

## 2024 Youth Poll: Young Californians in the Bay Area

Power California (PoCA) and partners seek to mobilize young voters in their political campaigns in 2024. This geographic profile outlines the attitudes of Young Californians living in Bay Area, focusing on their perceptions of and experiences with the housing crisis, their identities, and outlook heading into an election year.

Young Californians in the Bay Area stand out relative to residents in other regions of the state. They are more pessimistic about the effectiveness of political and civic engagement. The pessimistic outlook of Young Californians in the Bay Area relative to Young Californians in other geographic regions also emerges in their lower levels of optimism about the future. In addition, although housing issues were the top two priorities for Bay Area residents, they were less concerned about housing affordability relative to young people in LA and the Central Valley. Young Californians in the Bay Area also had the greatest level of identification as Caretakers and the lowest level of identification as Hustlers. They place more blame for the housing crisis on elected officials and are more likely to be transplants from the communities in which they grew up. Young Californians in the Bay Area reported fewer experiences with economic insecurity and housing barriers, such as living paycheck-to-paycheck. Rents, however, are still perceived as high. Despite these distinct attitudes, Bay Area residents support policies to address the housing crisis at equally high rates as other regions. Their attitudes also diverge from their behavior. Residents in the Bay Area reported turning out to vote at higher rates in the 2020 election than residents in other regions despite being more pessimistic. These findings suggest that the Bay Area could be mobilized around housing issues, but the approach needs to account for substantial regional differences.

- **45% identify as Caretakers because they are the main money maker or caretaker in their household.**
- **13% identify as Hustlers because they are working multiple jobs or side gigs.**

### TOP ISSUES AND THE HOUSING CRISIS

Young Californians living in the Bay Area want the government to address issues related to housing.

- **34% want the government to address homelessness.**
- **25% want the government to address affordable housing.**

Young Californians in the Bay Area attribute responsibility for the housing crisis to elected officials (45%), low wages (39%), and housing shortages (29%). When asked to choose the primary factor responsible, 23% blamed low wages, 16% blamed corporate landlords, and 13% blamed elected officials. Young Californians in the Bay Area were the second most likely to blame low wages, especially compared to people in LA and regions outside of California's major metropolitan areas and the Central Valley.

The housing crisis has had consequences for Young Californians in the Bay Area but this research also suggests they are less economically insecure compared to people in other regions. This stands out due to the comparatively higher cost of living in the Bay Area.

- **46% reported that high rents were a housing barrier.**
- **27% do not have money for a down payment.**
- **23% reported that they are living paycheck-to-paycheck.**

Young Californians in the Bay Area stand out when it comes to their top reason for moving. 30% reported moving to attend school, which may also help explain why fewer Bay Area respondents reported Hustling and taking on extra jobs, and why they are a distinctive region across many outcomes in this research. Furthermore, 29% moved to be closer to work or a new job, significantly lower than 54% of LA residents, while 14% moved due to a tough situation with a partner, housemate, or neighbor.

## SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING CRISIS

Despite having different attitudes and experiencing lower levels of economic insecurity, Young Californians in the Bay Area support pro-housing policies at equally high rates to other regions.

- **91% support state and local laws making housing affordable and protecting those at risk.**
- **73% support rent control laws.**

In short, Young Californians in the Bay Area perceive government action as the solution to the crisis.

## COMMUNITY, RACIAL, AND POLITICAL IDENTITIES

Partisanship among Young Californians in Bay Area varies more than in other regions, which likely contributes to their distinctive attitudes. 45% of Bay Area residents in PoCA's research were registered with the Democratic compared to 49% who were registered under the "decline to state/no party preference" (DTS) label. 4% are Republican. The Bay Area stands out as the region with the lowest rate of Republican Party registration and the highest rate of Democratic registration.

Many young Californians have role-based identities that are salient. Among Bay Area residents, 45% described themselves as Caretakers compared to only 13% who describe themselves as Hustlers, which is the lowest rate of Hustler identification across all regions of the State. These identities are important to people's self-perceptions.

- **31% perceive their role identity as important to who they are.**
- **23% perceive their racial and ethnic identity as important to who they are.**
- **15% perceive their class identity as important to who they are.**

These identities are also politically important. 76% of Young Californians in the Bay Area rated their identity as somewhat or very important to their politics.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This research shows that Young Californians in the Bay Area have a distinct set of attitudes relative to residents in other regions of the State. Some of this appears to be driven by fewer reported experiences with economic insecurity, lower rates of identification as Hustlers, and a more pessimistic

outlook about the future. Yet, Bay Area residents support housing policies at equal or greater rates than other Young Californians and turned out at greater rates in recent elections. We recommend developing a campaign organized around the Caretaker identity, since role identities were more salient than other identities. In addition, these campaigns should be especially positive and optimistic due to the more negative outlook among Bay Area residents, which could pose a barrier to mobilization. A campaign that builds solidarity with the people who are being affected by the housing crisis, as well as identifying common enemies across regions, such as corporate landlords, could be especially effective. This would also align with the fact that class identity was the third most salient identity among Bay Area residents.