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League of Women Voters of Riley County

DISCOVERY REPORT

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Founded in 2006, New Boston Creative Group, LLC, is a full-service marketing and communications company in Manhattan, Kan. New Boston partners with businesses, organizations and communities to create materials that help them achieve their goals. The result is affordable, professional marketing that provides a positive return on investment. A team of native Kansans, New Boston specializes in projects that promote Midwest entities and improve the quality of life across the region.



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Project Overview

The League of Women Voters of Riley County (LWV) hired New Boston Creative Group to help their organization achieve two goals:

- Increase voter turnout in Riley County
- Increase membership and participation in the local LWV chapter, especially among younger adults

To give us the background necessary to devise a plan to help LWV achieve these goals, New Boston did some preliminary research to determine which demographic groups are not currently voting in Riley County, and found that there is a huge discrepancy in the number of adults under 45 voting, compared to those older than 45. For the presidential election in 2012, 46.7% of registered voters in the county under the age of 45 voted, compared to more than 80% of those older than 45. In 2014, without a presidential race, these numbers dropped to only 26.6% of registered voters under 45 voting, compared to 73% of those older than 45. Primary elections historically have much lower turnouts for both age groups.

Given Manhattan’s unique position in our state as a community with a median resident age of 24 (compared to the state average of 36), New Boston and the LWV agreed to conduct research specifically focused on voters under the age of 45 living in Riley County. We wanted to see if national research on elections held true in our community, as well as to get perspective from our own residents about what could be done to reverse this trend.

This report includes:

- Relevant secondary research findings
- Focus group overview
- A summary of focus group questionnaire responses
- A summary of the focus group discussion
- An analysis of the focus group findings
- Recommendations for the Riley County League of Women Voters for 2016

A Note about Research on this Topic:

Researchers in this area commonly discuss “social desirability bias,” which is when a respondent says they do something because they know they should and that it is socially expected of them. Dr. Michael McDonald, of the political science department at the University of Florida and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, points out that data based on polls is often skewed because “poll respondents overstate their voting participation. A primary reason — although not the only one — is that people like to think of themselves in a favorable light within societal norms, in this case presenting themselves as voters even if they did not vote.” In any given presidential election, researchers have found a difference of as much as four million

votes between the actual tallied votes and the number of people who claim to vote in polls.

This bias must be kept in mind when analyzing our data and any data related to such a sensitive and private topic as voting. However, as we don't have any other current local information to work with, it is very interesting to note the points at which our focus group aligns with the national research.

Relevant Secondary Research Findings

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, voting rates for 18- to 34-year-old voters have trailed those for older Americans in every congressional election since 1978. In 2014, this ranged from 23.1% of 18- to 34-year-old voters to 59.4% for those 65 and over. The next oldest age voting block — those 35 to 44 — voted in greater numbers, but still at an incredibly low 37.8%.

To understand more about the under-45 voter, we did a comprehensive look at industry research on this topic. In 2016, these voters will span three different generations: Generation X, Generation Y (also known as the Millennials), and the oldest members of Generation Z — the first generation to never know a world without the Internet, who will be impacting voting results for the first time this election.

While there are many definitions of the birth dates of these generation classifications, they are roughly:

- **Baby Boomers** — This cohort, as a whole, begins in 1946 after the conclusion of World War II and runs until 1964. Those in the first half of the generation (1946-1954) are further classified as Baby Boomers or Boomers I, and have some different characteristics from those born from 1955 to 1964, who are often referred to as Boomers II or Generation Jones.
- **Generation X: Born 1965 to approximately 1980** — the most educated generation in history
- **Millennials (Gen Y): Born around 1980 to mid-1990s** — the most diverse generation in history
- **Generation Z: Born mid-1990s to today** — the generation that has lived its entire life with the Internet

(It is good to keep in mind that someone turning 18 in 2016 was born in 1998!)

Because parents influence the behaviors and attitudes of their offspring, in general, it is important to realize that Generation X and Y are the children of Baby Boomers (and the later Boomer II generation), while Generation Z is mostly the children of Generation X.

The Millennials

Because of this natural two-decade jump between generations, it makes sense that the children of the large Baby Boomer generation, the Millennials, are the largest age cohort in 100 years. It is also the most racially and ethnically diverse generation, partially due to increases in immigration rates and partially due to changes in social norms.

One in five Millennials is Hispanic. While Generation X has a higher percentage of immigrants than the Millennials (22% to 15%), approximately 12% of Millennials are children born in the United States of immigrants. We haven't seen rates of immigrants and second-generation children of immigrants this high since the turn of the 20th century.

The bulk of today's Millennials are in their 20s and 30s, so they are well into the workforce and many have been eligible to vote since the 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections. They will be 40% of the electorate by 2020.

For the 2016 election cycle, Millennials will be the biggest age cohort in the under 45 group, with the younger Generation X and older Generation Z groups also figuring into the mix.

According to Pew Research Center, there are three main factors that impact how a generation votes: Racial/ethnic makeup, popularity of politicians around the time they come of age, and broad societal changes during their lifetime. It is interesting to look at the Millennial generation with these three impacts in mind:

1. **The Millennials are racially and ethnically diverse.** Race is a major player in how someone votes. For example, in 2008, 58% of African Americans 18 to 29 voted, compared to 45% of all 18 to 29 year olds. When you look at how race plays into party affiliation, 64% of blacks identify as Democrat or lean Democratic, while only 25% of whites do.

Today 59% of Millennials are non-Hispanic whites, compared to 79% in the Silent Generation, those born mid-1920s to mid-1940s.

2. **The popularity of the president and the two political parties at the time someone turns 18 directly influences their political choices for life.** Those who came of age during the years of Franklin D. Roosevelt tended to be Democrats, and those who came of age under Truman and Eisenhower tended to swing more Republican. You can see this trend through JFK, Reagan and so forth. Such remains true today, as we look at today's under-45 electorate, who have come of age either under Clinton or Obama, with a smaller percentage who became adults during George W. Bush and the post-9/11 years.
3. **Broader societal changes occurring during a person's life cycle also dramatically influence their political stances.** Those who grew up during the Great Depression have different financial values than those who grew up in the affluent 1990s, or those who suffered through the Great Recession of the late 2000s. We can also see this trend on social issues; for example, the greater acceptance of homosexuality in the U.S. grew out of society's response to the AIDS epidemic and the lessening of the societal expectation

that homosexuality needed to be kept secret. Today, 70% of Millennials support gay marriage. They live in a world of blended cultures, and from food to entertainment to dating, they are more willing to try new things and expand their comfort zones.

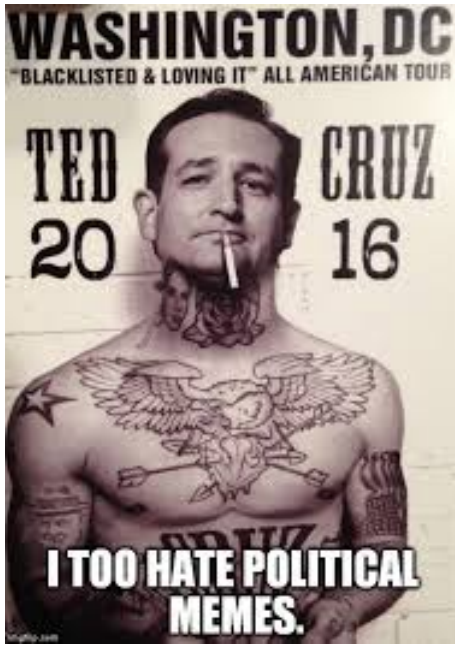
While Millennials are more likely to classify themselves as a Democrat or say they lean Democratic (51% of 18 to 34, compared to 35% who are Republicans or lean Republican), they are very concerned about financial issues. The Great Recession of the end of the 2000s hit this generation very hard, as it came at a time when many were just entering the workforce, delaying the start of their careers because they were either let go from entry-level jobs or were unable to find employment and thus extended their time in school.

In addition, Millennials distrust government and the political system in general. In a 2013 article, the New York Times cited a Harvard Institute Study that reported, "Only 39% of young voters trust the president to do the right thing, opposed to 44% in 2010. Just 18% of voters under 30 trust Congress, compared to 25% in February 2010."

John Della Volpe, the polling director for the Harvard Institute, wrote in the conclusion to this report, "The hyperpartisanship and gridlock that has befallen Washington, D.C. is having a traumatic effect not just on our nation's status at home and abroad, but on the political health of tens of millions of once (and hopefully future) idealistic young people."

So, if you combine their distrust in the currently dysfunctional two-party system, their disenchantment with Obama, and the financial strain of the economic environment during their early careers, it's easy to see how this generation has little trust in the political system.

You only have to spend a little bit of time on social media to observe firsthand the country's current cynicism, lack of respect, and jadedness toward our country's current leaders:



As we saw from Pew's top three factors that shape someone's political leanings, race and ethnicity play a major factor. While current white Millennials are fairly evenly split between the two major parties (45% Republican and 43% Democrat), this is not the case with non-white voters who greatly shape the entire generation. As this younger generation continues to come of age, the gap will continue to widen. Today, 51% of all 18 to 34 voters are Democrat or lean Democrat, while only 35% are Republican or lean Republican. For comparison, Generation X is 49% Democrat, 38% Republican, and Baby Boomers are 47% Democrat and 41% Republican.

The numbers will soon be stacked against the Republicans. Depending on your political leanings, this could be good or bad news. It should be striking fear into

Republican leadership. In writing about the GOP's prospects in 2016 in a 2015 article in the Washington Times, J.P. Moran, a Catholic writer and frequent conservative radio talk show host wrote, "If we do not start competing for the youth vote in 2016, we will be doomed as a party by 2020."

The two-party system as a whole must respond or Moran's prediction will be right. As a generation, Millennials are not "joiners" and seem to relish their independence (something we saw locally in our focus groups as well). Today, half of all Millennials (50%) claim to be Independent, and only a third report being affiliated with any religious organization.

History has shown us that as any age cohort grows older, they are more likely to vote. However, the question many analysts are holding their breath about is whether that trend will change with this generation. If we as a society can't fix what's wrong with our two-party dysfunction, and engage these voters, we risk losing them permanently — they may fail to "tune in" as they mature.

Every day, 12,000 new young voters turn 18. It is the largest population bubble our nation has seen in decades. Already, the youngest voters are having major impacts in election outcomes. In the past two presidential elections, the McCain and Romney groups lost because they ignored the younger voter. In 2014, only 38% of 18-24 voters were contacted by campaigns. If McCain or Romney had managed to carry 45% of the younger demographic, they would have won. It was due to the Obama campaign's focus on and appeal to younger voters — Generations X and Y — that he won.

Gender

Another trend we need to watch regarding younger voters is a growing gap between men and women, which was also true in our local focus groups. Women vote at higher rates than men in all age groups EXCEPT the oldest voting block. This has been true since 1996. In fact, there was a 20-point gender gap in the last presidential election. Obama won by 12 points with women, but Romney won by eight points with men.

With Millennials, women tend to be Democrats or lean Democratic, while men are more likely to lean Independent. Therefore when campaigns talk about wanting to swing Independent younger voters to Republicans, they are focusing most of their attention on men.

Media

To appeal to Millennials, there will naturally have to be a shift to new methodologies of voter education. Young voters consume news online rather than TV, and they trust online news more than traditional news outlets. However, they don't share their political opinions as much online as older age groups do, and they claim that what they read in social media doesn't sway their opinions.

Education

It makes sense that the more educated a person is, the more likely they are to vote. Those who have been to college are 66% of the vote, compared to 35% of non-college educated citizens. Young people with bachelor's degrees make up 30% of the total youth population, but 40% of those who vote. It also has been proven that people with more education are more likely to vote Democrat.

Voting Rates Among Young Kansans

Young voters vote in lower percentages in Kansas than nationally. According to the US Census, in data released in 2013 about the 2012 election, the national average of young adults under 30 who voted was 45%. In Kansas that percent was 38.3%. When compared to our neighboring states, only Oklahoma voted at a lower rate. (Missouri 48.5, Nebraska 67.9, Colorado 55.7, and Oklahoma 27.1)

Perhaps we Kansans are simply late bloomers: when it comes to adults 30+, Kansas votes at a higher rate (70.3%) than the national average (66.3%). Missouri voted at 67.9, Nebraska at 65.7, Colorado at 74.6, and Oklahoma at 59.9.

Voting Rates In Riley County

The data the Riley County Clerk's office provides us on local voting trends looks at registered voters vs. actual voters only. To compare our actual local voting rates, we need to know total population of a given age cohort, which is tricky to find on non-census years. The American Community Survey (factfinder.census.gov) attempts to estimate population counts between the official U.S. Census years. Using those estimates for 2012 and 2014, we've estimated our population counts in order to get comparable data for the last two elections¹:

- **2012** — We estimate there were approximately 40,000 adults between the ages of 18 and 44 living in Riley County. Of those, 20,733 were registered voters in Riley County, around 51% of the population. Of those, 46.7% or 9,690 actually voted in the general election. **This would mean that approximately 24% of adults 18 to 44 voted in Riley County, which is considerably lower than the state average.**
- **2014** — We estimate approximately 41,300 adults between the ages of 18 and 44 were living in Riley County. Of those, 19,124 were registered, and 26.6% or 5,083 actually voted in the general election. **This would mean that approximately 12.3% of adults 18 to 44 voted in Riley County.**

¹ The American Community Survey provides population data by age groups, including 15 to 19, 20 to 24, 25 to 34, and 35 to 44. We are uncertain what percentage of the 15 to 19 age cohort are 18 and 19. For the sake of figuring an estimated total population, we used 40% of this 15 to 19 population total to represent the population of 18 and 19 year olds. We know 40% is probably a conservative estimate, given our community make-up of college students and soldiers, who are typically 18 years old and up.

What we do not know is how many of the approximately 20,000 adults living here who are not registered in Riley County are registered and voting somewhere else. With K-State and Fort Riley in this jurisdiction, we hope this is a significant number.

Focus Group Overview

A focus group was held in October 14, 2015, to get insights on voter behavior in Riley County. It was advertised through a social media and email campaign reaching adults in the targeted age demographic living within 25 miles of Manhattan.

Advertisements did not specify what the topic of the focus group would be. Despite no gender or racial targeting in the marketing efforts, only 11 white women attended the event (five men had registered, but for whatever reason did not attend that day), and of those 11, seven were over 30. All participants were promised a free lunch and cash for participating.

So a second event was held November 17, 2015, that was specifically for men. A targeted social media campaign was conducted once again, and a special round of ads were used to specifically target minorities in hopes of adding more diversity to the participant mix. Emails were also sent out to several K-State faculty members asking them to encourage students to participate, in hopes of recruiting a larger contingent of participants under 30. The second group resulted in 10 male participants, notwithstanding another 5 who had pre-registered but didn't attend.

The second group did have a good balance of age groups and gave us a larger number of under-30 participants; however, only one person from a non-white race participated. (In a county made of 86% white residents, one out of ten participants being African American is close to representing the county's population. But we can not make racial generalities based on only one person's input.)

Despite being held on two different days, all other variables from our research remained the same: location, questions, researchers, and food. (The second group did receive \$30 rather than \$20 for their participation, in hopes of gaining greater participation among men.) For the sake of this study, we will look at the combined data; however, the gender divide between the two groups does allow us to look at some of the questions specifically by gender, which provided some interesting insights. These points will be called out when the gender-specific data is significantly different than the overall combined findings.

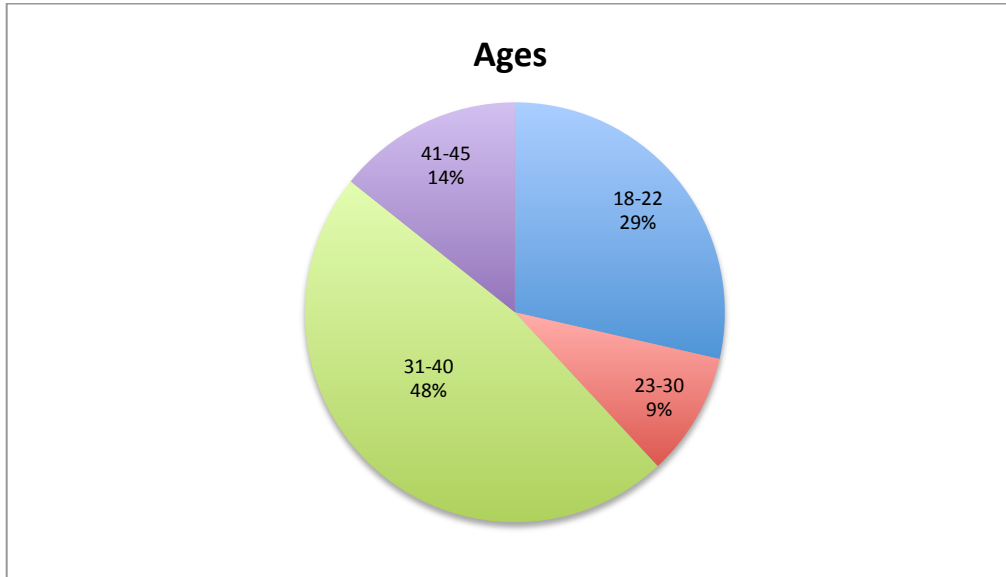
Participants filled out a four-page form asking for demographic information and answers to sensitive questions. A summary of these findings, as well as a transcript of the responses to the oral questions, follows, as well as a summary of secondary research findings, our recommendations and ideas to promote LWV and its goals in 2016.

Focus Group Questionnaire Responses

Combined data, unless noted

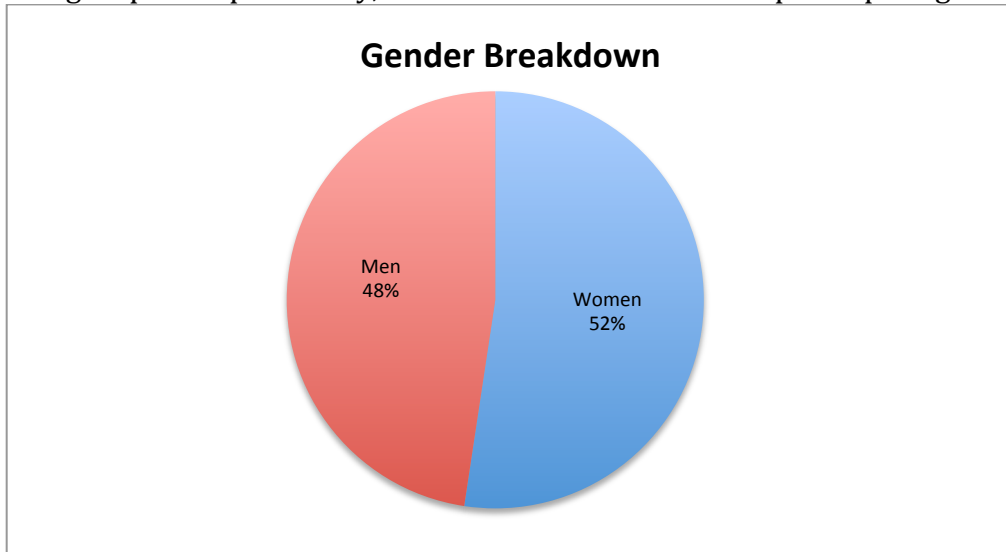
1. Age

Overall, 38% of the participants were 30 and under, 48% were 31-40, and 14% were 41-45.



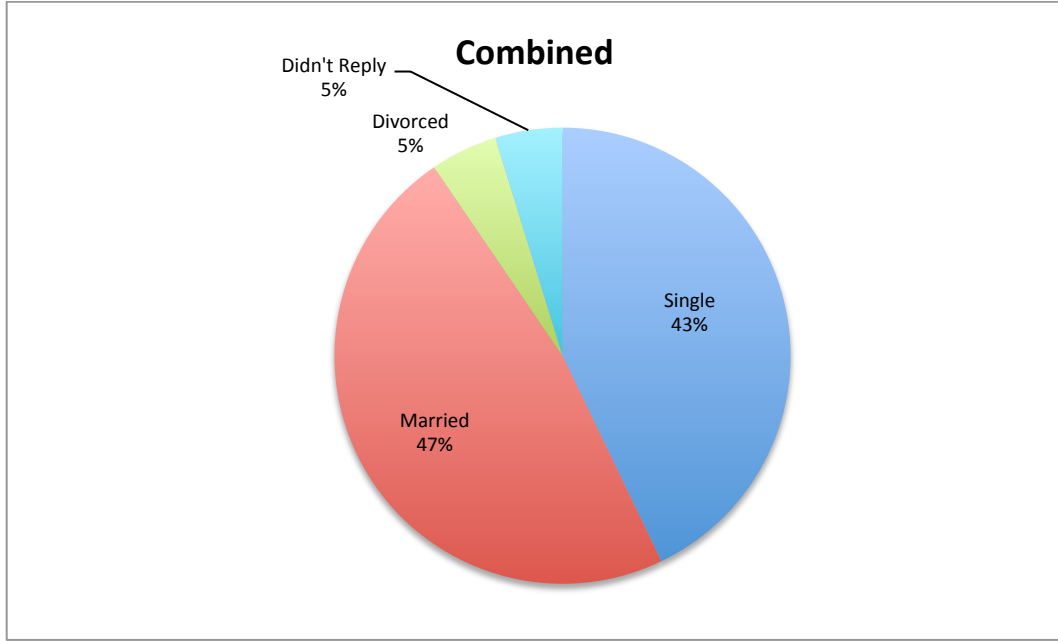
2. Gender

The group was split evenly, with 11 women and 10 men participating.



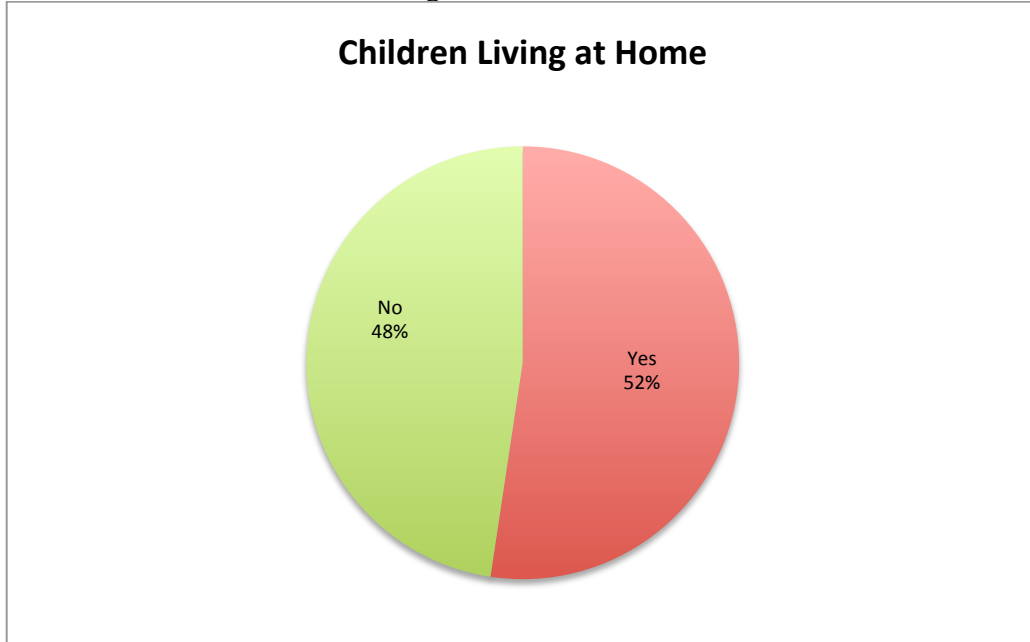
3. Marital Status

We had a fairly even split between those who were married and single/divorced. Women were more likely to be married and men more likely to be single, which reflects the fact we had more men under the age of 30 than women.



4. Children at Home

The group was fairly evenly split between those who had children at home (11) and those that did not (10). The number of children at home ranged from one to five, with two being the most common answer.

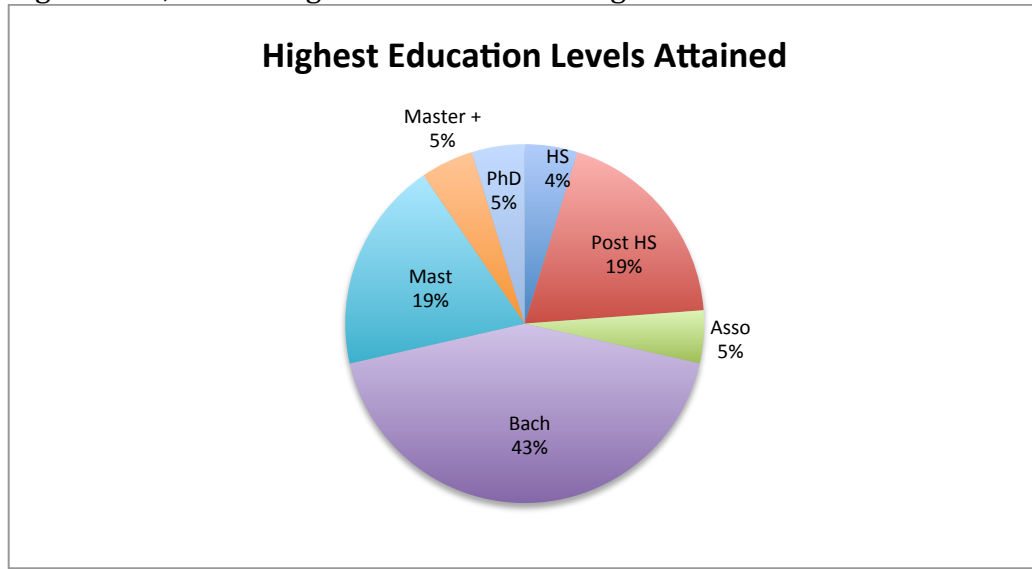


5. Ethnic/Racial Classification

One respondent classified himself as African American; all other participants classified themselves as white/Caucasian.

6. Highest Education Level

Our group was well-educated, which is reflected in Manhattan being a university town. Most (if not all) of those who checked they had “some post-high school, but no degree” are current college students.



7. Where Do You Live?

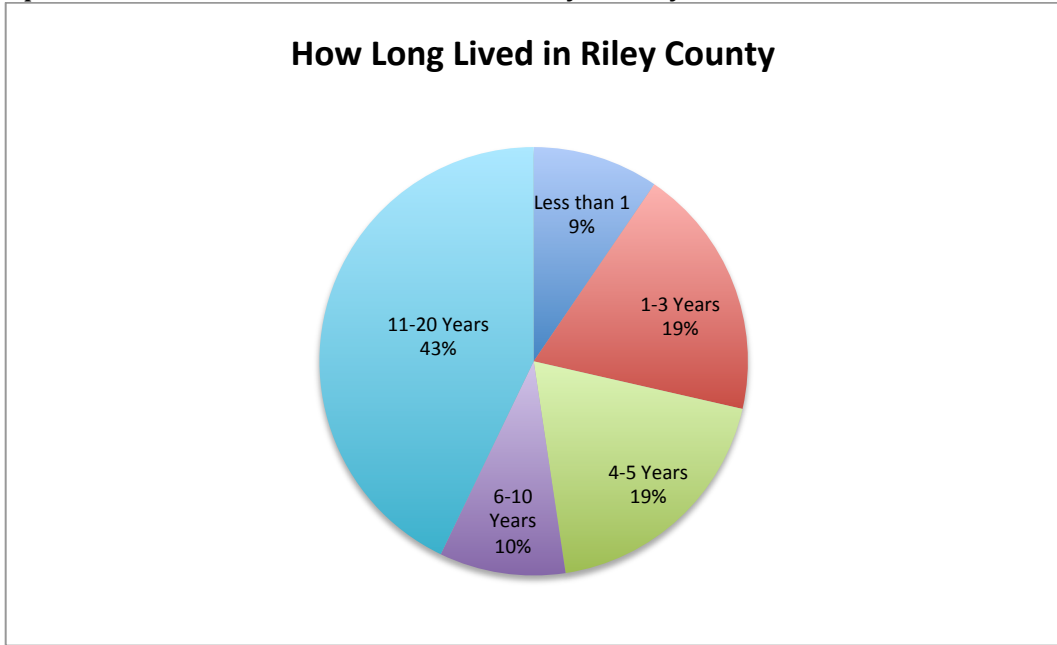
All respondents indicated they live in Manhattan.

8. Where Do You Work?

Nearly everyone selected Manhattan as the location of their work; however, one person said they worked at Fort Riley, one in rural Pottawatomie county, and one indicated “student at KSU.” (We probably should have clarified on the survey that attending school can be considered “work” for the purposes of this study.)

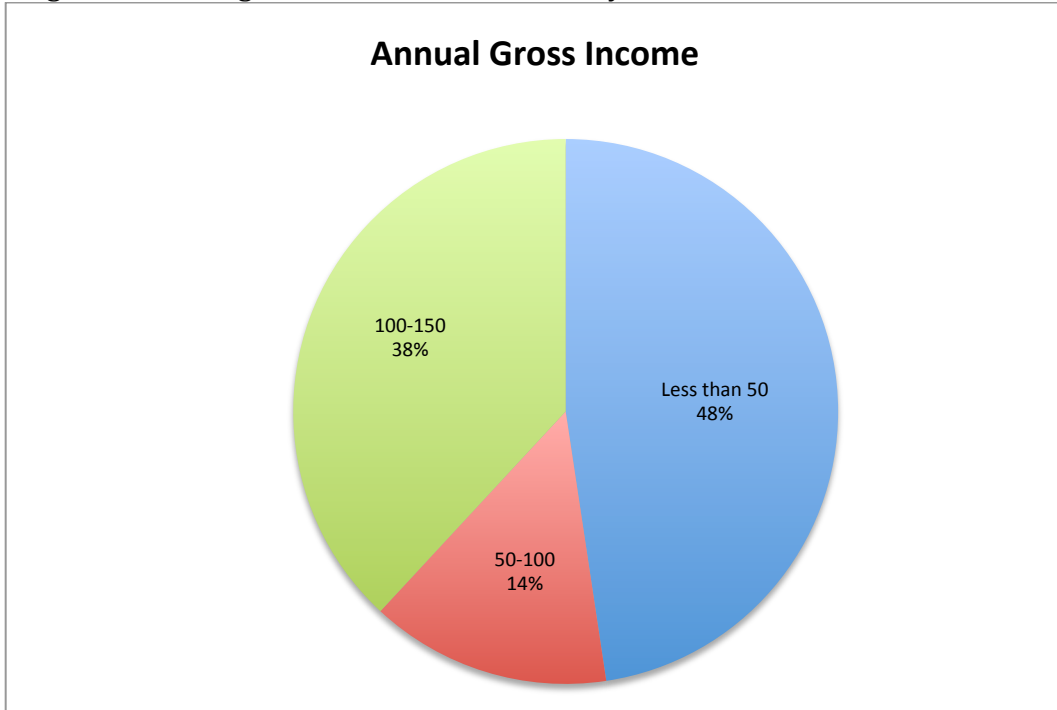
9. Length of Time in Riley County

Both groups were dominated by long-term residents, with students making up most of those who'd lived in the county three years or less.



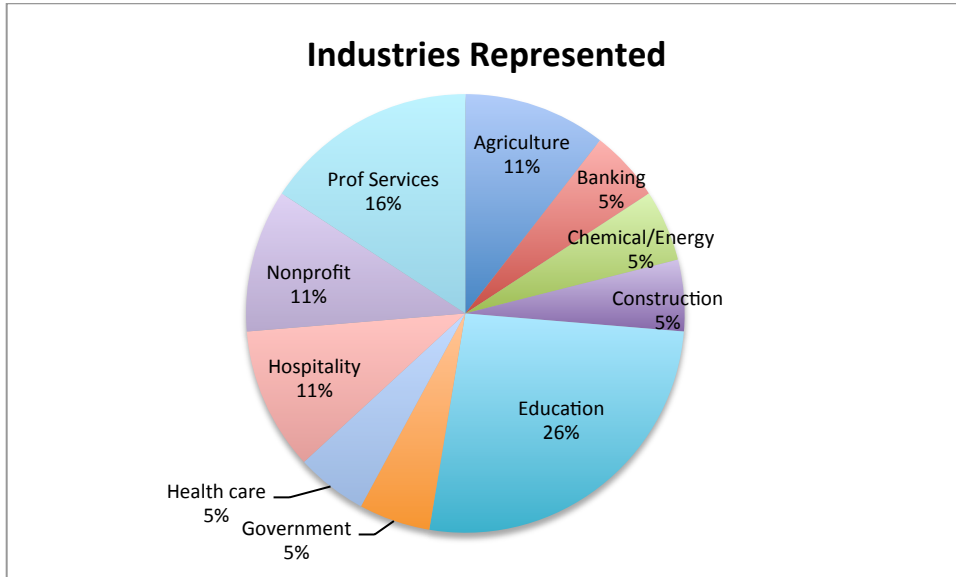
10. Annual Gross Household Income

These numbers reflect the young age of our participants, with many being single and making less than \$50,000 annually.



11. What industry do you work in?

We had a diversity of industries represented; however, we failed to instruct students with how to answer this question. Some classified themselves as in “education,” while others marked the industry of their area of study (our intent). Of course, if they are employed while going to school, they could have selected the field they are working in currently.



12. Are you registered to vote in Riley County?

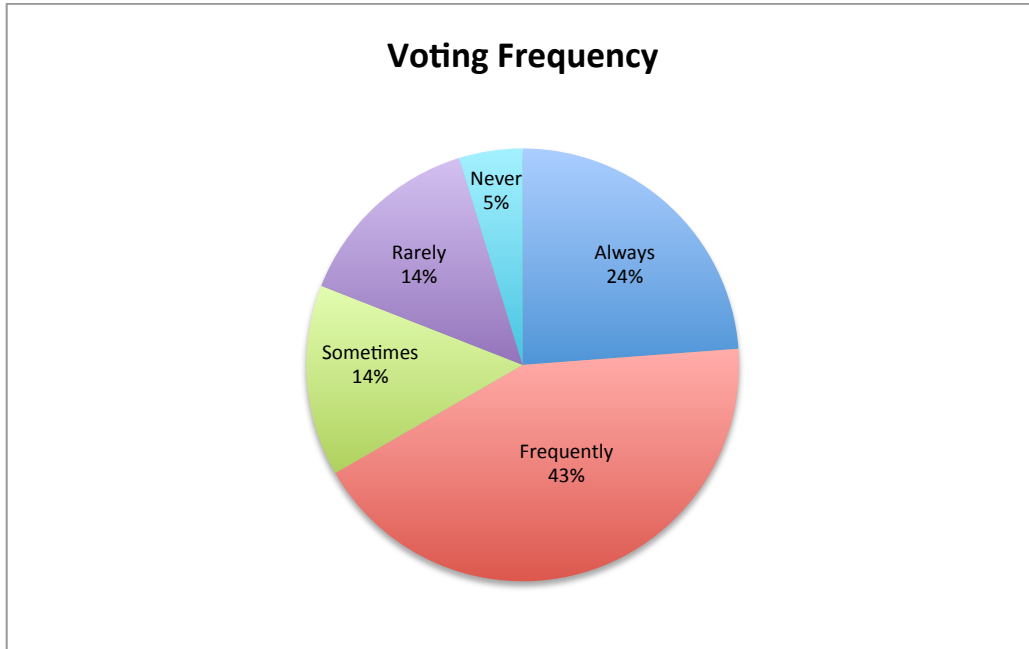
Of the 21, only one woman and two men said they were not registered to vote in Riley County. This may be reflective of the type of person who’d be willing to volunteer for a focus group, and is probably not a scientifically representative sample of the county’s actual population.

13. Are you registered to vote anywhere (in another county or state)?

Of the three who said they were not registered in Riley County, one woman and one man said they were registered somewhere else, leaving only one participant out of the 21 who admitted to not being registered to vote.

14. Voting Frequency

Five participants claim to vote always, while nine said they vote frequently. If this is a true admission, and our participants were being truly honest with us and themselves, then our focus group pool represents a disproportionate percentage of Riley County residents under the age of 45 who vote regularly, since we know only approximately 25 to 45% of voters in this age bracket have voted in the last two general November elections. Three people reported they sometime vote, three said they rarely vote, and one admitted he never votes.



When this data is broken down by gender, we see that nine of the 11 female participants report voting frequently or always, while only half of the men (5) classified themselves the same way. We found through our secondary research, discussed elsewhere in this report, that women of all ages except the very oldest demographic group are more likely to vote than men.

When broken down by age, we have eight of the 21 who were 30 or under. Of those, two are women and six are men. One man and the two women reported being “always” or “frequent” voters, while all of the other five said they vote sometimes (2), rarely (2), or never (1).

15. Membership in Community Organizations

As a whole, our participants are not very active in social service organizations. While seven reported membership in the chamber of commerce and eight said they belonged to a church, PEO was the only organization that had more than one person who was a member (three). Out of the 21, we had one who was a Rotarian, one in Junior League, one who was

a member of the Manhattan Alliance for Peace and Justice, and one that was a member of a college fraternity/sorority.

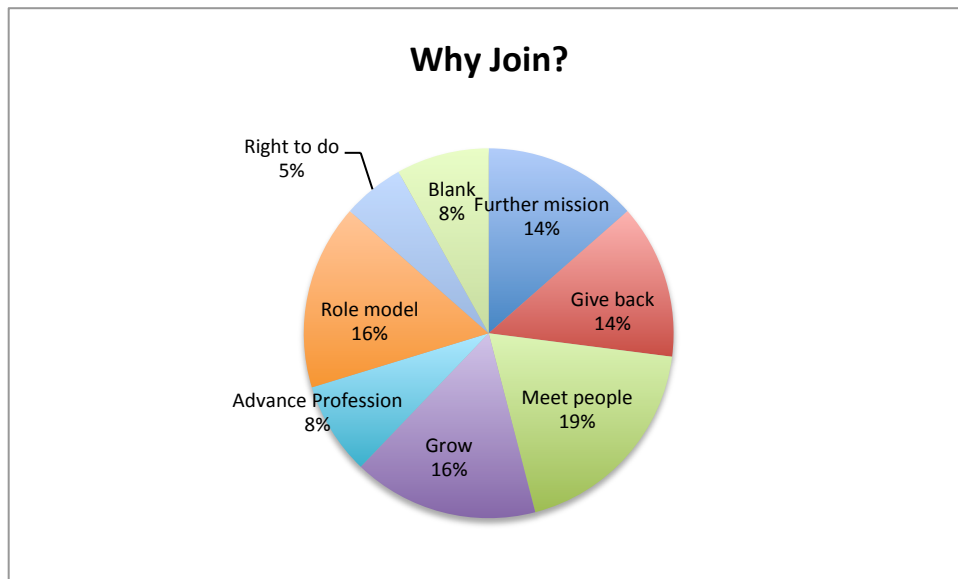
Several organizations were written in the “other” blank (American Association of University Women, Kansas Association of Environmental Education, Student Farm Club, Students for Environmental Action, Aggieville Business Association, Boy Scouts, Ecumenical Campus Ministry).

The most interesting finding was of the 21, nine reported not being a member of any organization. Of the ten men, six said they were not a member of any organization. Of the 11 women, three said they were not a member of any organization, and two reported a church as the only organization they were a member of.



16. Why belong?

The findings of this category were not very interesting, as several people checked nearly every option (more than one answer was allowed). The most popular answer (with 10 choosing this option) was “as a way to meet people/social reasons.”



17. Why don't you belong?

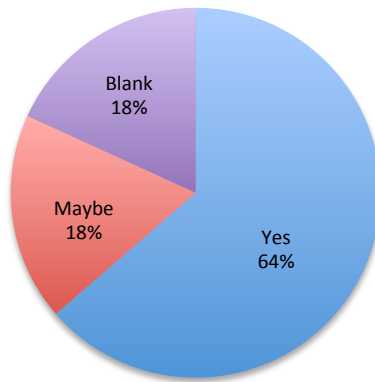
Of the 11 who answered this question, the most popular answer, with seven votes, was "I'm too busy with my work/school and family demands for outside groups." Other responses:

- Four reported they "haven't found a group where I felt I'd fit in."
- Three indicated "I'm interested in joining a group in the near future."
- One person said "these groups don't meet at a time that works for my personal schedule" and one indicated "My parents and friends aren't involved with such groups, so I just wasn't ever introduced to these types of organizations."

18. Do you see yourself joining such a group in the future?

The good news for community organizations is that participants seem interested in joining such groups as they mature in life. Thirteen of the 21 participants said they see themselves joining such groups "as you get older and your personal situation changes," and six said "maybe" they'd be interested in the future. No one marked "no"; however, four left this answer blank.

Join Something in the Future?



19. What issues are participants interested in?

Federal

Most of the respondents circled many of the topics listed below, but health care reform and income inequality got the largest responses, and Common Core got the least response. One person wrote-in “sustainability.” When the responses were tallied, this is the order participants ranked their interest in these issues:

Health Care Reform	13
Income Inequality	13
National Debt	12
Gun Control	12
Gender Equality	12
Entitlement Programs	12
International Affairs	11
Federal Budget	11
Immigration	10
Homeland Security	10
Same-Sex Marriage	10
Job Creation	10
Reproductive Rights	9
Race Relations	9
Climate Change	9
Free Trade	8
Domestic Oil Production	7
Campaign Finance	7
Defense Spending	6
Appointment of Judges	6
Common Core	4

State

Interest in state topics was a little more focused, with issues related to the state budget and its impact on K-12, higher ed funding, and social services funding ranked as the most important to our under-45 group — all of which makes sense considering many were either parents or students.

K-12	19
Balancing State Budget	16
Higher Ed Funding	16
Social Services Funding	13
Expanding State Economy	11
Reproductive Rights	10
Gender Equality	10
Gun Control	9
Race Relations	9
Same-Sex Marriage	8
Medicaid Expansion	6
Appointment of Judges	5
Common Core	5
Campaign Finance	4
Term Limits	4

Local

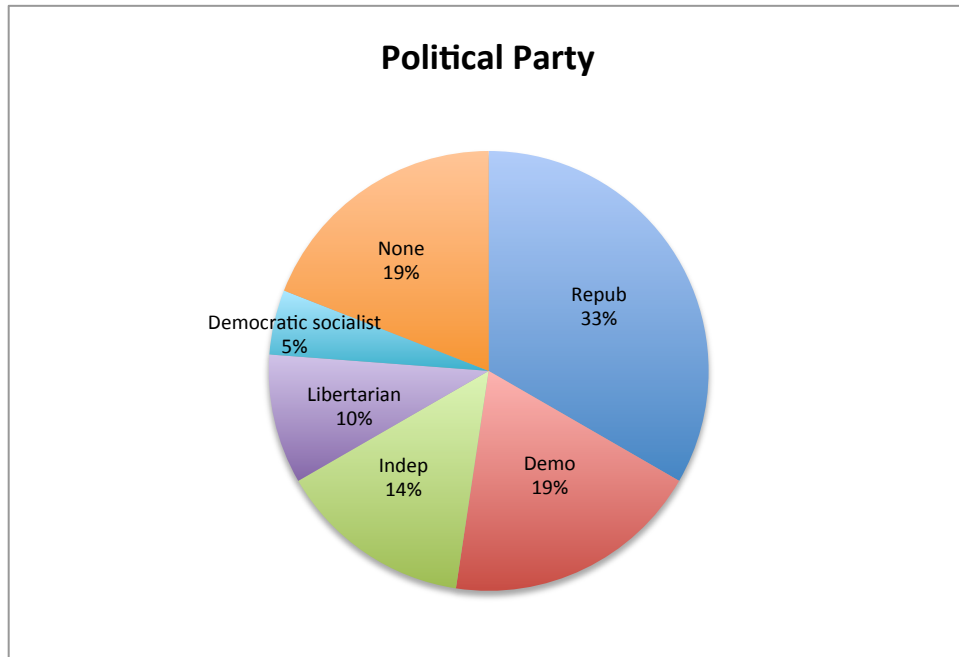
Financial concerns also were reflected in the group’s interest on the local level. Locally they are interested in economic development, improvements to Parks and Recreation facilities, and public transportation. One person wrote in “race relations and economic equality.”

Economic Development	17
Parks and Rec Enhancements	15
Public Transportation	15
Controlling City Debt	10
Apartment Inspections	7
Road Maintenance	7
Flood Control	4

20. Political Affiliation

All-in-all, the women were much more likely to affiliate with a party than the men, with nine of the 11 reporting being either Republican (6) or Democrat (3), with one reporting to be Independent or Libertarian.

It should be noted that of the 10 men, four said they had no party affiliation, two reported being Independent, and one said he was a Libertarian. One man wrote in being a “Democratic Socialist,” which probably reflects the current Bernie Sanders movement.



Comments on Demographic Questionnaires

The data derived from these questionnaires are quite interesting and the small sample size naturally brings up many questions. It would be very interesting to conduct a larger survey to see if trends carry through to the larger community.

Of particular interest is the small number of men in this group who had a political party affiliation. You will see in our later discussion of secondary voting research that we found this to be a trend across the nation. With political party affiliation fairly evenly split, and with younger women currently more likely to vote than younger men, efforts to involve and engage younger men are especially needed.

Focus Group Discussion Questions

Today we are talking about a national lack of participation of younger voters (classified as voters ages 18 – 45) in the political process. There is a lot of research in this area, but none that focuses on the situation specifically in Riley County.

Please be open and honest here — don't worry about others judging you. Everyone should be respectful of what people are willing to share, as all comments will help us better understand the issue.

Comments from women are in red and come first, while comments from men are in blue and come second. We had 11 women and 10 men participate in the focus groups.

1. Please raise your hand if you vote in every election or nearly every election. I'd classify this as voting in at least 75% of elections.
 - 7 (*not the younger participants*)
 - 4
2. For those of you who said you vote in every election or nearly every election, raise your hand if you usually vote at the polls on Election Day.
 - 7
 - 3
3. For those of you who vote at least frequently, raise your hand if you often vote through advance voting or through an absentee ballot.
 - 3
 - 1
4. Please raise your hand if you consider yourself a "sometimes" voter, meaning you estimate you vote in about half of elections, or between 25-75% of the time.
 - 3
 - 3
5. If you just raised your hand that you vote only sometimes, what keeps you from the polls or from requesting an absentee ballot? Raise your hand for the one option that is the closest to your situation.
 - I just get busy and forget to go to the polls on election day: 2 | 1
 - I often don't know who to vote for, so I just don't go: 1 | 1
 - I don't feel my vote matters so I don't make it a priority: 0

- I travel a lot or I have a very busy job and I don't take the time to request an advance voting ballot: **0**
- I travel a lot or I have a very busy job and I don't know how to request an advance voting ballot: **0 | 1**
- Health reasons: **0**
- I find the whole political process to be so negative, corrupt, or both, that I just don't want to participate: **0**
- Other:

6. For those of you who vote at least sometimes, why is it important to you to take time to vote?

- I was brought up that if you wanted to... if you didn't like how something was going, you need to voice your opinion; you need to vote to be able to critique what's going on.
- I'd agree, and also women's right to vote, don't take it for granted.
- Set a good example for my family, kids, others around me, because I think socially it's a private thing, but its also an awareness thing; might persuade others to go vote.
- Used to think that my vote didn't make a difference, then my neighbor ran for city council and lost by one, and I hadn't voted; if I had voted for him, it would have been a tie; one vote really does make a difference; maybe not nationally, but if everyone that thinks that voted, it would really add up in the polls.
- You see small margins of votes lost by, and if you and your friends had voted it could have made a difference; we don't live in a monarchy, there's not someone at the top that has all the say; we have a privilege to live in an environment where our voices matter; let's keep this going — I want to be able to have a say.
- So that your interests are represented.
- I would agree with that; it's a right we have so we should exercise it as much as we can.
- Agreed.

7. Please raise your hand if you said on the questionnaire that you never vote.
- 1; I will in certain cases, but more often I won't
 - 3
8. If you just said you never vote, can you please tell me why you never vote?
- I just get busy and forget to go to the polls on election day: 0
 - I often don't know who to vote for, so I just don't go: 1 | 1
 - I don't feel my vote matters so I don't make it a priority: 0
 - I travel a lot or I have a very busy job and I don't take the time to request an advance voting ballot: 0 | 1
 - I travel a lot or I have a very busy job and I don't know how to request an advance voting ballot: 0
 - Health reasons: 0
 - I find the whole political process to be so negative, corrupt, or both, that I just don't want to participate: 0
 - Other: 1
Traveled between here and Texas for a long time, so I haven't been in a place where I can register (never in one place long enough).
9. For those of you who never vote, would any of these possible changes to current local voting practices make you more likely to vote?
- Longer polling hours (beyond 7 am to 7 pm): 0
 - Move elections to a different day of the week than Tuesday: 0
 - More polling locations: 0
 - Making all voting by mail ballot: 0
 - Making voting available online: 1 | 3
 - Remove requirements to show ID at the polls: 0
 - Automatically register people when they get a Kansas driver's license:
 - Other: 1
Make it more — for people who don't know about waiting so long to become a citizen — more awareness about it. I know people my age (college) that don't know whether they can actually register for that state. Doesn't matter where they are. Their voice can be heard where they live.
10. How many of you are likely to vote in the upcoming general election in November 2016, during which we will choose the next president of the United States, as well as state and local leaders?
- 10
 - 10 (all)

11. How many of you agree with this statement: “I don’t vote, because my vote won’t make a difference anyway?”

Agree: **0**

Why?

Disagree: **11** | **9**

Why?

- It really does make a difference.
- If you don’t vote, you didn’t do anything to help you candidate.
- If I don’t go because I don’t think it makes a difference — if everyone who thought that way didn’t vote, it makes a huge difference; I don’t want to be part of that population.
- Sometimes the reasons we’re voting — whether for an official or for a bond issue — the reasons for voting may affect how passionate I am [about voting].
- Sometimes it’s duty, when it comes to local policy.
- Personally, I disagree because I was always told your voice counts. You’re as important as the next person. If you have the opportunity, vote.
- Your vote is your voice, if you don’t exercise the right to vote, you can’t complain. You had the opportunity, and if you don’t take it, you’re screwing the whole process.
- You could be the person to make or break the situation. Your vote counts.

12. How many of you agree with this statement: “I don’t vote *in Kansas* because my vote doesn’t make a difference in this state.”

Agree: **0** | **1** — “kind of”

Disagree: **11** | **10**

- Why? I try to vote where I can, but I have views across party lines, and unless you do a lot of research, it’s hard to know who to vote for.
- I don’t know enough to agree or disagree.

13. How many of you consider Manhattan your home, rather than just the place you currently live?

- **10** | **7**

14. How many of you know Manhattan is just a temporary home for you, and that you'll be leaving this town in the next few years anyway?

- **1** | **5** (someone voted twice)

15. For those of you who just raised your hands that Manhattan is your temporary home, does your lack of permanency in this community or state affect your interest in voting here?

Yes: **0** | **3**

Maybe: **0**

No: **1** | **2**

16. On a scale of 1-5, how interested are you in local (city/county/school district) political issues?

- 1 = Very interested: **5** | **6**
- 2 = Sort of interested: **6** | **4**
- 3 = Neutral: **0** | **0**
- 4 = Not very interested: **0** | **0**
- 5 = I don't care about local issues: **0** | **0**

17. On a scale of 1-5, how interested are you in state political issues?

- 1 = Very interested: **5** | **4**
- 2 = Sort of interested: **6** | **6**
- 3 = Neutral: **0** | **0**
- 4 = Not very interested: **0** | **0**
- 5 = I don't care about state issues: **0** | **0**

18. On a scale of 1-5, how interested are you in federal political issues?

- 1 = Very interested: **2** | **10**
- 2 = Sort of interested: **6** | **0**
- 3 = Neutral: **3** | **0**
- 4 = Not very interested: **0** | **0**
- 5 = I don't care about federal issues: **0** | **0**

19. Raise your hand if you think you might ever be interested for running for an elected office, even if later in life?

- **2** | **4**

Why or why not?

- I get to see firsthand the amount of time it takes to keep track of and be well informed, particularly city commission; to be a really effective and contributing member takes a lot of time; with kids, I feel that's where my focus should be.
- Your whole life is a window for people, and it's not worth it to me; it's a thankless job; just such a hard thing to put yourself on that pedestal.
- Being under the scope constantly, being critiqued; always going to have haters and supporters.
- Not just you but also your family members.
- I know how much it takes to put yourself out there, but I also feel some of the issues we're facing locally and statewide, we're going to need support; I feel for the people in office right now, but I also feel like there has to be support for the future; education is my strongest reason.
- There's a time when leadership is lacking, and I want to step in — maybe I'm the person that needs to step up and lead; if I want to see a change, I'm motivated to be the one to make it happen; it would be exhausting; my husband is a pastor so I know what it's like on a smaller level to have criticism sent at you, so maybe that's helped me prepare for that; you're representing a movement or idea, it's not personal.
- I wouldn't at the moment because right now there's not something I am 100% passionate about, and if I'm going to run for something I have to feel that way; sometimes we get on committees for the greater good and you might not be the right person; if you're going to run for something, it needs to be all about the cause and making sure you're the right person to represent that cause.
- It's an opportunity. If I ever go down that path, why not make a difference, locally or in the world?
- I've been brought up around politics. Also, there's a lot of apathy. A lot of things need to be changed but not people who are willing to step up, especially good people.
- The impression that politicians are beholden to special interests — hard to tolerate that. (Another person seconded this comment.)

Facilitator: For the general presidential election in 2012, 46.7% of registered voters in Riley County under the age of 45 voted, compared to more than 80% of people older than age 45. For the 2014 election, without a presidential race, only 26.6% of registered voters under 45 voted, compared to nearly 73% of those older than 45.

20. Why do you think adults ages 45 and under vote at such lower percentages than adults over age 45?

- I think for my age range, being in college, that's a huge bubble you're in; college could be a good outlet for letting people know; but there's nothing going on to let us know; lack of awareness in a big chunk of the age group that doesn't vote.
- I agree; they send out an annual email, but there's not a big campaign to get us to vote; nationally, issues affect us (i.e., LGBT), but there's not local support coming to inform us of local issues; plus, being in transition (living in a different place) means we're not naturally motivated to vote locally.
- Not sure if students register to vote in their college town, or need to get a ballot from their hometown.
- Is there any press out there [on campus] during election time?
- Email to students that says it's election time with link to get registered.
- As far as on campus, there's no one out there passing out info.
- Would be good if they did that, because when campus elections come around, huge wave of students participate; students don't seek information for local and state elections, need it thrown in their face.
- When I was in college I was interested in voting, and for me it was frustrating, my polling place would change and I'd have to drive off campus; seemed like it was a deterrent to keep students from voting.
- Nothing keeps them in tune with polling location.
- Hours are my saving grace; sticker is my badge of honor.
- Sticker is quite a motivation; have to Instagram it.

- Not sure if later hours would make a difference for working population; *never* shorten hours.
- My grandparents' generation was the generation of WWII, it has been a really long time that we've had a massive war like that where so many people were taken over to fight and protect liberties; that generation had to fight so hard to keep liberties they're going to make sure to keep those liberties; we haven't been as impacted.
- Something about teaching the practice of voting makes a difference; not sure if that is taught now in schools; doing mock elections for familiarity would be good.
- Work — I say that as a young student, but school and work consumes our lives; it's hard to keep up with everything.
- Cynicism, especially among the youthful demographic. A lot of them just don't think that their vote is useful or will be paid attention to.
- I'd agree with that. Young kids don't have the desire to vote. Doesn't matter or affect anything in the long run. Certain things that are established are hard to change.
- Young families are less likely to take the initiative and put in the energy to get informed (with young kids). By mid-40s their kids are old enough, they have the time.
- I'm a grad student, and among a lot of the students, especially concerning local elections, there seems to be a consensus that City Council will overturn things.
- From a student standpoint, when I moved here I only registered because I knew someone in the organization that was helping students register. Not a lot of opportunities for students to know where to go to get registered. Help to get students that information on registering and the voting process.
- Same with adults. Don't know where polling stations are, how to sign up for mail-in ballot.
- A lot of elections aren't very exciting. National elections get media attention, higher turnout. Still doesn't excite half the population. Local depends on voter turnout, but the issues aren't appealing to the younger population.

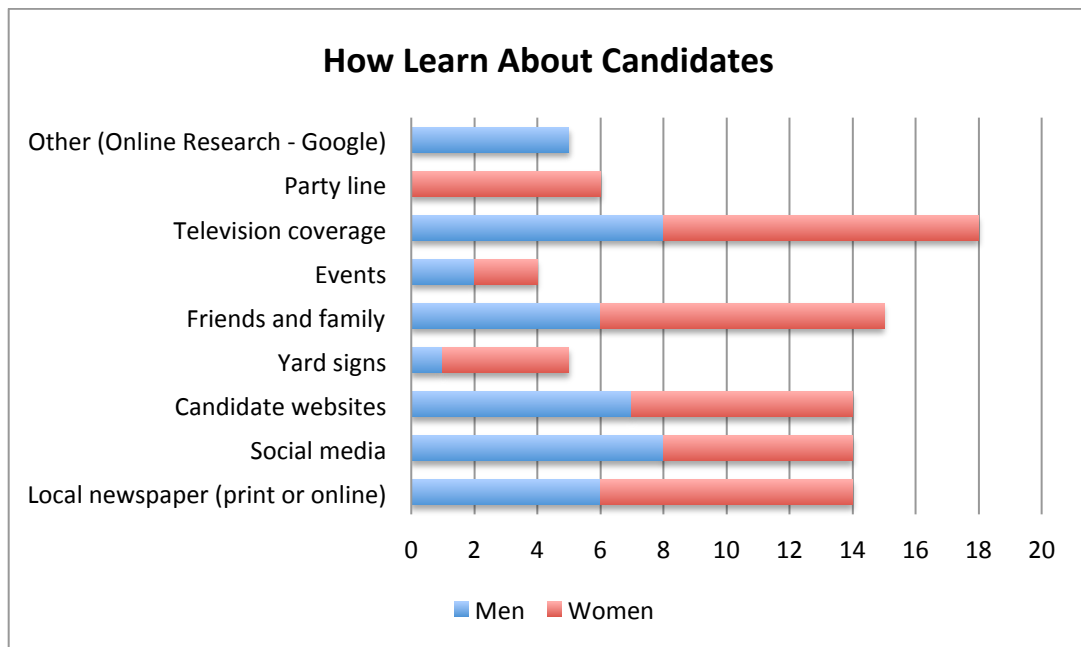
21. What could society, our government, and community organizations do to increase the number of younger voters to the polls?

- Put it online (several agreed); if it was put online, the increase would be dramatic; kids have smartphones, tablets, laptops, so if you put it in a format they can access, they'll do it; education on how to vote — I was nervous the first time because I felt I didn't know what to expect.
- When we lived in Arizona, it was the first place I lived as an adult, and I don't know who put it together, but there was this huge paper pamphlet that every single citizen received in the mail, and it covered every person running for district, city, state, national in both major parties, because I had no idea where to find that being new to the area, and that was a lifesaver for me; wish there was one place I could go to find all information about candidates/issues (impartial website) — would be so much easier and quicker.
- It's hard to do research that is not biased; you find info and then see it is endorsed; don't have one place to get honest information.
- Always anxious for Mercury to have their coverage, but most young people don't subscribe to the Mercury.
- Manhattan is the first place I've lived where you can meet the person; there are opportunities to see and hear them (legislative coffees, etc.).
- Wonder if an uninformed voter is more dangerous than an informed voter that doesn't go; if you want community engagement you have to go where the people are — having a polling booth at Wal-Mart or someplace where people go; but then you catch people who don't really care or are uninformed but they'll vote if they see it.
- Straight party-line voting is the same way; do you want to give people an easy way to participate who aren't informed, or make it difficult and get lower numbers but have informed votes?
- Only info I can recall about a candidate is what party they are
- Technology, phones — more awareness about it through social media so it's constantly looked at and in your face.
- If they could create an online system that people had confidence in (security).

- Abolish the Electoral College, so your vote actually elects people.
- System is way too complicated — register, find polling place, show up specific time and day. People have impression that it's difficult.
- Automatic registration, go to one polling place — make it easier.
- Automatic registration by driver's license — great way to go.
- Moving Election Day to Saturday would help a bit. Unless it's a game day (said with humor).

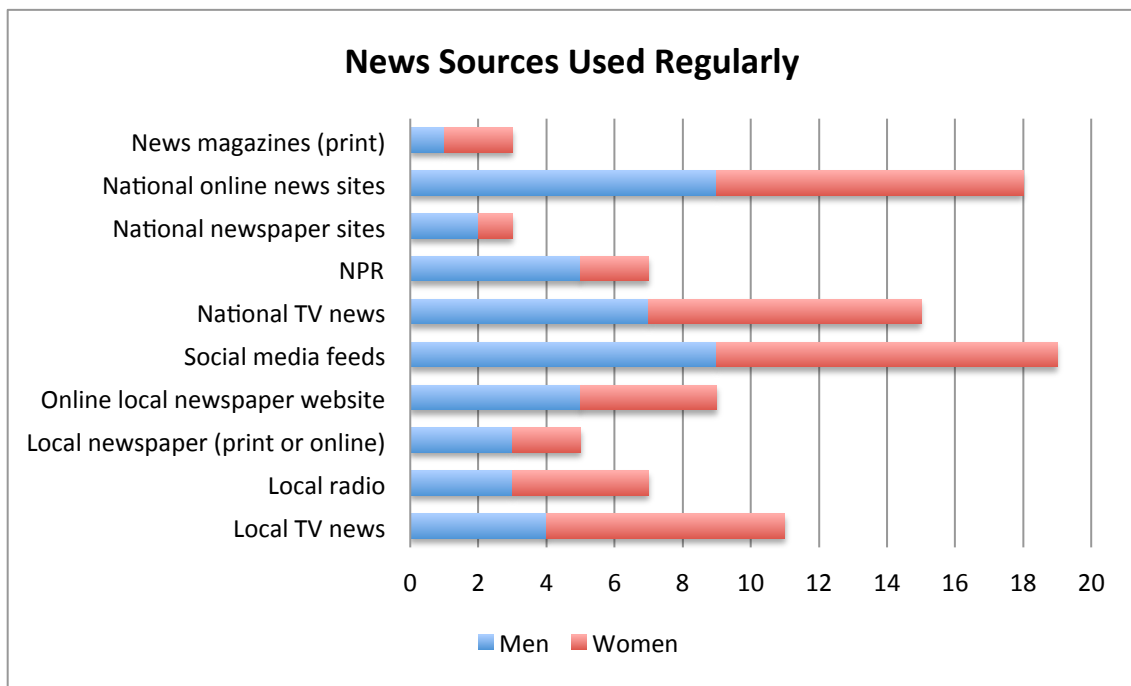
22. For those of you who ever vote, how do you learn about candidates so you can choose who to vote for? Raise hands for all that apply.

- Read candidates' stands on the issues in my local newspaper, either in print or online: **8 | 6**
 - Follow candidates on social media: **6 | 8**
 - Read candidates' websites: **7 | 7**
 - See who people I know are endorsing by putting signs up in their yards: **4 | 1**
 - Ask friends and family I trust: **9 | 6**
 - Attend political rallies, forums or other types of events: **2 | 2**
 - Watch candidates on TV, either on news programs or public debates: **10 | 8**
 - Vote for candidates in my political party: **6 | 0**
 - Other: **0 | 5**
- Online research (Google) – 5



23. Which types of news sources do you use regularly?

- Local TV news: **7** | **4**
- Local radio: **4** | **3**
- Local newspaper (paper form): **2** | **3**
- Online local newspaper website: **4** | **5**
- Social media feeds: **10** | **9**
- National TV news: **8** | **7**
- NPR: **2** | **5**
- National newspapers, like USA Today or The New York Times (print form): **1** | **2**
- National online news sites: **9** | **9**
- News magazines (print format): **2** | **1**
- Other: **0**



24. Have any of you ever been employed by a political campaign?

- **0** | **0**

25. How many of you have participated on a local, state or national political campaign as a volunteer?

- **4** | **3**

26. If you have worked on a campaign, either as an employee or volunteer, why did you want to get involved?

- To help a candidate get elected who I agreed with on viewpoints and agenda (One other agreed with this answer).
- Taking a class, way to learn more about the process.
- Issue-related; felt like it made a bigger difference for entire community.
- I supported the candidate.
- Issues I cared about.
- Very young in 2008 and Obama seemed like a transformative figure, so got galvanized about the campaign.

27. How many of you have ever been a part of a social service or community organization?

- **10 | 6**

Which organizations?

- Pilot Club
- Rotary
- Junior League
- PEO
- Kiwanis
- National Helpers
- Boy Scouts
- 4H
- League of Women Voters
- Ecumenical Campus Ministries
- Engineers Without Borders
- Local church

28. Why did you choose to join this organization?

- Social interaction with people like me.
- Contribute to the community.

- Both of those things.
- Driven by what their flagship reason was/mission, that it was going to be sustainable.
- Selfishly, I join groups that fit my schedule/lifestyle.
- I agree with scheduling; lots of things I'm interested in, but not conducive to my schedule.
- Help out the community I lived in.
- Learn about the community I live in (plus help).
- Values I agreed with.

29. How many of you have ever heard of the League of Women Voters?

- 7 | 7

30. Are any of you members of the League of Women Voters?

- 0 | 1

31. What do you know about the League of Women Voters?

- Absolutely nothing (several agreed).
- Older ladies that have time to participate in a group like that.
- Do support legislative forums; without that group, some of those forums might not exist.
- Getting people to vote; came to my work recently to get people registered.
- Walked our neighborhood, made sure people were registered to vote.
- Nothing (several nodded).
- Assumed it was a women's group and we were not welcome.
- A league of women voters.

32. What would you say is the reputation of the national League of Women Voters organization?

- Older demographic (several agreed).
- Maybe aggressive women.

- Women's suffrage.

33. How many of you know there is a chapter of the League of Women Voters in Riley County?

- 4 | 2

34. What is your impression of the local League chapter? What's their public image?

- Active
- Older and active
- Experienced
- Reputation for championing social justice in the community, being an advocacy group mostly for social justice issues but other issues they all agree to support (this is from the one participant who is a member and has a mom who is a member).

35. What do you think is the mission of the League of Women Voters?

- Increase turnout to elections and inform more people about the issues and candidates running.
- Educate the public about issues at hand.
- No idea .
- To get more women to vote.
- Help women have more of a say-so.
- To identify issues that they find important and then endorse candidates.
- Get young people to vote, too.

36. What, if any, political affiliation do you think the local League of Women Voters has?

- None; assume they're neutral (several agreed)
- Democrat
- A mix
- Don't have a specific political orientation, but generally support more liberal ideas for the electoral process (from our member)

37. Have you ever attended an event sponsored by the League of Women Voters?

- No (several)
- Legislative coffees

- One yes (from the member)

38. Why have you, or haven't you, attended a League event, such as a candidate forum?

- One was really early on a Saturday morning.
- Always see them and think they're interesting, but I don't make it a priority; I'll do my research online.
- Someone covers it in the news, so I can get info even if I don't attend.
- I have to be passionate about what I'm going to go for.
- Most women have children they're taking care of, so 7:30 in the morning is hard.
- Put it on Channel 3 and I can do laundry, entertain kids and still watch it; to choose to give up time to attend in person doesn't fit my lifestyle.
- You're out of the norm if you go if you're in a certain demographic (younger); might feel like a fish out of water.
- I wouldn't go on a Saturday, because that's the one day my whole family is together; not giving that up unless it's earth-shattering.
- Go out to Anneberg Park after a soccer tournament (to catch this demographic).
- Hold events over lunch hour (several agreed).
- Didn't know they existed (several agreed).
- By the time I've heard about the events, they're past (read in paper).
- I attended forums because I know they usually have really good questions about local issues, from membership and community, and do a good, thorough and equitable job at forums, which other organizations often don't do (member).

39. Have any of you considered getting involved in the League of Women Voters?

- 0 | 0

Facilitator: If you haven't guessed, today we are here on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Riley County. They hired us to assess why more people don't vote in Riley County, and what could be changed to encourage more participation in local elections by adults under the age of 45. They have also charged us with learning more about the public's perception of their organization and how it needs to evolve to stay relevant in the future.

40. Do you have any ideas for the League of Women Voters as to what they could do to inspire more adults in this area to turn out on Election Day?

- Put a sales tax on the ballot; that's something that affects me personally on a daily basis; if I don't go, then someone else has that power for me if I don't turn out and vote; you can't always have something big on the ballot, though.
- Social media — use that as a platform to educate us on what they're about; I've heard of the name but I couldn't tell you anything about them.
- Never heard of them before.
- Put together key points of candidates/issues as resource for community.
- Presence at community events (e.g., 5ks, games, festivals, etc.); recruit younger people that can represent them and promote/support them.
- Figure out how to elicit emotion; six things that make things go viral; right now, their presence is flat; girl power movement/suffrage.
- You don't want to feel like a fish out of water, want to feel welcome and comfortable; some events are so formal/stiff, it just drives me crazy; needs to be fun, social.
- Crack their mold by partnering up with an organization, like the library, Girls on the Run, that will get to their audience.
- Find out where their people are, and go to them.
- I want to be active and make a difference, and if I can't do that in an organization, I'm not going to stick around; abandoning the status quo/ way things have always been done.
- Do they have a website?

- From a student perspective, being more active with student groups on campus, those that have similar ideology; get that registration movement going.
- Do they have social media? (*Facilitator confirms.*) Make it more well-known then.
- More awareness; first time ever hearing about them.
- Higher level of marketing.
- Polling stations on campus (more).
- Publicize advance voting.

41. Did you know that men are eligible to join the League?

Yes: **0** | **1 (member)**

Maybe: **0** | **1**

No: **11** | **8**

42. What, if anything, could the League do differently to appeal more to younger adults to become members of their organization?

- Hold meetings at times that work for younger people; library, children's story time at same time.
- Go to the places where they're going to be; might stop off at a booth for a few minutes while enjoying another event.
- I think their name is an issue (several agreed); probably not going to change it, but I wouldn't join it for that reason.
- The league of underrepresented voters (someone joked this could be an alternative name...without any gender included).
- Huge social media push.

43. There has been some discussion of rebranding the League of Women Voters to simply "LWV" to seem more modern and inclusive of men. What do you think of this idea?

- Oh, boy.

- Need to be more inclusive; if I was a man I wouldn't brag I'm part of a group with "women" in the name; tired of acronyms, though.
- What's their mission? If they're trying to get women votes, they need to keep with that name; if they're targeting a certain age group, need to change to that; just depends on mission and making sure it conveys that; need to rebrand themselves.
- Assumed it was a group of women trying to get other women to vote; no boys allowed.
- As soon as someone asks what it means....
- Don't think it would make a difference.
- I agree — unless they just completely 180, it's not going to make a difference.
- Actual name change — League of Active Voters; acronym won't do much.

44. Any other advice or wisdom you have for the League as far as getting more younger adults to vote and become engaged in the political process?

- Utilize K-State; a lot of students on campus, Leadership Dept., Women's Studies Dept.; students are willing to participate and learn; more of a presence there.
- Sending a speaker to other organizations (going where people are).
- Handing out materials.
- More than just telling people to vote; need to inform people with resources that can help them make better decisions.
- Our age group is very competitive, so if they stated facts about low participation in voting, and posed as a challenge, might respond to that (i.e., can you out-vote another generation?).
- And if that was in the paper or on social media, that would help.
- Hacking is the fear in mobile voting.

- That competitive nature could bring out more voters, but if you want to offset the uneducated voter, then they'd have to follow it up with a resource to educate people; increase understanding.
- Voter turnout in 2016 and 2017 will probably be good due to sales tax question.
- Partner with the Mercury, utilize a resource that's already out there.
- If they do social media, really put those issues and meetings out there.
- Show what the organization is, what it's for — give people more info about what it's actually about; name sounds like a bunch of aggressive women.

45. If LWV were to create a core group/subcommittee of younger people, would anyone here be interested?

- Would depend on schedule.
- Definitely interested if it fit in manageable schedule (several agreed).
- 3-4 indicated they might help.

[Note: Both focus groups ended at this point. As he was leaving, the one male who said he was a LWV member said to our facilitator, "My mom paid for my membership dues — that's the reason I'm a member."]

Analysis of Focus Group Findings

While our sample size is small, and we cannot ignore the possibility of social desirability bias in our findings, our findings are fairly similar to national trends.

- We found that our women were more likely to vote than our men, including in the 18-30 age group.
- We found four basic consistent reasons why this age group reports they don't vote:
 - Too busy and forget to go to the polls on election day
 - Don't know how (or don't take the time) to request an advance ballot
 - Confusion or problems with registration
 - I often don't know who to vote for, so I just don't go
- Our men were less likely to affiliate themselves with a political group than our women. Nine of our women affiliate themselves with one of the two major parties, while of the men, only two reported being Republican or Democrat. This follows national trends: Younger male voters tend to be more Independent than women.
- Of the 21 participants, we had three self-reported Independents, two Libertarians, and one Democratic Socialist. So nearly 30% didn't affiliate with one of the two major parties.
- Among our participants, we did not hear a lot of cynicism or lack of trust in the political process as a deterrent for people participating. For the most part, our participants reported that they believe it is important to vote, that voting makes a difference, and that just because they live in Kansas this opinion doesn't change.
- Our participants were slightly more likely to say they were "sort of interested" rather than "very interested" in political issues on all levels (local/state/federal). The genders were pretty equal in their interest in local and state issues, but men seemed much more interested in federal issues than women. This could mean they really aren't interested in political issues, but they know they *should* be interested (social desirability bias), so they report being "sort of" interested.
- We found through discussion that the women seemed less willing to run for office than men. Reasons women reported not being interested in running for office focused on the amount of time it takes, the lack of thanks and the pressure of being in the constant spotlight, and the toll on their families as reasons why they don't want to run. Men were more willing and less concerned about personal impacts, with four of our ten participants saying

they'd consider running some day. These men seemed less concerned about personal issues and more inspired by changing the world, but they were concerned about the influence of special interests on their ability to create change.

- Across the board we heard repeatedly that people don't have the information they need to make decisions, which is ironic in today's media age. However, we can see this especially on the local level, as the news sources our audiences are consuming are more nationally focused. Eleven of the 21 said they use local news regularly, but only seven of the 21 reported using local radio, five read a local paper in print, and nine read a local paper online. Nearly all get their news from social media and online news sites and 75% from national TV, which won't keep local audiences up to speed on state and local issues.
- Our busy culture is reflected in the lives of our participants. While 16 of the 21 report they have EVER been a part of a social service or community organization, many of the organizations they listed were from their youth (4-H or Boy Scouts), were professional organizations, or were churches. On their print questionnaires, many seemed open to joining a community service organization "someday," which probably is also influenced by the fact they perceive such organizations as more for older adults.
- This group didn't know much about the League of Women Voters, either nationally or locally. While 14 of 21 said they had heard of the League, only six of the 21 knew there was a local chapter.
- Women's perceptions of the group's activities were pretty close to actual, but the younger women perceive LWV as a group of active and experienced older ladies, "who have time to participate in a group like that." The men assumed it was for women and men were not welcome.
- For the most part, people were accurate in their guess or knowledge that the LWV is unaffiliated with a political party.
- Most of the participants had not attended a LWV event or weren't aware of them. Reasons why they hadn't attended included the time of day, that they are on a Saturday, lack of personally making attendance a priority, and ability to get the information from such events through media coverage.
- To get more adults to turn out on election day, our group recommended:
 - Increasing social media use.
 - Putting together a community resource tool (pamphlet or website) that could be used to share information on everything that will be on

the ballot.

- Having booths at more community events.
- Getting people emotionally charged up so they turn out in larger numbers.
- Making events fun and more social.
- Partnering with other organizations that work with the target audience, getting students more involved on campus through partnerships with other campus organizations, and doing more on campus to encourage registration.
- Using competitions to increase turnout — but they said you would need to be careful you weren't just creating more uninformed voters; would need to make education a big part of the competition effort.
- Doing more to publicize advance voting.
- Better telling the organization's story, both locally and nationally.
- We tested the idea of rebranding the group's name to LWV, and found that women and men didn't see this as a good idea. The overarching theme seemed to be that men wouldn't be comfortable being a part of an organization with "women" in the name. The women felt that the group needed to look closely at its mission: Is the group concerned with getting women to vote and engaged in the political process, or getting eligible voters of both genders to vote. Once that is decided, that decision should be reflected in the name so the focus is clear.
- With each group we tested the idea of a "young members" committee, and got warm responses to this. We asked if participants might be willing to join such a group, and the responses mostly had to do with whether or not the meetings fit into their schedules.

Recommendations

After examining the local feedback we received from the focus groups and the secondary research, and contemplating the organization's branding problem, we are proposing a series of global recommendations for the League to consider, as well as specific strategies for implementing them.

1. **Branding** — Your organization was founded in 1920 during the women's suffrage movement. While women today are voting at rates higher than men, your focus has shifted to focusing on all citizens to be more informed and active in government, rather than just women. However, your name is excluding half of the population from wanting to join; in a day and age where young people are not joining many organizations, you need to look for ways to be inclusive, rather than deterring people from participating.

We found that men have a hard time getting over the fact that your name has "women" in it, and using an acronym doesn't help. While you do get some enlightened men to participate (commonly through a spouse, friend, or parent), it does seem like the organization's name could be limiting its potential to recruit new members.

There were a few comments from male participants that the name makes them think this is a group for "angry" or "aggressive" women, which is not a perception you want to encourage in any way. The organization also definitely has a reputation for being made up of "older" women who have more time to devote to social causes, which doesn't help you recruit younger women as members. It may be time for the national organization to rename and rebrand in order to be more attractive to a younger generation of potential members.

However, unless your local chapter wants to break away from the greater whole, and until the national organization chooses to rename and rebrand, we don't know how your local group can tackle this. Perhaps it is best to embrace your heritage and focus recruiting efforts on younger women, while encouraging citizens of both genders to play a part in the political process.

Internally, your chapter could play a leading role in advocating for the national organization to rethink its name, and approach the issue from within. Given the challenges our country faces to get younger citizens "turned on and tuned in" to politics, it seems something as superficial as your name could be sacrificed to further your goals.

We also wonder what the League could do to encourage women to run for public office. We haven't seen this as part of the organization's mission, but it would seem to go hand-in-hand with your mission and membership.

2. **Advocacy** — From the extensive research we’ve conducted in the past few months, it seems like the issue of getting younger voters to act on their right to vote has three pain points:

- Getting people registered
- Getting people inspired to want to vote
- Getting people to actually cast a ballot

Of these, the system of getting people registered to vote seems the easiest to solve and the most antiquated. Most western democracies automatically register all adults when they become of age. It seems like automatic voter registration —with one central system that would be consistent in every state — would be a major advancement. We recommend the LWV study the possibility of this change and advocate for it nationally.

We know this is a change that won’t happen overnight, but it seems like a problem we can easily solve. If we can file our taxes online, why can’t we figure out a way to combine existing databases (driver’s licenses, U.S. Census, social security) so that on a person’s 18th birthday they are automatically shipped a voter ID card with instructions about keeping addresses updated? This would not only remove one obstacle to getting people to vote, but it would save tons of personnel hours in processing forms and allow us to focus less on informing people HOW to vote, but more on what they need to know to make informed choices.

Of course, this is a political issue. Democrats will likely be all for it, while Republicans may not want to enlarge the electorate with possibly uneducated voters. But that’s beside the point. Automatic voter registration may not increase the numbers of people who vote significantly, but it would eliminate one unnecessary obstacle.

3. **Kansas Younger Voter Challenge** — Younger adults live in a world that is very competitive — and they generally respond well to challenges and games that encourage new behaviors. We recommend creating a competition between all of the Kansas communities with a LWV chapter to see which can achieve the greatest percentage increase in their under-45 voter turnout. This would include Riley County, Emporia, Great Bend, Johnson County, Lawrence, Leavenworth County, Salina, Topeka-Shawnee County, and Wichita Metro.

We suggest contacting each of these local chapters as soon as possible to see which are willing to participate, then holding a joint press conference to announce the campaign and educate the media and public about the problem of a lack of younger voter participation in American. Involve local units of government as much as possible, and come up with some sort of bragging

rights prize for the city that wins. A big gold trophy would make for good photos, too.

4. **Find Out What Your Partners Are Doing and See If They Will Help Riley County Win the Challenge** — Meet with all groups in the community that currently interact with this age group to tell them about the state challenge and see what they have planned in 2016 to encourage voting. Ask if they'd be willing to coordinate efforts and be a part of your project. Groups we suggest you meet with include:

- a. MHS and Riley County High School clubs related to government/student council
- b. K-State Young Republicans and Democrats
- c. K-State Government Relations
- d. K-State Student Government
- e. K-State Residence Halls
- f. K-State Greek Affairs
- g. The Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce's Young Professionals group
- h. The Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Public Affairs committee
- i. Local Republican and Democrat organizing committees

5. **Create a League of Women Voters of Riley County Young Voters Committee (YVC)** — This will be an active working group that collectively will organize and run your local campaign. We recommend you try to recruit from the following pools:

- a. High school seniors
- b. Working adults 18 to 44 (esp. those 18 to 24 not in school)
- c. Adults enrolled in formal education (K-State, MATC, MCC, etc.)

A chair of this committee should be recruited who is comfortable speaking in front of groups to educate local governmental units and other organizations about the problem and what the LWV is doing this year to solve it. The committee can help him or her book appointments and make as many presentations in the summer and early fall as possible.

The YVC committee needs to have two subcommittees: education and events. Each of these committee should have chairs or co-chairs.

The **education committee** members should all be personally active on social media and willing to put it to use to share LWV posts to their own personal networks. They should be willing to be nonpartisan in their social media activity during the campaign, and use their personal spheres of influence to educate the local community about the issues and candidates, as well as

share information the League puts out about meetings, candidate's stands on issues, and events.

The **events committee** should plan several social events involving people running for office. These should be informal, nonpartisan socials or mixers held in the evenings with food and drink, and they should include opportunities for participants to visit with candidates and their representatives. Any formal presentation should be minimal; instead, the candidates should be circulating the room and talking to young voters firsthand. These events will be advertised through social media (from contacts across the committee). Candidate remarks should be focused on issues of importance to the under 45 voter. Cost to attend should be very minimal; these aren't fundraisers, but opportunities to get involved.

Getting a group of young adults actively representing the LWV is a great way to increase the visibility of the organization among younger people in the community, and to begin to change perceptions that this is an organization that consists of only older adults. Changing this perception is the first step in growing a younger membership base.

6. **Use your YVC to create key messages for younger voters that help them see that the choices of the electorate affect them personally.** These messages should focus on how local elected officials have a direct impact on their own finances, the stability of the state economy, higher education tuition and fees, and the quality of public education in Kansas.
7. **Send out your YVC leaders to make public presentations** — A formal presentation can be created so that YVC teams can visit area clubs, schools, and other types of organizations to encourage young adults to be a part of the process, as part of the state challenge. These presentations can be videotaped and posted online as well. Presentations shouldn't be long, they should integrate humor and visuals into the content, and they should focus on making voting a personal issue for young adults.
8. **Expand the Reach of Local Voting Guides** — The Manhattan Mercury usually produces the only thorough voting guide for this local market. We suggest the LWV collaborate with The Mercury and maybe even the Collegian to see if additional copies could be produced this year so they can be distributed more widely than just to subscribers (this could be funded through expanded ad revenues). We could also see if The Mercury would create an online version that nonsubscribers could access or if they'd collaborate with LWV so the content could be reproduced on the League's website. Ultimately the goal would be to better disseminate the information through online media — and share links to this content on social media — so no one can say they didn't have the opportunity to learn about local issues.

9. **The LWV needs to enhance its social media on all platforms.** While you have established accounts on Facebook and Twitter, both feeds have small numbers of followers. These accounts need to be built up ASAP so they reach thousands of followers. This should be done through your education committee of the YVC and through paid social media posts asking people to follow the LWV for nonbiased 2016 campaign information.

Monthly, an editorial calendar would help organize the distribution of content. Graphics and photos could be created in advance to accompany information. These feeds should also be used to share blogs, online voter education resources, secretary of state online resources, and information candidates put on their feeds. One person should be the primary administrator for the social media feeds, but additional people could be given permissions to post content. The LWV should strive to post at least three to four times per week, and probably daily in the final weeks leading up to elections.

10. **Move Public Forums to More Family-Friendly Times** — Consider scheduling some of the forums during lunches or evenings during the week, and film or broadcast them for later viewing through social media tools such as Periscope.
11. **Partner with the K-State residents halls and Greek living units to better educate students about voting while living in Manhattan.** One idea would be to create door-knocker cards for each room with easy to follow information that spells out how they register to vote while living in Manhattan or how to request an advance voting ballots from home.

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