types. Young adults (18- 30) did not differ from 16-17 year olds in support for lowering the voting age for local or state elections. Young adults expressed significantly more support for lowering the voting age than adults 31 and older for school board, city, and state (but not national) elections. In summary, from local to state elections, the age divide in voting age policy opinions is between 16-30 versus older adults; 16 and 17 year olds show more support than older respondents for lowering the voting age in national elections.

Gender. Women expressed more support for lowering the voting age for school board and city elections compared to men (see Figure 4), but there were no gender differences in levels of support for state and national voting age policies.

Race/ethnicity. Our examination of racial/ethnic differences in voting age policy opinions is necessarily tentative, as our data do not fully reflect the diversity of Los Angeles. Black and Native American groups were too small to examine in our sample, and comparisons were limited to White, Asian, and Latinx respondents. We found differences among these three groups in their support of lowering the voting age for school board and city elections only (see Figure 5). For school board elections, Asian and Latinx individuals were more supportive of lowering the voting age than White individuals. For city elections, Latinx individuals were more supportive of lowering the voting age than White individuals. In summary, findings tentatively suggest that individuals of color appear more supportive of lowering the voting age than White individuals for local elections.

Political ideology. To examine political ideology, three groups were created that reflected conservative ($n = 55$), moderate ($n = 74$), and liberal ($n = 281$) political ideology. Regarding school board elections, liberal individuals expressed the strongest support, followed by moderates, and conservatives expressed the least support for this policy. For city, state, and national elections, liberal individuals expressed more support for lowering the voting age compared to moderates and conservatives, and the latter two groups did not differ from each other (see Figure 6). In summary, liberals are most likely to support expanding voting rights to 16 year olds. Except for school board elections, conservative and moderates express similar views on lowering the voting age and are less in favor of it than liberals.

Unrelated factors. A series of factors we examined did not have any association with voting age opinions. These factors included political interest, whether one voted in the 2016 and 2018 elections, parenthood status (tested among those 31 and older) and financial strain (i.e., difficulty meeting financial needs in the household). Regarding prior voting, this factor was likely not significant because the vast majority of age-eligible respondents reported voting in the 2016 (22 and older; 90.8%) and the 2018 (20 and older; 86.7%) elections²⁹.

Justifications for Voting Age Opinions

Our next goal was to describe respondents' justifications for supporting and opposing voting age policy change. We did this in two ways: First, we asked respondents to indicate how much they agree with a set of supporting and opposing justifications for voting age policy opinions, on a scale from *strongly disagree* [1] to *strongly agree* [5]. (See Table 2.) Second, we asked respondents to describe their thoughts about changing the voting age to 16 in their own words and provided an open text box in the survey. We describe the most and least endorsed

²⁹These numbers do not match those in Table 2, because Table 2 presents percentages for anyone who answered the question (those 18 and older), but we restricted the analysis to those age-eligible to vote in both elections (22 and older for 2016 election, and 20 and older for the 2018 election).

justifications from the quantitative responses and supplement these findings with respondents' open-ended responses.

Opposing justifications. The top three most highly endorsed justifications for opposing lower voting age were that (1) 16 year olds are too easily influenced by other people to think for themselves, (2) 16 year olds are too impulsive to make good decisions, and (3) 16 year olds do not understand the consequences of their actions. The ideas that youth are too easily influenced and do not understand the consequences of their actions were even somewhat compelling to respondents who most strongly supported voting age policy change. Among those most opposed to lowering the voting age across election types, strongly held justifications also included ideas that 16 year olds are too inexperienced to address social problems and not mature enough to have informed opinions. A 32 year old politically moderate female summarized some of these opposing arguments:

“Sixteen year olds are still growing and are not mature enough to vote with informed opinions. Sixteen year olds still have underdeveloped brains, are easily influenced based on their peers’ opinions, and many aren’t thinking critically. Rather than thinking for themselves they tend to go with the opinions and views of those who surround them without questioning.”

Although less common, even some teens endorsed views of not being capable of voting, such as this 17 year old politically liberal female who said,

“I believe we mature near 18, we process our mistakes and know where they are important. At 16, I still made quick decisions based on nothing at all. I do not agree we should change voting age to 16.”

The least commonly endorsed opposing justifications were that young people weaken democracy and that 16 year olds are not allowed to smoke or drink and thus should not be allowed to vote.

Supporting justifications. The top three most highly endorsed supporting justifications for lowering the voting age are that (1) 16 year olds should have a say in policies that directly affect them, (2) voting will give 16 year olds a reason to become more informed about politics, and (3) 16 year olds are capable of understanding politics. These justifications were also the most compelling among respondents least supportive of voting age policy change. On the value of input from youth, one respondent (who did not report demographics) said, *“Changing the voting age to 16 allows more input from a younger community, which makes the votes more diverse and fair among everyone,”* and a 16 year old liberal male said, *“16 year olds are going to live in this country much longer than the 70 year olds we have in our government and they should have a say in their own future.”*

Some respondents connected youth's capability to understand politics to opportunities to become informed, such as this 18 year old politically moderate female who said, *“I think that given the proper exposure in educational courses, 16 year olds ARE capable of making well*

informed decisions in the public sphere." The strongest supporters of changing the voting age tended to agree with all the supporting justifications in our study, with one exception; they were not as likely to endorse the idea of few differences between 16 and 18 year olds. Indeed, the least commonly endorsed justification for supporting a lower voting age was that there is not much difference between 16 and 18 year olds.

Other Salient Justifications. The open-ended responses raised three opposing justifications and one supporting justification not listed in the survey. First, several respondents believed that efforts to change the voting age were a partisan strategy to increase Democratic voter turnout. As a 61 year old conservative man stated:

"This is a bad idea that is being put forth by a liberal state legislature that is trolling for more Democrat votes. It has nothing to do with 'getting young people involved in the issues of our day' but it's 100% about continuing the absolute shift to the left for the State of California."

Second, some respondents voiced concern that changing the voting age would disproportionately benefit wealthier voters and exacerbate inequality. These concerns sometimes aligned with the idea that 16 and 17 year olds are too easily influenced by adults. As one 25 year old liberal woman explained:

"I'm 100% for expanding civic participation, but I'm concerned that this change could disproportionately benefit groups who already have a strong voice in governance. For example, if it were mostly wealthy white teens who were voting for whomever their parents supported, while low income teens of color still face similar significant hurdles to voting as their parents."

Third, some respondents were apprehensive about burdening 16 and 17 year olds with too much responsibility, explaining that they believed teenagers should be focusing on academics and getting into college, as well as enjoying themselves before the responsibilities of adulthood. A 63-year old liberal female stated that *"voting is a responsibility that I feel 16 year olds should not have at this time of life. They have enough with high school and other life stresses."*

Finally, echoing a supporting argument that appeared in California policy initiative ACA 7 of 2016 and was salient for community organizers in Los Angeles, two respondents believed that lowering the voting age was important for expanding voting rights indirectly to parents who could not vote due to immigration or previous felonies. These respondents explained that children of non-voting parents could help to represent their parents' interests, such as the 38 year old moderate female who said: *"I think it will allow 16 year olds to vote just in case their parents can't and they can do it as early as 16 years of age."*

Demographic Differences in Justifications

To identify whether certain groups of people resonate with particular reasons to support and oppose voting age policy change, we examined age, gender, racial/ethnic, and political ideology differences in justifications. These differences are summarized in Table 2. In large part, these demographic differences parallel differences reported above on policy opinions. Namely, 16-30 year olds, liberal, and - to some extent - Latinx and Asian respondents tended to endorse more supporting justifications. Adults 31 and older, White, and conservative and moderate respondents tended to endorse more opposing justifications.

Teens (16-17 years old) stood out in one respect, as they were most likely to endorse the view that voting will help 16 year olds become lifelong voters than both other age groups. Regarding race/ethnicity, compared to Latinx respondents, Asian respondents differed less often from White respondents. Regarding political ideology, conservatives endorsed several opposing views more strongly than moderates, as shown in Table 2. Additionally, moderates more strongly endorsed the view that 16 year olds are capable of taking voting seriously compared to conservatives.

Finally, although gender did not appear to be a major factor determining voting age policy opinions, several gender differences emerged in justifications. Women appeared more likely to support youth voice than men, via stronger endorsement of views that 16 year olds should have a say in policies that affect them and are already civic leaders in their communities. Men appeared more skeptical of youth's readiness to vote, being more likely than women to endorse the view that 16 year olds are impulsive, easily influenced, immature, do not understand consequences of their actions, and would weaken democracy.

How Justifications Relate to Policy Opinions

A final step in the survey analyses was to examine the associations between people's justifications and their voting age policy opinions. The goal here is quite different from asking which justifications are most strongly endorsed, as we did above. Rather, here we want to know which justifications are most likely to drive individuals' policy views. The list of key justifications in this analysis could differ from the justifications that are most endorsed.

Before we share these results, three methodological points should be noted. One is that we entered multiple justifications together in a single model, allowing us to examine the unique contribution of each justification to policy opinions. Second, given the age differences in policy opinions and justifications, it was important to also test whether justifications differentially are related to policy opinions across age groups. Thus, we present findings that are consistent across ages and highlight instances where results differ by age. Third, we examined the four policy opinions separately and also created an index representing strength of support/opposition, calculated on a 0 to 4 scale based on the number of voting age policies supported or opposed, respectively. Results are summarized in Table 4.

Opposing justifications. Five justifications were salient predictors of opposing the expansion of voting rights to teens. Viewing 16 year olds as too inexperienced to address social problems and believing that 16 year olds are not allowed to smoke or drink were associated with weaker support across all four election types and weaker overall strength of support.

Believing that 16 year olds are not mature enough to have informed opinions was related to weaker support for voting age policy change at city, state, and national levels and weaker overall strength of support; this belief was also related to stronger overall opposition for adults 18 and older only.

Viewing 16 year olds as too impulsive to make good decisions was a justification salient for all, predicting weaker support for voting age change across age groups at city, state, and national levels. However, viewing teens as impulsive especially predicted weaker support for city elections among adults 31 and older. As shown in Table 4, viewing teens as impulsive predicted weaker support for school board elections for adults 18 and older, but not for 16-17 year olds. When considering strength of support and opposition, 18-30 year olds' policy opinions were most strongly guided by viewing teens as impulsive. This view predicted lower strength of support and greater strength of opposition for 18-30 year olds relative to other age groups.

Finally, the view that 16 year olds don't care about politics was related to weaker support for lowering the voting age across age groups for school board elections only.

Supporting justifications. Regarding supporting justifications, four justifications were fairly consistently related to support for voting age policy change. First, although it was least commonly endorsed, the view that there is not much difference between 16 and 18 year olds was consistently associated with stronger support for voting age policy change across election types, greater strength of support, and weaker overall opposition. Second, the view that 16 year olds are allowed to drive and pay taxes as justification for voting was related to stronger support for changing the voting age in city, state, and national elections and weaker overall opposition. Additionally, this view was related to stronger support for allowing 16-17 year olds to vote in school board elections and to stronger overall support for adults 18 and older only.

Third, viewing youth as civic leaders in their communities was related to greater support for voting age policy change for city and state elections and stronger strength of support. These findings were consistent across age groups. Fourth, when individuals viewed youth as capable of taking voting seriously, they were more likely to support voting age policy change for state and national elections and expressed weaker opposition overall. This view that youth could take voting seriously also predicted greater strength of support for 16-30 year olds only.

Three justifications were more selectively related to support for voting age policy change. First, believing that voting will help 16 year olds become lifelong voters was related to stronger support for allowing 16-17 year olds to vote for school board elections. Second, the view that 16 year olds should have a say in how policies affect them predicted was related to stronger support for 16 year olds voting in school board elections, but especially for 16-17 year olds. Third and unexpectedly, believing that 16 year olds are capable of understanding politics was

related to *lower* strength of support only for 16-17 year olds. The reasons for this result are unclear and would require more research to untangle.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

California policymakers have been reconsidering the voting age for over two decades. Successful expansions of voting rights to teens in several Maryland towns and in Berkeley, California, along with optimism about the potential of youth movements among community organizers, suggest a potential sea change in favor of policies that lower the voting age. However, the issue would ultimately have to be put to voters, and public opinion is wide-ranging on the issue, with very few of our survey respondents neutral about voting age policy and stronger opposition among older and more conservative Los Angelenos. Below, we highlight the major take-away messages from this research, with an emphasis on recommendations for policy and future research.

Take-Away #1. Los Angeles is well positioned to implement voting age policy change.

Three main factors suggest that Los Angeles would have fewer challenges to implementing a change to the voting age. These factors include the 1) flexibility of the voting center model where personalized ballots are printed for each voter, 2) California's pre-registration system that offers a basis for the necessary database infrastructure, and 3) the law exempting Los Angeles from having to mail paper ballots to all voters, meaning less preparation and lower cost. These factors predispose Los Angeles to an easier implementation of voting rights expansion for teens compared to other places. But even so, technical challenges and costs would be non-zero. Our conclusion is that the technicalities and financial aspects of implementation should be understood better. However, these factors should not deter policymakers from seriously considering changes to the voting age.

Take-Away #2. Expanding teens' voting rights for school board elections is most strongly supported by public opinion yet raises implementation and equity challenges. The Los Angeles residents we surveyed most strongly supported extending teens the right to vote in school board elections. School board voting age change garnered more support overall across the sample and was more likely to be supported among those who generally opposed the idea of lowering the voting age. Such a policy is in effect in Berkeley, was considered at the state level in 2016, and is under discussion in LAUSD. Public support for offering limited voting rights to youth in this way may suggest a viable path forward for policymakers and advocates.

However, our implementation analysis suggested that, whereas any voting age change could be implemented without major constraints, lowering the voting age for school board elections only would be most costly, logistically challenging, and potentially confusing to voters compared to implementing voting age changes of a large scope. Additionally, for some, school board election voting age changes raise concerns about inequality for voters and for candidates. There are few precedents for having local candidates with very differently sized and aged constituencies to answer to in making policy decisions.

In our research, we saw no reasons to support teen voting at the school board level that would not also extend to voting city-wide. Expanding voting rights to teens for citywide elections and issues would eliminate the inequality on the candidate side, as local candidates for city council, mayor, and school boards would be beholden to the same general constituencies. From a historical perspective, the idea of partial voting rights evokes other times in our nation's history when certain individuals were not considered full citizens. From 1787 to 1868, only three-fifths of slaves were counted for representation and taxation purposes (and slaves could not vote).³⁰

From an equity perspective, then, statewide efforts to lower the voting age for all elections, such as ACA 8, are much more palatable than initiatives that advocate for partial voting rights for teens. In light of the lower relative support for extending state and national voting rights to teens, however, our findings tentatively suggest that garnering the necessary public support for ACA 8 would require a major shift in public opinion. One caveat is that our study did not distinguish between 16 and 17 year olds; perhaps the public would more easily favor extending voting rights to only 17 year olds.

Our conclusion is that Los Angeles policymakers should more favorably consider extending youth voting rights to citywide elections compared to school board election proposals. Although somewhat less supported in our public opinion survey, giving 16 and 17 year olds voting rights for citywide elections relies on a very similar rationale as that of school board elections. Lowering the voting age citywide would reduce the equity and implementation concerns that arise when considering school board election voting age change.

Take-Away #3. The voting age policy views of policymakers, community organizers, and the general public may be guided by distinct justifications. Community organizers advocate for lowering the voting age as part of their broader mission to empower youth of color, yet empowering the most marginalized youth with voting rights was not explicitly evident among survey respondents or policymakers. Community organizers also see *Vote at 16* initiatives as part of a larger movement, in which youth are voicing concerns about current issues and leading social change efforts, but this idea was rarely expressed elsewhere. The public's opposing views were more likely to rely on negative stereotypes about teenagers, emphasizing impulsivity, immaturity, and lack of knowledge.³¹ In contrast, policymakers seem largely to avoid negative attributions about youth. Instead, policymakers appear to largely stick to democracy-focused arguments and age precedents, which are justifications that hold appeal for the public and organizers alike.

Take-Away #4. The research on justifications offers a range of implications for policy messaging on both sides of the issue. Effective messaging would focus on the most highly endorsed justifications and the justifications most predictive of policy opinions because they can convey different information. Commonly held justifications point to places of potential common ground across groups, because these views are more likely to be agreed on by supporters and opponents. For efforts to garner support, common ground might come from

³⁰Digital History (2019).

³¹Gross & Hardin (2007).

arguments about giving youth a say in policies that directly affect them, giving youth a reason to become more politically informed, and believing youth are capable of voting.

For opposition efforts, common ground may be found with ideas that youth are easily influenced, impulsive, or do not fully understand the consequences of their actions. In contrast, the most predictive policy opinions point to messages that could be used to target and sway likely voters on either side. The supportive justifications that are most consistently predictive of voting age policy opinions include beliefs that teens are already civic leaders, are capable of taking voting seriously, there is not much difference between 16 and 18 year olds, and teens are allowed to drive and pay taxes.

For opposing arguments, the most important predictors of voting age policy opinions were views that youth are inexperienced, teens are not allowed to smoke or drink, that youth do not care about politics, and again the arguments that youth are immature and impulsive. Additional nuance emerged from our survey findings regarding justifications that are particularly appealing for certain subgroups by gender, age, race/ethnicity, and political orientation. More generally, those involved in support or opposition campaigns might benefit from understanding the likely demographics of supporters (who tend to be younger, more liberal, and residents of color) and those most likely to be opposed (older, White, and moderate or conservative).

Should There Be an Age of Majority?

Existing age-based laws are used to justify both supporting and opposing viewpoints and dominate voting age policy discussions among lawmakers. In other words, when we consider at what ages rights and responsibilities should take effect, we tend to look for precedents, which reflects conventional reasoning guided by social norms.³² As we see from the debate around age 18 voting rights in the late 1960s, when the nature of an existing law (being drafted at 18) aligns well with the right sought (opportunity to vote on policies related to war and the draft), public support can be quite strong.

However, U.S. law does not have one consistent age of majority. Although many legal privileges take effect at age 18, driving and working privileges are offered at earlier ages, substance use rights are held until later, and the age at which youth are tried as adults varies across states. Thus, the working assumption is that the US is not guided by age of majority considerations, which opens the door for legislation that considers age-based rights in a more nuanced way. A nuanced understanding of adolescence better aligns with decades of developmental research documenting the complexity of adolescents' developing competencies and biological, social, and cognitive systems.³³ Yet, the varying rights of teenagers across domains means that reliance on conventional reasoning to support voting age policy will necessarily be contentious and difficult to resolve. Thus, although appealing to both sides, it stands to reason that with

³²Oosterhoff & Metzger (2017).

³³Lerner & Steinberg (2009).

respect to voting age debates, arguments of other age precedents are not likely to be effective because there are equally attractive counterarguments on the other side.

What about Civic Education?

Some policymakers, community organizers, and Los Angeles residents touched on the importance of civic education when discussing voting age change. However, the relative lack of attention to whether and how civic education should change in relation to voting age change is somewhat concerning. There are studies showing that policies lowering the voting age are more successful at increasing turnout when paired with enhanced school-based civic education.³⁴ Attention to civic education in concert with allowing 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote is persuasive, especially for those who endorse the rationale that teens should vote earlier while connected to school, home, and community supports.

Some voting age policies, such as San Francisco's Measure F or California's SCA 19 in 2004, specifically call for the creation of educational programs to prepare teens to vote. To date, an educational component has not been explicitly discussed related to California's ACA 4 or ACA 8 or voting age change initiatives in Los Angeles. Perhaps lawmakers are concerned that schools or teachers may unduly influence students' voting, see current civic education as adequate, or do not place priority on enhancing civic education in relation to this policy. Teachers may need to be trained on how to foster a climate of dialogue and debate and build civic skills for voting without pushing an agenda. Scholars have shown this is certainly possible.³⁵

Limitations

Although thorough, our documentation of perspectives by key informants in Los Angeles was not exhaustive. The omission of views of Los Angeles City Councilmembers is notable, as these elected officials most likely would be asked to consider a voting age policy proposal in Los Angeles if it were to move forward. In addition, our public opinion survey was not representative of Los Angeles residents, and small sample sizes for some groups gave us low power to test for racial/ethnic group differences or differences among moderates versus conservatives.

On a broader level, this chapter focused on expanding voting rights for teenagers, but was unable to take up voting rights issues more comprehensively. The issue of expanding local voting rights to non-citizens is an active topic of discussion. It is often discussed in concert with lowering the voting age, given the common focus on enfranchising groups who are directly affected by decisions of local elected officials. Some areas are taking a more holistic approach to enfranchisement, as illustrated by the Riverdale Park, Maryland voting rights decision (2018), which included lowering the voting age to 16, expanding voting rights to all residents regardless of citizenship status, and offering same-day registration for voters.

³⁴Zeglovits & Aichholzer (2014).

³⁵Hess & McAvoy (2014).

Directions for Future Research

Additional voting age policy research would be especially fruitful in several areas. First, as suggested above, a larger, more representative sample is needed to replicate our public opinion findings. Second, extending our findings regarding justifications for voting age opinions, experimental research would be useful for determining whether indeed specific messaging leads to increased support or opposition to voting age change. Third, many oppose voting age change based on the belief that youth are more easily influenced by others than adults. This intriguing question has never been empirically tested, and future research could examine the extent to which adolescents are more, less, or equally susceptible to others' influence regarding political views.

Fourth, if a large city such as Los Angeles, or a state such as California, did lower the voting age, opportunities to thoroughly research the positive, negative, or neutral impacts of this policy would be unprecedented. The towns that have enfranchised teen voters to date are so small that rigorous quantitative examinations of increased voter turnout are not feasible. Extending voting rights to 16 year olds in Los Angeles would offer the first large-scale opportunity to test the impact of this policy on voter turnout in the US, as well as examine effects on parents' voting, changes in civic education, and effects on lifelong voting habits. Just as all policy impacts take time to detect with accuracy, it may take several election cycles to reliably determine the impact of voting age change on turnout and other outcomes.

Conclusion

Ultimately, voters of Los Angeles and California will be the decision makers on changes to the voting age. Our results lead us to recommend that the Los Angeles City Council move toward introducing a ballot measure that would allow 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote in local elections. We further recommend that the California State Assembly move ahead with approving ACA 8 and/or ACA 4 so that this issue can be decided by voters. With no large impediments to cost or implementation, it is time that voters be given the chance to weigh in on voting rights expansion for teenagers.

With varying public opinions documented in our research, we cannot say whether the expansion of voting rights will be favored or opposed by the majority of voters. Indeed, with few of our respondents neutral on the issue, the topic of voting age expansion could bring people to the polls and spark passionate debate on both sides. Given that Los Angeles and California often lead the way in progressive policy change, other cities and states may look to LA and California as test cases for the viability of voting age change policies in their areas.

References

- BBC News (2015, June 18). *Cut in Scottish voting age passed unanimously*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-33173488>.
- Bergh, J. (2013). Does voting rights affect the political maturity of 16 and 17 year olds? Findings from the 2011 Norwegian voting-age trial. *Electoral Studies*, 32(1), 90-100.
- Chan, T. W., & Clayton, M. (2006). Should the voting age be lowered to sixteen? Normative and empirical considerations. *Political Studies*, 54(3), 533-558.
- CIRLCE. (2013, November 12). *Solid turnout of teen voters in local election*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from <http://civicyouth.org/solid-turnout-of-teen-voters-in-local-election/>
- Coppock, A., & Green, D. P. (2016). Is voting habit forming? New evidence from experiments and regression discontinuities. *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(4), 1044-1062.
- Digital History (2019). The Three-Fifths Compromise. *Digital History Archives*. Retrieved on September 29, 2019 from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=163
- Griggs, B. (2019, February 20). Oregon may lower the voting age to 16. *CNN News*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/19/politics/oregon-voting-age-16-trnd/index.html>.
- Gross, E. F., & Hardin, C. D. (2007). Implicit and explicit stereotyping of adolescents. *Social Justice Research*, 20(2), 140-160.
- Hart, D., & Atkins, R. (2011). American sixteen-and seventeen-year olds are ready to vote. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 633(1), 201-222.
- Hart, D., & Youniss, J. (2017). *Renewing Democracy in Young America*. Oxford University Press.
- Hess, D. E., & McAvoy, P. (2014). *The political classroom: Evidence and ethics in democratic education*. Routledge.
- Khazan, O. (2012, November 1). Argentina lowers its voting age to 16. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2012/11/01/argentina-voting-age/>
- Lavinder, K. (2018, March 23). Malta lowers voting age to 16, stoking hopes of democratic engagement. *South EU Summit*. Retrieved July 9, 2018 from southeusummit.com/europe/malta/malta-lowers-voting-age-16-stoking-hopes-democratic-engagement/.
- League of California Cities (2007, May 9). *Charter Cities: A quick summary for the press and researchers*. Retrieved September 27, 2019 from <https://www.cacities.org/Resources-Documents/Resources-Section/Charter-Cities/Charter-Cities-A-Quick-Summary-for-the-Press-and-R>.
- Lerner, R. M., & Steinberg, L. (Eds.). (2009). *Handbook of adolescent psychology, volume 1: Individual bases of adolescent development* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons.

O'Connor, L. (2016, November 10). Lower voting age proposal fails in San Francisco, wins smaller victory in Berkeley. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/voting-age-proposals_n_581919bce4b00f11fc5c859c?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xLLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALmg4Vwehf_Ym3zRO1sLNk0vFtl6RIB7ujDWBnIoLsbSMT38oMGJiD0Qkd1ERdhrvlcequAJ3ucDCcIG24wXGsw8EgQ2h2cfYEI1VYqH9JUx5YteG_UJknebNQUOSQgnp2hT19Wfv_rbiFxpq3yttVtotlol2amrUdXaSiH5b9.

Oyez. (n.d.). *Oregon v. Mitchell*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1970/43-orig>

Oosterhoff, B., & Metzger, A. (2017). Domain specificity in adolescents' concepts of laws: Associations among beliefs and behavior. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 27(1), 139-154.

Padilla, A. (2018). 2018 annual report to the legislature on student voter registration. Retrieved on September 30, 2019 from <https://admin.cdn.sos.ca.gov/reports/2018/student-voter-registration.pdf>

Paterson, T. (2011, October 23). Austria opens the polls to 16 year olds. *Independent*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/austria-opens-the-polls-to-16-year-olds-943706.html>

Sherrod, L. R., & Lauckhardt, J. (2009). The development of citizenship. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology: Contextual influences on adolescent development, Vol. 2* (3rd ed., pp. 372–408). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Smithsonian. (2018, May 3). The Twenty-Sixth Amendment, 1971. *National Museum of American History*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from <https://americanhistory.si.edu/democracy-exhibition/vote-voice/getting-vote/sometimes-it-takes-amendment/twenty>

Thebault, R. (2018, June 27). Should 16 year olds be able to vote? A majority of the D.C. Council thinks so. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/should-16-year-olds-be-able-to-vote-a-majority-of-the-dc-council-thinks-so/2018/06/27/7ce0cbfc-796c-11e8-93cc-6d3beccdd7a3_story.html.

Voter's Edge California (n.d). *Measure Y1 - Lowering the voting age for local School Director races*. Retrieved September 27, 2019, from https://votersedge.org/en/ca/ballot/election/area/42/measures/measure/2509?election_authority_id=1

Wagner, M., Johann, D., & Kritzinger, S. (2012). Voting at 16: Turnout and the quality of vote choice. *Electoral Studies*, 31(2), 372-383.

Wray-Lake, L., Metzger, A., & Syvertsen A.K. (2017). Testing multidimensional models of youth civic engagement: Model comparisons, measurement invariance, and age differences. *Applied Developmental Science*, 21(4): 266-284.

Zeglovits, E., & Aichholzer, J. (2014). Are people more inclined to vote at 16 than at 18? Evidence for the first-time voting boost among 16 to 25-year olds in Austria. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 24(3), 351-361.

Zeglovits, E., & Zandonella, M. (2013). Political interest of adolescents before and after lowering the voting age: the case of Austria. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(8), 1084-1104.

Table 1. Summary of California Legislation to Lower the Voting Age

Bill Name	Description	Status	Arguments
ACA 23 (1995) Au: Speier	Allow voting for 14 year olds and older.	Inactive - Never set for hearing in committee	Not available
SCA 19 (2004) Au: Vasconcellos	Allow voting at 14; 14-15 year olds' votes count ¼, 16-17 year olds' votes count ½. Amended: Allow fully counted votes at 16. Programs to prepare teens to vote.	Inactive - Failed to pass Senate Appropriations Committee	First Bill Support: Partial votes accustom youth to the responsibilities of citizenship. First Bill Oppose: Partial votes may violate the 14 th amendment of the constitution. Amended: Not available
ACA 25 ('04) Au: Mullin ACA 17 ('05) Au: Mullin ACA 15 ('08) Au: Mullin ACA 2 ('09) Au: Furutani ACA 7 ('13) Au: Mullin ACA 4 ('19) Au: Mullin	Allow 17 year olds who will be 18 at the time of the general election to vote in primary elections and any intervening elections.	ACA 2(2016), 15, 25 – Failed to pass Assembly. ACA 2(2009), 17 No vote taken on Assembly floor. ACA 7 Held by committee. ACA 4 – Active. Passed in House with 2/3ds majority vote (58-13-8); Headed to Senate	Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase voter turnout. • Create lifelong voters. • Vote while connected to school & community. • Allows youth to help select candidates that will appear on their ballots. • Rectifies a disadvantage for youth with a birthday between primary and general election. • Pair meaningful action with civics courses. • 17s can be poll workers and serve in armed forces. • Law exists in 20 other states, and turnout increased. Oppose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal minors are children, under strong influence of parents and teachers, are unlikely to express independent choices.
ACA 7 (2016) Au: Gonzalez	Allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in school and community college district governing board elections in their areas of residence.	Inactive Held by committee.	Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amplify youth voices. • Vote while connected to family and school. • Transitions at 18 present obstacles to voting. • United Nations call to increase voting. • Maryland cities allow it and turnout increased. • 16-17 year olds have the maturity. • Establish lifelong habits. • Increase parental voter turnout. • Youth drive, work, & pay income taxes yet have no representation. • Some youths' parents cannot vote due to citizenship. • Educational decisions neglect an important group. Oppose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes two classes of voters; thus unfair. • Unfair to school board candidates who would have different electorates than others. • Could complicate election administration.
ACA 10 (2017) Au: Low ACA 8 (2019) Au: Low	Allow 17 year olds to vote in all elections.	ACA 10 – Inactive Failed to pass with two-thirds majority in House (46-24-9) ACA 8 – Active Passed in House with 2/3ds majority vote (57-16 6); Headed to Senate	Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other places allow youth to vote. • Increase voter turnout. • Build on success of California's preregistration. • Pair meaningful action with civics courses. • Vote while connected to school, home, & community. • Establish lifelong voting habits. • Increase learning about government and politics. Oppose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal minors are children, under strong influence of parents and teachers, are unlikely to express independent choices.

Note. This information was taken from the bill analysis available online by the California State Legislature. No information on ACA 23 was available. Au = Author. ACA = Assembly Constitutional Amendment. SCA = Senate Constitutional Amendment.

Table 2. Survey Sample Demographics and Descriptive Statistics

Categorical Variables	N	%	
Age			
16 and 17	189	34.9%	
18 to 30	128	23.2%	
31 and older	134	24.9%	
Missing	91	17%	
Gender			
Male	131	24.3%	
Female	299	55.6%	
Other gender identity	7	1.3%	
Missing	108	18.8%	
Race/ethnicity			
American Indian or Alaska Native	11	2.0%	
Asian	135	25.1%	
Black or African American	29	5.4%	
Hispanic or Latino/a	139	25.8%	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	9	1.7%	
Other	24	4.5%	
White	158	29.4%	
Missing	99	18.4%	
Parent^a			
Yes	101	39.0%	
No	155	59.8%	
Missing	4	1.5%	
Voted in 2016 presidential election^a			
Yes	176	68.0%	
No	80	30.9%	
Missing	3	1.2%	
Political Party			
Democrat	262	48.7%	
Independent	42	7.8%	
Republican	33	6.1%	
Other party	11	2.0%	
Don't know	17	3.2%	
No preference	75	13.9%	
Missing	98	18.2%	
Continuous Variables			
	M	SD	Missing
Financial Strain	2.48	0.796	333
Political Ideology	5.23	1.53	128
Political Interest	3.84	0.903	98
Politically Active	2.42	1.030	97

Note. Parenthood status and voting history were only asked of those 18 and older.

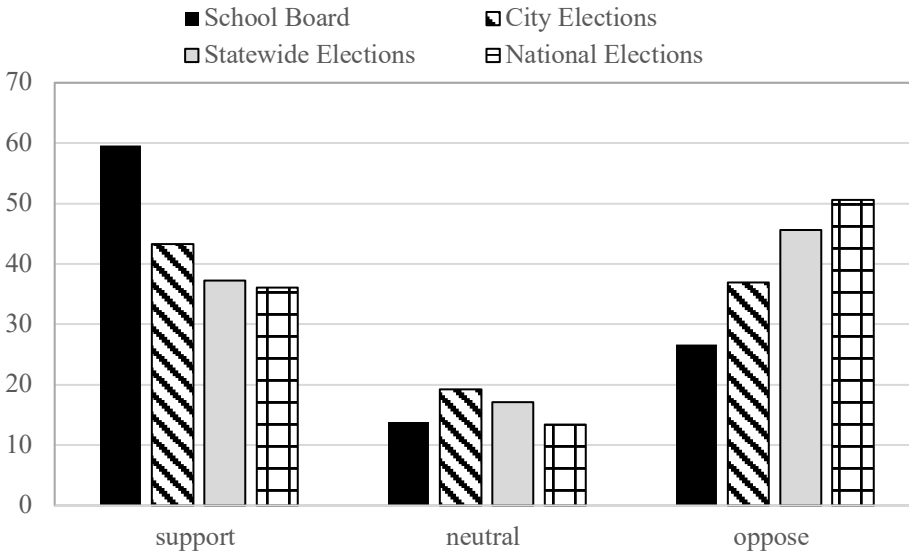
^aThese variables were only asked to participants 18 and older. Therefore, the number of cases is necessarily smaller. There may be participants 18 and older among the 91 people who dropped out before the age question, but there is no way of knowing this information. N = number, M = mean, and SD = standard deviation.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Demographic Differences for Policy Opinions and Justifications

	M	SD	Group Differences
Supporting Justifications			
16-year olds should have a say in policies that directly affect them.	4.00	1.28	16-30 year olds, females, Latinx and Asians, liberals higher.
Voting will give 16-year olds a reason to become more informed about politics.	3.87	1.28	16-30 year olds, Latinx and Asians, liberals higher.
16-year olds are capable of understanding politics.	3.83	1.22	16-30 year olds, liberals higher.
16-year olds have valuable perspectives on political decisions.	3.76	1.20	16-30 year olds, liberals higher; Latinx higher than Whites.
Voting will help 16-year olds become lifelong voters.	3.70	1.40	All age groups differ; Latinx and Asians, liberals higher.
16-year olds are capable of taking voting seriously.	3.64	1.27	16-30 year olds, Latinx higher than Whites; all political ideologies differ.
16-year olds are allowed to drive and pay taxes, so they should be allowed to vote.	3.49	1.45	16-30 year olds, Latinx and Asians, liberals higher.
16-year olds are already civic leaders in their communities, so they should be allowed to vote.	3.35	1.39	16-30 year olds, females, Latinx and Asians, liberals higher.
There is not much difference between 16 and 18 year olds.	2.87	1.44	16-17 year olds higher than 31 & older; liberals higher.
Opposing Justifications			
16-year olds are too easily influenced by other people to think for themselves.	2.96	1.35	Males, conservatives and moderates higher.
16-year olds do not understand the consequences of their actions.	2.80	1.33	31 and older, males, Whites higher than Latinx; all political ideologies differ.
16-year olds are too impulsive to make good decisions.	2.80	1.41	31 and older, males, conservatives and moderates higher.
16-year olds are too inexperienced to address social problems.	2.75	1.43	31 and older, males, Whites and Asians, conservatives and moderates higher.
16-year olds are not mature enough to have informed opinions.	2.66	1.41	31 and older, males, conservatives and moderates higher; Whites higher than Latinx.
16-year olds do not care enough about politics to vote.	2.53	1.32	31 and older, males higher; all political ideologies differ.
16-year olds are not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol, so they should not be allowed to vote.	2.08	1.45	31 and older higher; all political ideologies differ.
Younger people voting will weaken democracy.	1.86	1.25	31 and older, males higher; all political ideologies differ.

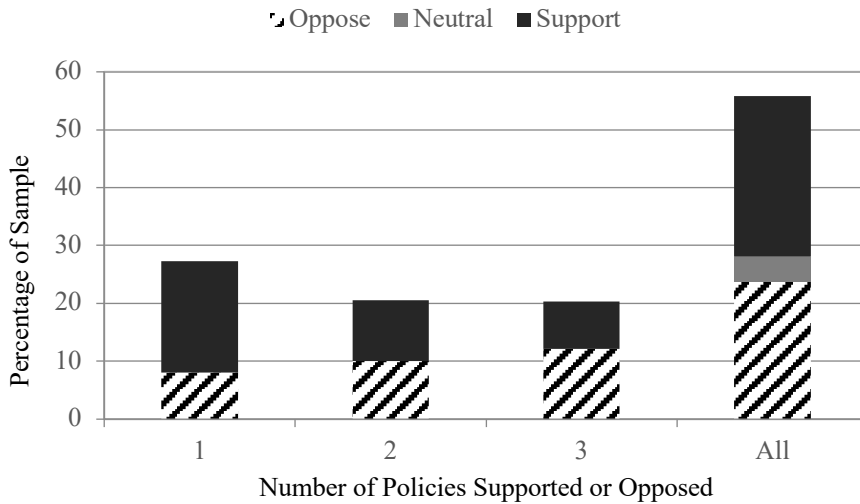
Note: Justifications are ranked from most to least endorsed by respondents. Mean difference tests indicated that for supportive statements, “There is not much difference between 16 and 18 year olds” and “16-year olds are already civic leaders in their communities, so they should be allowed to vote” ranked lowest; “16-year olds should have a say in policies that directly affect them” and “Voting will give 16-year olds a reason to become more informed about politics” ranked highest. For opposing statements, “Younger people voting will weaken democracy” and “16-year olds are not allowed to smoke or drink alcohol, so they should not be allowed to vote” ranked lowest; “16-year olds are too easily influenced by other people to think for themselves” and “16-year olds do not understand the consequences of their actions” ranked highest.

Figure 1. Percentages of Respondents that Support, Oppose, and are Neutral on Lower Voting Age across Election Types



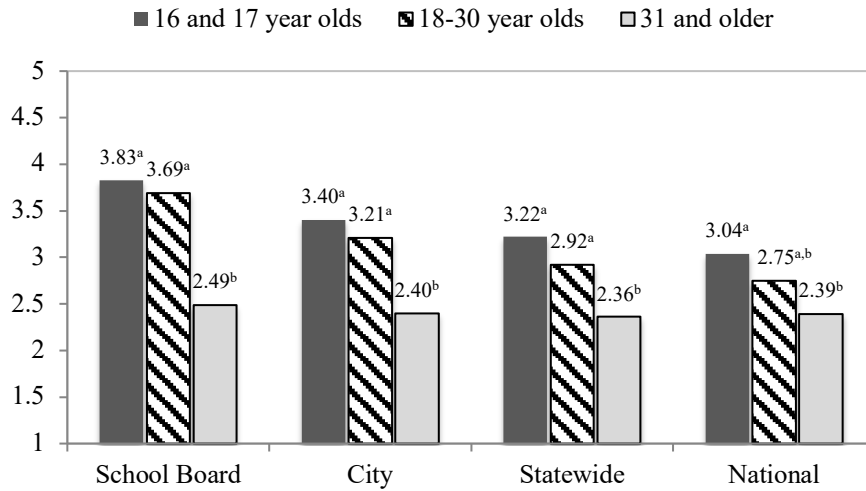
Note. Original responses were 1 (strongly oppose), 2 (oppose), 3 (neutral or undecided), 4 (support), and 5 (strongly support). Percentages were derived from combining support and strongly support categories and combining oppose and strongly oppose, respectively.

Figure 2. Strength of Support and Opposition for Voting Age Policy



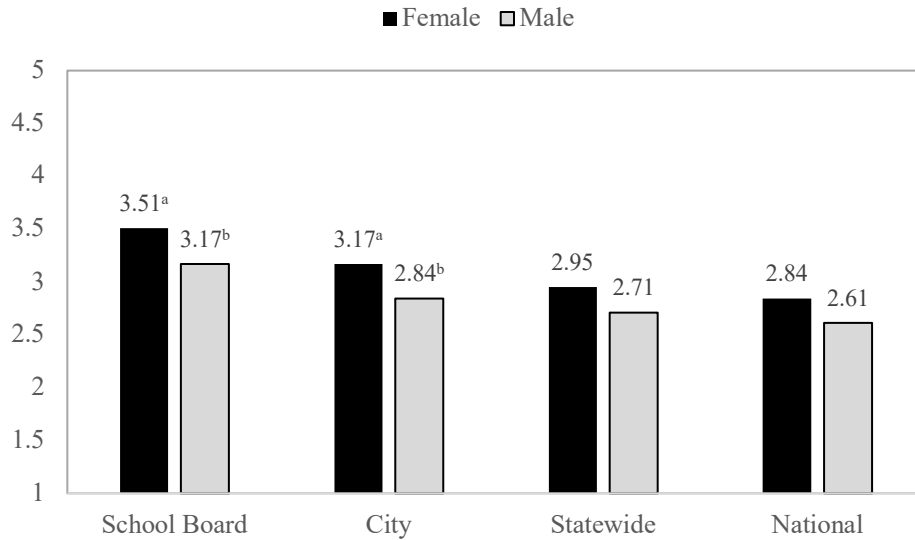
Note. Respondents were first categorized as supporting, opposing, or neutral on the four policy opinions. Then, the number of policies supported and opposed were counted, ranging from 0 to 4. Black bar segments represent proportion of sample indicating support for 1, 2, 3, and all policies, and striped parts of bars represent proportion of the sample indicating opposition for 1, 2, 3, and all policies. A small proportion of the sample (4.3%) were neutral on all four policy opinions.

Figure 3. Mean Differences in Voting Age Policy Opinions by Age Group



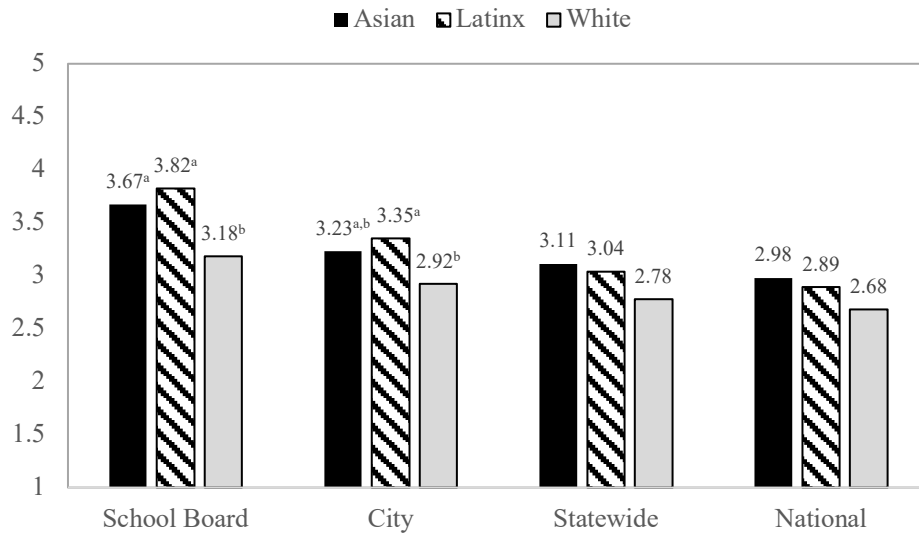
Note. Different superscripts represent significant differences for each policy type, i.e., only when columns for a type of election do not share the same letter, they are significantly different at $p < .05$.

Figure 4. Mean Differences in Voting Age Policy Opinions by Gender



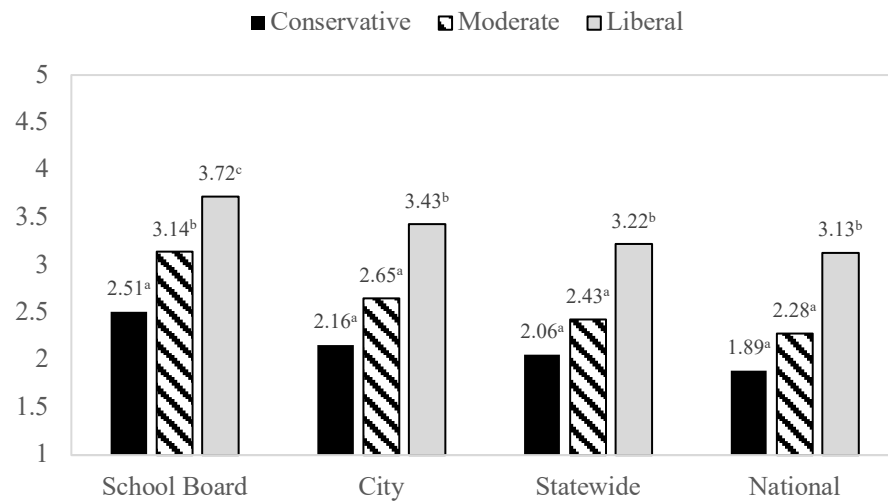
Note. Different superscripts represent significant mean differences for each policy type at $p < .05$. No superscripts indicate no mean difference between groups on the policy opinion.

Figure 5. Mean Differences in Voting Age Policy Opinions by Race/Ethnicity



Note. Different superscripts represent significant differences for each policy type, i.e., only when columns for a type of election do not share the same letter, they are significantly different at $p < .05$. No superscripts indicate no mean difference between groups on the policy opinion.

Figure 6. Mean Differences in Voting Age Policy Opinions by Political Ideology



Note. Different superscripts represent significant differences for each policy type, i.e., only when columns for a type of election do not share the same letter, they are significantly different at $p < .05$.

Table 4. Justifications Predicting Voting Age Policy Opinions

	V16 School Board	V16 City	V16 State	V16 National	Strength of Support	Strength of Opposition
Opposing Justifications						
16s don't care about politics.	-.10*	-.05	-.01	-.02	-.10	.03
16s are too inexperienced.	-.15**	-.12*	-.17***	-.14*	-.18*	.12
16s are not mature enough.	-.10	-.16***	-.15**	-.19***	-.21**	.12
16s are too impulsive.	-.04 ₁₆₋₁₇ /-.21*** ₁₈₊	-.15** ₁₆₋₃₀ /-.22*** ₃₁₊	-.20***	-.17**	-.09 ₁₆₋₁₇ /-.29** ₁₈₊	.13 ₁₆₋₁₇ /-.38*** ₁₈₊
16s don't understand conseq.	-.04	-.04	-.03	-.06	-.08	-.01
16s are too easily influenced.	.06	-.02	-.03	-.04	-.03	.24** ₁₆₋₁₇ /-.07 ₁₈₊
16s can't smoke/drink.	-.08*	-.10**	-.12**	-.14***	-.12*	.17***
Youth voting weaken democ.	.15 ₁₆₋₃₀ /-.11* ₁₈₊	-.07	-.06	.02	.06	.13
Supporting Justifications						
16s are capable of underst.	-.02	-.01	-.03	-.01	-.22* ₁₆₋₁₇ /.03 ₁₈₊	.03
16s have valuable persp.	-.01	.03	.04	.01	.05	.04
16s should say in policies.	.26*** ₁₆₋₁₇ /.09 ₁₈₊	.02	-.00	.05	.02	-.10
16s can take voting seriously.	.05	.06	.11*	.16**	.23** ₁₆₋₃₀ /-.11 ₃₁₊	-.18**
Reason to become informed.	.02	-.03	-.07	-.01	-.02	-.06
Help 16s be lifelong voters.	.14**	.07	.07	.01	.06	-.07
16s can drive and pay taxes.	-.03 ₁₆₋₁₇ /.20** ₁₆₋₁₇	.26***	.21***	.26***	.12 ₁₆₋₁₇ /.36*** ₁₈₊	-.25***
16s are civic leaders.	.12	.16**	.23***	.09	.20*	-.08
Little diff. between 16 & 18.	.11**	.16***	.18***	.22***	.25***	-.30***

Note. Standardized coefficients reported. Items are paraphrased for space reasons. When one parameter is reported, this effect was equivalent across age groups, and otherwise parameters are reported separately by age group. V16=Vote 16. The dependent variable for specific election types was the original continuous variable. Strength of Support/Opposition variables were calculated from counts of support/opposition across election types (range = 0 to 4). Reasons for and against the policy were examined in separate models. All models controlled for age, gender, political ideology, and race/ethnicity (Latinx and Asian only as dummy variables given small sample sizes for other groups), which are not pictured.

Appendix A: Methodology

Policy Research Methodology

We gathered various sources of data that contributed to the analysis of legislative history, policy context in Los Angeles, and community organizations' perspectives. We name our data sources when describing findings about California and Los Angeles' policy landscape regarding the voting age. We reviewed archived documents related to each piece of proposed legislation or motions and when available, video recordings of sessions, from the California state legislature (www.legislature.ca.gov) and the Los Angeles Unified School Board (<https://boe.lausd.net>). We reviewed the Los Angeles City Charter and related documentation, as well as documentation on voting laws, procedures, and statistics available from the California Secretary of State (www.sos.ca.gov) and Los Angeles County Registrar (www.lavote.net).

We supplemented insight gained from this documentation with qualitative interviews with a few key informants. We interviewed Dean Logan, Registrar for Los Angeles County, and Steve Zimmer, former LAUSD School Board President and Education Policy advisor to Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. We sent invitations for interviews or written comments to all current Los Angeles City Councilmembers, and only received a response from one, Bob Blumenfeld, who sent a short written response generally in favor of the idea. We also requested, but were unable to secure, interviews with several LAUSD School Board members. Regarding current voting age legislation under consideration at the state-level, we talked with Cassie Mancini, a legislative aid of Assemblymember Evan Low, sponsor of ACA 8. These interviews provided general information regarding current legislation, legislative procedures, and implementation of voting procedures, and only in a few select cases are these individuals quoted directly.

To gather perspectives from organizing groups advocating for voting age policy change, we identified several organizations active on the issue via news stories, events, and web searches, and reached out to three organizations and spoke to someone with knowledge of the organization's efforts to advocate for voting rights for young people. At Community Coalition, we talked with Hector Sanchez, Director of Finance and coordinator of youth programs; at Inner City Struggle, we spoke with Associate Director Henry Perez; and at Power California, we talked with Executive Director Luis Sanchez as well as a community organizer and former student member of the LAUSD school board Tyler Okeke. We attempted to schedule interviews with youth organizers at each of these organizations, but due to scheduling conflicts, were unable to obtain their perspectives in the timeframe needed for the research.

Survey Methodology

We purchased advertising time on Instagram and Facebook through the Facebook Business platform, which uses an algorithm to show advertisements to the target audience. In this case our target audience was Los Angeles residents 16 and older. We paid per "impression," or view, of our advertisements in Instagram and Facebook News Feed and Stories sections. Of participants who clicked on an advertisement leading to the online survey, about half completed it. On average, we paid \$1.91 in advertising time per survey completion.

Each advertisement allowed us to target audiences by platform (Instagram and/or Facebook), age, and geographical area. Initially, we created two advertising campaigns: one for 16 20 year olds and one for adults aged 18 and over. For each campaign, we tested two different advertisement photos and text placements to determine which performed better, and then implemented the more effective advertisement. Each advertisement featured a photo of an adolescent or adult female and text below the photo that specified our status as UCLA researchers and the purpose of the study.

The advertisements featured photos of African American, Asian, Latinx, and White race/ethnicities. Through data gathering, we discovered that Asian and Black participants were more likely to click on advertisements featuring models matched on ethnicity. We could not analyze results for advertisements featuring Latinx and White models because these two advertisements were less effective overall and, thus, we did not use them widely.

We monitored the demographics of our sample and engaged in more targeted recruitment when needed. Upon noticing that older adults were underrepresented in the sample, we introduced a separate advertisement for adults 35 and older. We also created separate advertisements targeting African American youth and Conservative youth (specified in the advertisement's target audience) because they were underrepresented in the sample. In addition to purchasing additional advertisements to increase African American and Conservative respondents, we reached out directly to 11 Los Angeles-based affinity groups via Twitter and email, yet these outreach efforts yielded few results.

Statistical Analyses

On our survey, 64.3% of respondents reached the end of the survey, 8.8% stopped after answering the first four policy opinion questions, and the remaining 26.9% stopped somewhere in the middle of the survey. Thus, amount of missing data varied across items (as shown in Table 2). For example, approximately 18% of the sample did not reach the demographics section of the survey. In comparing those who completed the survey versus those who did not on voting age policy opinions, there were no significant differences in policy opinions for those who stopped the study early, although there was a trend toward completers having lower endorsement of voting for school board elections than those who stopped early ($M_{\text{completer}} = 3.37$; $M_{\text{non-completer}} = 3.60$, $t=1.92$, $p = .055$).

First, to describe support and opposition for voting age change, we first examined mean differences across voting age policy opinions using a repeated measures ANOVA in SPSS with policy type as a within-subjects factor with four groups. There was a significant overall multivariate F test ($F(3, 532) = 50.49$, $p < .001$) and a significant effect for the within-subjects factor ($F(3,534) = 102.20$, $p < .001$). Pairwise comparisons were examined, and all differences were significant at $p < .001$.

Second, we examined demographic differences in policy opinions by age, gender, race/ethnicity, political ideology, financial strain, political interest, and self-assessment of being politically active. For each policy type we conducted a two-way ANOVA with age group (3) and gender (2), and their interaction, as between-subjects factors predicting policy opinion. Significant effects emerged for age group across all four policy types ($Fs(2,422) = 43.50, 20.29, 12.86, 6.59$, $ps < .01$). Gender was significant only in voting age for school board and city models, ($Fs(1,422) = 6.87, 5.71$, $ps < .01$), but was not significant for state or national voting age opinions. None of the models had a significant age group x gender interaction. Tukey's post-hoc follow-ups were examined for age group, and mean differences reported at $p < .05$. Race/ethnicity differences in policy opinions were examined with a series of one-way ANOVAs. Significant racial/ethnic differences emerged for lowering the voting age for school board ($F(2,389) = 9.42$, $p < .001$) and city elections ($F(2,389) = 3.93$, $p < .05$), and Tukey's post-hoc follow-ups were reported at $p < .05$. There were no racial/ethnic differences on state and national voting age opinions. Political ideology (3 groups) was examined in the same way; significant differences were found across all four policy types ($Fs(2,408) = 23.93, 29.58, 24.17, 25.42$, $ps < .001$), and Tukey's post-hoc follow-ups were reported at $p < .05$.

The remaining factors of political interest, prior voting in 2016 and 2018 elections, parenthood status, and financial strain were examined in relation to policy opinions using independent samples *t*-tests. Prior to the analysis, political interest was dichotomized into some interest or less (0) and a lot of interest or more (1), and financial strain was dichotomized into having no problem buying things (0) and having a hard time financially or just enough to meet needs (1). The sample for parenthood status was restricted to those 31 and older, and the sample was restricted to those voting-age eligible in prior elections. None of these *t*-tests met the .05 threshold for statistical significance.

Third, we examined justifications for voting age opinions. To have statistical support for determining the most and least endorsed justifications, we conducted two repeated measures ANOVAs with supporting justifications (9) and opposing justifications (8) as within-subjects factors, respectively. Both models showed significant *F* tests for within-subjects effects ($F_{opposing}(7,470) = 79.78, p < .001$; $F_{supporting}(8,466) = 69.94, p < .001$). Pairwise comparisons were examined and used to determine the rankings reported in text and in Table 3.

Fourth, we examined demographic differences in justifications with a series of one-way ANOVAs with gender, age group, race/ethnicity, and political ideology as between-subjects factors, respectively. Given the large number of statistical models conducted (17 justifications x 4 demographic factors = 68 one-way ANOVAs), we do not report each *F* test here. We used the same process as described for analyses above, in first looking for a significant *F* test (at $p < .05$), and then examining Tukey post-hoc tests to determine pairwise comparisons for between-subjects factors with 3 groups. These results are summarized in the last column in Table 2 and more information is available upon request from the first author.

Finally, to examine the role of justifications in predicting voting age policy opinions, we utilized *Mplus* version 8.1, a structural equation modeling software, to conduct regression-based models. We primarily moved to *Mplus* for these analyses so that we could use multiple groups modeling to statistically compare regression parameters across age groups. We did this by comparing a model where all parameters were free to vary with a model where parameters were constrained across age groups; comparisons were evaluated based on chi-square difference tests and change in CFI values, where CFI change of .01 or greater was considered significant. When models differed significantly, parameters were freed one-by-one using modification indices to determine which parameters differed by age. These results are summarized in Table 4; when one parameter is reported, this effect was equivalent across age groups, and otherwise parameters are reported separately by age group.

