

2024 Youth Poll: Spotlight on Young Black Californians

Power California (PoCA) and partners seek to mobilize young voters of color in their political campaigns in 2024. This memo profiles Young Black Californians' perceptions of and experiences with the housing crisis, their identities, and outlook heading into an election year.

Young Black Californians see voting as crucial, are civically engaged, and yet they are also the most impacted by housing disparities. They face the highest rate of eviction, are more likely to have considered leaving California, are more likely to report skipping medication to save money and are more likely to report being unable to get a mortgage. Young Black Californians are being displaced due to the high cost of living and the need to find more affordable housing. This has also led many Young Black Californians to work a second job or side hustle to make ends meet. The realities of these lived experiences also shape their personal identities.

- **57% identify as Hustlers because they are working multiple jobs or side gigs.**
- **20% identify as Caretakers because they are the main money maker or Caretaker in their households.**

Despite these hardships, Young Black Californians remain optimistic about their future and their loved ones' futures. In fact, PoCA's research found that Young Black Californians were the most optimistic of all racial and ethnic groups. These findings demonstrate that Young Black Californians are a constituency with a strong potential to mobilize in 2024 and beyond, and that longstanding stereotypes that young people are disinterested in politics and pessimistic are misguided.

TOP ISSUES AND THE HOUSING CRISIS

Power California's research found that issues related to housing are the top two issues that Young Black Californians want the government to address.

- **51% want the government to address affordable housing.**
- **28% want the government to address homelessness.**

Young Black Californians perceive the government, financial institutions, and low wages as responsible for the high cost of living in California. When asked about the causes of the housing crisis, Young Black Californians perceived banks and financial firms (50%), low wages (47%), and elected officials (42%) as the most likely causes of the housing crisis in California.¹

The housing crisis has had severe consequences for Young Black Californians, who are economically insecure and facing many barriers related to finding housing.

- **52% reported that high rents were a housing barrier.**
- **38% reported that living paycheck to paycheck has made it difficult to find housing.**

¹ Participants could select multiple causes.

- **29% did not have money for a down payment and 24% have been unable to get a mortgage.**

Due to these barriers, rates of homeownership are low (31%) and 68% of Young Black Californians are renters (55%) or living with their parents (13%). Young Black Californians are also being displaced due to economic barriers.

- **42% have considered leaving California due to the cost of living.**
- **39% have taken on a second job or side hustle.**

In addition, 30% have moved in the last two years for better work and pay, reflecting the absence of good paying jobs in their communities. 18% of Young Black Californians have moved because of an eviction, which is substantially higher than all other racial and ethnic groups.

SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING CRISIS

Young Black Californians' experiences with economic insecurity and the housing crisis have influenced their policy attitudes.

- **86% support state and local laws making housing affordable and protecting those at risk.**
- **77% of Young Black Californians support rent control laws.**

In short, Young Black Californians perceive government action as the solution to the crisis.

COMMUNITY, RACIAL & POLITICAL IDENTITIES

This research shows that young Californians are motivated by issues, not partisanship. Within the Black community, this is reflected in the high rate of “decline to state/no party preference” (DTS) status among registered voters. 42% of Young Black Californians were registered as DTS, while another 38% were registered Democrats. 15% were registered Republicans.

Many young Californians have role-based identities that are salient. Among Young Black Californians, 57% described themselves as Hustlers/Grinders and 20% described themselves as Caretakers. Although salient, these role-based identities are less central to their self-perception compared to their identities as Black people and Americans. 38% of Young Black Californians rated their racial identity and 32% rated their American identity as most important, compared to 12% who selected their role identity. These identities are all politically important. 95% of Black Californians rated their most important identity as somewhat or very important to their politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Among young Californians of color, Young Black Californians stand out as the singular group most likely to perceive their racial and American identities as more important than their community identity. As a result, we recommend developing group-specific campaign messages to reach them. We anticipate that these messaging strategies would be more successful if they tap into racial and American identity. Furthermore, because race, American, and community identities are important for 82% of Black Californians, a successful mobilization campaign should link them together. Such an approach will help to reach and engage a wide array of Young Black Californians who place importance on different types of identities.

We also recommend that mobilization campaigns link the Hustler identity, which was the most prevalent role identity, to the housing crisis that young Californians are experiencing. PoCA's research shows that many Young Black Californians are economically insecure. Thus, campaign materials and messaging strategies should center these lived experiences. We highly recommend linking these experiences to racial and American identities. Finally, although young Black Californians are experiencing economic insecurity, we suggest that campaigns tap into their optimistic outlook. While it may be easy to focus on the negative, Young Black Californians are optimistic about the future and civic minded. Thus, advocacy efforts should draw on this positive outlook to increase the likelihood of a successful political campaign.