

Gen Z Wants Open-Minded Political Dialogue

Springtide™ Research Institute Data Find That Teens and Young Adults Want Healthy, Open-Minded Political Engagement—but Don't Necessarily See It Modeled by Adults

Bloomington, MN (August 25, 2020) — A new survey from Springtide Research Institute found that young people ages 13 to 25 want to be engaged in politics and political conversation with adults, but they aren't necessarily getting the opportunity. Forty-five percent of young people say they wish the adults in their life would let them into conversations about politics more often.

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Older people... don't really listen. They half listen to our opinions, thoughts, whatever the case may be. They don't really hear us out.

Alyssa, 19

52%

of young people say they know more about politics than adults give them credit for.

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When we broke this finding out by age,

47%

of 13-to-17-year-olds—who cannot yet legally vote—tell us they know more about politics than adults give them credit for.

Young people often see adults modeling how to talk about politics in unhealthy ways. When asked how they perceive adults' attitudes in general when they talk about politics, young people selected aggressive, dismissive, and disengaged (65%) almost twice as often as they selected considerate and inviting (35%). Forty-one percent feel like most adults in their life disregard their feelings about political issues.

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I have had very few healthy political conversations in my lifetime. They're all just—nobody wants to listen. They just want to talk.

Corey, 21

Springtide data suggests that adults can build relationships of trust through certain practices—practices of Relational Authority, a framework explored in detail in *The State of Religion & Young People 2020*—including listening, transparency, integrity, care, and expertise.

Listen

As mentioned above, 41% of young people ages 13 to 25 feel like most adults in their life disregard their feelings about political issues, and **many find adults to be dismissive, disengaged, and aggressive**. Listening starts with acknowledging that young people *have* political ideas and opinions, and inviting them into conversation about those concerns.

Be Transparent

Fifty-nine percent of the young people Springtide surveyed say that personal experiences make them passionate about political issues. Rather than scripted talking points around issues, try starting conversations around *why* an issue matters to you.

Model Integrity

Sixty-eight percent of the young people Springtide surveyed say they would not stop speaking to someone who strongly disagreed or opposed their political values, and 77% want to be having conversations about differences openly. While young people aren't intimidated by disagreement, they need adults to model open-minded dialogue that doesn't shun, shame, or disown others for having diverse perspectives.

Show Care

When young people *do* report having positive political conversations, it's often parents and other family members who are engaging them with respect and curiosity. **Seventy-seven percent of young people say that friends, parents, and trusted adults are the people whom they are the most comfortable engaging with about how to find different points of view on political and social issues on the internet**. An assumption of care and trust within a family relationship makes sharing experiences and discussing difficult topics safer and easier to do.

Share Expertise

Eighty-one percent of young people say it is important to try to understand both sides of a political issue, and 84% of young people agree that educating ourselves about the views and perspectives of others is important for seeing *both* sides more clearly. Modeling a humble expertise means listening, considering the experience of others seriously, and committing to continued education and dialogue.



Young people care about politics, and they want to be engaged in healthy, open-minded political engagement—but they need to see it modeled and encouraged by the adults in their lives.

Find out what our research revealed about young people’s political influences, their faith lives, and how they’re navigating remote learning and work in *The State of Religion and Young People 2020: Relational Authority*.

This important study can be found on Springtide Research Institute’s website: www.springtideresearch.org.

Springtide Research Institute is a sociological research institute listening to the inner and outer lives of young people ages 13 to 25. Amplifying young people’s lived experiences through unbiased research and the generation of evidence-based actionable insights, we seek to help those who care about young people, care better.