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including protesting, persuading others to vote, addressing community problems, boycotting, and raising money for charities. Nevertheless, there remain a sizeable number of young people who are disengaged from civic activities. Our challenge is to find out more about why so many young people disengage from civic life—and about the programs that can help turn this trend around.”

Some young people are intensely involved. Thirteen percent of American youth are what we call “dual activists,” engaging in at least two different forms of community engagement and two different forms of political participation. Almost seven percent of young Americans are hyper-involved, claiming ten or more different kinds of participation. Compared to their peers, this hyper-engaged group is more likely to be Asian-American, Democratic (or leaning toward the Democrats), liberal, suburban, college-educated, and from college-educated homes. Most are confident in their ability to make a difference.

The bad news is that substantial numbers of young people are disconnected from politics and community life. A majority of young people (58 percent) are disengaged, meaning they are unable to cite two forms of civic or two forms of political engagement that they have done. A subset of the disengaged—the 17 percent of youth who have not done any of the 19 forms of civic engagement—are much less confident in their own ability to make a difference, less likely to have college-educated parents or parents who volunteer, less likely to have any college experience, less aligned with either party, and more likely to be white.

#### POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE MATTERS FOR ENGAGEMENT

The survey found that most young Americans are uninformed or misinformed about important aspects of politics and current events. For example, 53 percent are unaware that only citizens can vote in federal elections; only 22 percent can correctly name at least one member of the President’s Cabinet; and only 34 percent know that the United States has a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

However, those who participate tend to be better informed. Of those who could answer all six of our knowledge questions correctly, 48 percent were regular voters, 32 percent were active members of at least one group, and 50 percent had volunteered. In contrast, of those who could answer no questions correctly, just 15 percent voted regularly, 11 percent belonged to any group, and 25 percent volunteered.

#### TRUST IN GOVERNMENT DOWN

One of the most striking findings was the loss of trust in government among young people. When Continued on page 12

## 19 INDICATORS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

### CIVIC INDICATORS

- 1. Community problem solving:**  
Working together informally with someone or some group to solve a community problem
- 2. Regular volunteering for a non-electoral organization:**  
Working in some way to help others for no pay
- 3. Active membership in a group or association:**  
Belonging to and actively participating in groups or associations, either locally or nationally
- 4. Participation in fundraising run/walk/ride:**  
Personally walking, running, or bicycling for a charitable cause
- 5. Other fundraising for charity:**  
Helping raise money for a charitable cause

### ELECTORAL INDICATORS

- 6. Regular voting:**  
Voting regularly in both local and national elections
- 7. Persuading others:**  
Talking to others when there is an election taking place to try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates
- 8. Displaying buttons, signs, stickers:**  
For a candidate, political party, or political organization
- 9. Campaign contributions:**  
Contributing money to a candidate, a political party, or any organization that supported candidates
- 10. Volunteering for candidates or political organizations**

### INDICATORS OF POLITICAL VOICE

- 11. Contacting officials:**  
Contacting or visiting a public official, at any level of government, to ask for assistance or to express an opinion
- 12. Contacting the print media:**  
Contacting a newspaper or magazine to express an opinion on an issue
- 13. Contacting the broadcast media:**  
Calling in to a radio or television talk show to express an opinion on a political issue, even if it is not aired
- 14. Protesting:**  
Taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration
- 15. E-mail petitions:**  
Signing an e-mail petition
- 16. Written petitions:**  
Signing a written petition about a political or social issue
- 17. Boycotting:**  
Not buying something because of conditions under which the product is made, or because of disapproval of the company that produces it
- 18. Buycotting:**  
Buying a certain product or service because of approval of the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it
- 19. Canvassing:**  
Having done some work as a canvasser going door-to-door for a political or social group or candidate.