2018 youth vote report
Thank You!

America is in crisis. Our federal government is dysfunctional, led by a corrupt and mendacious self-promoter in the White House, and a Congress that cannot or will not hold him accountable. We face climate catastrophe, escalating health care costs, a broken criminal justice system, and more.

Despite all that, I am optimistic. The young people building NextGen Rising’s youth vote program give me hope.

Young people have always been at the forefront of the fight for social justice in America, from the abolitionists to the suffragettes to the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. We need the moral authority and energy of young people now more than ever. That is why I am so proud of the work of NextGen Rising. By leading the fight to turn out young voters in some of the most critical elections across the country, the NextGen team helped power the blue wave that defeated Donald Trump’s enablers in Washington and across the country. I have no doubt their work will continue to shape the country in 2019, 2020, and beyond.

Thank you for supporting their efforts and I hope you join me in continuing to cheer them on.

Tom Steyer
Founder, NextGen America
The #YouthVote powered the Blue Wave...and NextGen powered the youth vote.

Young people are the largest and most progressive voters in the country, but they tend to vote at half the rate of older Americans. 2018 was a record year of participation for all Americans, but the increase in young voters was disproportionately high. Some key numbers:

Registered Voter Turnout: 2014 vs. 2018
Targetsmart estimates that 37% of registered 18-29 year olds voted in 2018, more than double their turnout in 2014.

- 2014: 18% of Voters Were Under 40
- 2018: 24% of Voters Were Under 40

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Gen Z and Millennials are starting to show up in numbers that could change the country. Should these trends hold in 2020, young Americans can help power progressive victories up-and-down the ballot. But a major shift in the makeup of the electorate does not happen overnight – it takes record investment and organization.

In 2018, NextGen America ran the largest youth vote program in American history across 11 battleground states. Our program registered over 257,000 young people to vote and reached over 7 million young people between 18 and 35 years old in person, online, through the mail, and over text. Democrats could win every election if young people vote at the same rate as older Americans. NextGen’s organizing efforts led to young people voting at higher rates than the population writ large. Young people vote if we engage them.

TACTICS WITH IMPACTS
Our program isn’t limited to face-to-face conversations. NextGen focused our digital, mail, and texting programs on progressive young voters aged 18-35 who either have never voted before or are sporadic voters at best. These efforts increased turnout of young voters dramatically.

Focus on Young People of Color
We doubled down on efforts to mobilize young people of color in our states. We emphasized organizing at HBCUs and minority serving institutions. We used content and materials made by and for young people of color. These efforts were highly successful at increasing turnout.

Turnout: 18-35 Sporadic/Non-voters in NextGen States

- no outreach: 39%
- got NextGen GOTV mail: 48%
- got NextGen text: 43%
- got NextGen digital ad: 40%

Factors With Impacts

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caucasians</th>
<th>African Americans</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>Asian Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no outreach</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organized by NextGen</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
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Focus: 18-35 by Race/Ethnicity in NextGen States

Turnout: 18-35 by Race/Ethnicity in NextGen States

- Caucasian: 66%
- African American: 61%
- Latinx: 58%
- Asian American: 61%

+5pts
+10pts
+10pts
+7pts

37% turnout by registered voters 18-29 nationwide
59% turnout by those registered by NextGen
60% turnout by those organized by NextGen
65% turnout by those pledged to vote by NextGen
SPRING AND SUMMER 2018

In January, we onboarded 345 “student fellows” who kicked off our voter registration program with a bang, allowing us to mobilize a new crop of volunteers and start to create the young voters who would power the blue wave.

In June, we brought more than 350 fellows, organizers, and staff from around the country to Detroit for “Camp NextGen” — the largest youth vote training in history. For three days, we learned campaigning skills, shared organizing best practices, and took action: knocking doors in swing Michigan Congressional districts and participating in the largest phonebank in youth vote history! After Camp NextGen, our team hit the streets in their states to register voters in their communities. Ultimately, we collected 58,276 pledge-to-vote cards and 16,670 voter registration forms over the summer.

FALL 2018

In two weeks of “back to school” events, our teams completed 10,000 volunteer shifts, gathered 65,000 commitments to vote and registered more than 100,000 young people to vote. On National Voter Registration Day, our team registered 7,347 voters in about 12 hours — one new voter every 6 seconds! We leaned into goofy tactics, knowing that humor always leads to greater success with young people. Between lip sync battles, “Donut Forget To Vote” giveaways, and “Vote Goat” petting zoos, we were able to inspire young voters into action. 

Young people often cite lack of information as a reason for not voting, so we distributed over one million voter guides in our states. Our voter guides contrasted candidates’ positions on the issues that young people care about and cleared up misinformation about voting. 

In our Get Out The Vote push, we knocked over 1 million doors, sent more than 6.7 million texts, and provided constant support for young voters experiencing issues at the polls.

PRIMARY SEASON

Our teams ran big primary election “Get Out The Vote” campaigns to get sporadic voters used to casting a ballot. We hosted 12 “Keeping Up With The Candidates” forums with Democratic primary candidates. Young voters asked candidates about the issues that matter most to them, and also watched the candidates perform a talent show act and answer questions about their Starbucks orders and Netflix binges.

DIRECT MAIL

We sent mail to millions of voters, knowing it still works for young people. We sent 3 million voter registration packets out and got 93,000 completed voter registration forms returned. We sent 2.3 million pieces of “social pressure” get out the vote mail, including a report card which works to shame young non-voters. We sent 1 million “registration reassurance” postcards, reminding those least likely to vote that it’s easy to cast a ballot. We sent voter guides to young voters to ensure our voters could identify which candidates on their ballot were progressives.

DIGITAL ADVERTISING

No youth vote program is complete without talking to young voters online. We identified six million potential young voters in our states who we couldn’t reach with just face-to-face interaction, including millions of young people who had never voted before, a cohort that rarely gets contacted by political campaigns. Over 12 weeks, from August through Election Day, we ran ads that were anything but your “typical” political ads, including a dance performance video accompanied by the audio of an Obama speech and ads comparing Republicans to a sledgehammer smashing young people’s hopes and dreams. We ran these ads not only on Facebook and YouTube, but also on platforms where political campaigns don’t often focus, including running the first ever political ad on the online gaming streaming service Twitch.

We also highlighted the work of our teams on the ground online, knowing that when young people hear from other young people like them, they tend to take action. We promoted Facebook events, created Snapchat filters, and promoted tweets from our organizers to our full audience. The organizer tweets performed extremely well, driving an engagement rate 324% higher than other NextGen-branded tweets.

HOW WE DID IT

The Year in Field Organizing

The Year in Communications

over a quarter of a million young voters registered
HOW WE DID IT

The Year in Special Projects

YOUTH RESEARCH PROJECT
At the end of 2017, we launched a massive research project to dig deeper into the attitudes that drive young people to vote or not. Through in-depth interviews, two rounds of focus groups and polls, and more, we developed a model to better understand each voter’s attitudes and a few powerful messages to use. One key message stood out as particularly effective across all young people and we repeated it every day during the campaign: “There’s power in numbers: 70 million Americans ages 18-35 are eligible to vote — more than any other age group. But since we vote at half the rate of older Americans, politicians ignore our needs. If we show up to vote, people in power will have to listen to us.”

OUR LIVES, OUR VOTE
Following the mass shooting in Parkland, a movement of young people took to the streets to demand common sense gun reform from their elected officials. To help grow that young voter energy, NextGen partnered with Giffords, Everytown for Gun Safety, and ACRONYM to launch Our Lives, Our Vote — a program to empower high school-aged Americans to vote out politicians beholden to the NRA by registering their peers to vote. We supported 11 community organizations to register 63,273 high school students to vote in person, online, and through mail and hosted 450+ events at high schools.

BLACK LIVES RISING
We ran a $1 million effort to increase turnout among young Black voters in thirteen cities across six battleground states called Black Lives Rising. Black Lives Rising collaborated with organizations run by and for young Black people, like Color of Change PAC, WokeVote, and Black Futures Lab, to host events and canvasses and create unique digital ads to boost Black youth turnout.

Lessons Learned
Over the course of a year of organizing, we learned hundreds of new lessons. Here’s our Top 5:

1. Let young people be young people.
We asked our teams of young staff and volunteers to be their irreverent selves online and offline. We let young people talk to reporters and we promoted their best social media content to target other young people. This authenticity allowed us to reach more voters more effectively, and made our teams excited to share their stories with their own networks of young non-voters.

2. Start early and train often.
We started organizing in youth-dense communities more than a year before the 2018 elections. Our work building relationships and trust with community members, campus administrators, and local election officials allowed us to surpass our voter registration goals and counteract misinformation. Voters we started organizing in 2017 turned out 10 points higher in 2018 than people we only talked to in the election year.

3. Be one with the internet.
The internet is full of creative content that no marketing agency would ever come up with. We let our team be creative and didn’t shut down weird, risky ideas. We mirrored the content that young people engage with online and tested it with real voters. Had we been risk-averse, some of our best performing content may have been cut.

4. Mail works with young people.
Snail mail is still an effective tactic with young people. While young people are more itinerant than their elders, we can see that our mail programs helped register nearly 100,000 youth and increased turnout amongst sporadic young voters.

5. Prepare for attacks on voting rights.
The Republican party has lost young voters for a generation and know they can only win if young people are discouraged from casting a ballot. Whether it’s last minute changes to polling places, reduced early vote hours, long lines in campus precincts, or discriminatory voter ID laws, voter suppression is real.
NextGen's successes in 2018 were tremendous, but they didn’t happen overnight. **Millions of hours of work helped form the building blocks of success.**

### By the Numbers

NextGen America organized in 11 states in the 2018 cycle. Candidates we supported won 69% of their elections thanks to our 750 staff and 16,000+ volunteers.

#### VOTER TURNOUT: 18–35 YEAR OLDS

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<thead>
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<th>2018</th>
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<tbody>
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#### INCREASED TURNOUT OF NEXTGEN TARGETS

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### NATIONALS

- **VOTER TURNOUT:**
  - 2014: 21.1%
  - 2018: 41.5%
  - ORGANIZED BY NEXTGEN: 60.9%

### STATE RESULTS

- **Arizona:**
  - 2014: 15.0%
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  - ORGANIZED BY NEXTGEN: 58.5%

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THE STATES

CALIFORNIA

In 2016, seven congressional districts voted for Hillary Clinton for President and a Republican for Congress. In 2018, we flipped all seven of those seats by activating young people on the ground. Due to the “jungle” June primary system, several of our target districts were at risk of having no Democratic candidates in the general election. We scaled up our program quickly to fix this, knocking 6,500+ doors in two weeks and sending digital ads and mail to sporadic voters. Ultimately, youth turnout in the primary more than doubled over 2014 levels and a Democratic candidate made it to the ballot in all of our target districts. In November, our success continued as some of the key campuses and precincts organized by our teams saw radical increases in turnout. In one UC-Irvine precinct, turnout increased ten times over 2016 levels as Katie Porter booted Mimi Walters from her seat in Congress in CA-45.

106K+ doors knocked
SEVEN seats flipped

Last year, Kyrsten Sinema was elected the first Democratic Senator from Arizona in a generation, and young voters helped push her over the top. Our team organized at the three big universities (U of A, ASU, and Northern Arizona University), on more than a dozen community college campuses, and in some of the most youth-dense neighborhoods in the country. Registering voters and knocking doors in the Arizona heat can be tough, so our team got creative with youth vote “Pool Parties, Poll Parties” and “Paletas (popsicles) to the Polls” events. Our hard work paid off when young Arizonans doubled their vote share over 2014 levels, helping Sinema win. Interestingly, for the first time in years, Democrats won both young white and people of color by considerable margins — winning white young Arizonans by 7 points and young Arizonans of color by an incredible 53 points.

WISCONSIN

While Democrats disappointing lost Wisconsin in 2016, NextGen won an opportunity to create a program to replace GOP Governor Scott Walker and protect Sen. Tammy Baldwin. Our work began in April, when record youth turnout powered progressive Justice Rebecca Dallet to a double digit win in the state Supreme Court elections. In two wards at UW-Madison, turnout increased 354% and 559% compared to 2014. According to Madison Mayor Paul Soglin, “There was a sleeping giant and it is awake and that is millennials and college students.” This trend continued in November, as young voters helped register 2,000+ young black students all over the state kicked Walker out of office and elected progressive Democrat Gov. Tony Evers and Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes.

NEVADA

NextGen won every targeted race in 2018, electing a Democratic Governor, Senator, and state legislature. The number of votes cast by young people increased from 54,000 in 2014 to 120,000 in 2018. Since young Nevadans voted 2-to-1 for now-Senator Jacky Rosen, we can assume that the upsurge in young voters alone provided her entire vote margin of victory. The number of votes cast by young people increased from 50,000 over 2014 levels youth turnover over 2014 levels

We worked with partners to pass two ballot measures too: creating Automatic Voter Registration and increasing the amount of renewable energy in the state, helping show young voters the direct impact of participating.

2.5x youth turnout
over 2014 levels
PASSED
AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

IOWA

NextGen has organized in Iowa consistently since 2014, and with competitive gubernatorial and congressional elections last year, our work paid off. Thanks in large part to our organizers, youth turnout levels in 2018 were the highest in any midterm in a decade. Iowa law allows organizers to petition to place early vote polling locations on campuses, and our team collected thousands of signatures to get 19 early vote polling places on campuses. All this hard work paid off as a youth voting surge helped elect Rep. Cindy Axne and Rep. Abby Finkenauer to be the first female members of Congress representing Iowa in Washington.

2x youth vote share
over 2014 levels
FIRST DEM. SENATOR IN 42 YEARS

IOWA

2014 levels, helping Sinema win. Interestingly, for the first time in years, Democrats won both young white and people of color by considerable margins — winning white young Arizonans by 7 points and young Arizonans of color by an incredible 53 points.

ARIZONA

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MICHIGAN

Reversing trends from 2016, Democrats won nearly every statewide election in 2018 and flipped two US House districts from red-to-blue. Our team helped make this happen by training folks to organize in their own communities. 91% of our organizing team was from the towns, cities, and campuses they were organizing.

In two wards, turnout increased
354% & 559%
NEW PROGRESSIVE GOVERNOR

highest youth midterm turnout in a decade

Further, Michigan was a key state for our Black Lives Rising program. With several events in partnership with millennial media outlet Blavity, our organizers helped to register more than 2,000 young black students around the state, and they delivered. The young Black Michiganders that we contacted turned out 14 points higher than those we did not contact.
NextGen has been organizing in New Hampshire since 2014 and 2018 was a big year. With GOP Gov. Chris Sununu’s blessing, New Hampshire Republicans passed laws that made voting intentionally confusing for students. Young people weren’t going to let them suppress the vote without consequences, and we helped collect thousands of petition signatures opposing the bills and organized a series of actions at the State House calling for the Governor to veto the bill. After he signed it, student voting rights became a top issue in the 2018 elections as we worked hard to hold the Governor accountable.

Our efforts to get young people to register and vote on Election Day were staggeringly successful. In one Keene State College precinct, 41% of the vote came from same-day registrants. We provided over 2,900 students with rides to the polls across the state, each ride being a young person who might not have voted otherwise.

We doubled the number of registered same-day voters and mail GOTV push to encourage progressive voters to turn out and vote for someone other than Morganelli. Ultimately, Susan Ellis Wild, a progressive candidate, won the primary and the general election, which was powered by youth turnout more than three times higher than 2014 levels in her district.

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With teams on the ground in 10 key states, NextGen staff and volunteers are already working hard on the three core components of our program:

1. WIN elections by activating young people:
   While the Presidential election looms large, we will turn out young voters year-round in every election (including the Presidential primaries) to ensure young people are ready for November 2020. NextGen staff and volunteers work daily to register more young people to vote and get them to commit to cast a ballot in every election.

2. EXPAND voting rights and youth access to the ballot:
   By fighting to create more on-campus polling places, expanding early vote rules and more, our team is working with local election officials and university administrations to make it easier to vote.

3. FIGHT for our progressive values:
   Our teams advocate for progressive change in state legislatures and in Washington, pushing the voice of young Americans into the forefront of the conversation, and holding elected officials accountable to their campaign promises.

For progressives to defeat climate change, strive for racial justice, and protect the most vulnerable in our communities, we must elect a Democrat to the White House, make gains in Congress, and win enough state races to get rid of extreme GOP gerrymanders.

What’s next?

NextGen Rising’s mission is to fight for a progressive future by growing and wielding the grassroots political power of young people in elections — and 2019 and 2020 give us ample opportunity to do that.
2018 was a transformative year for young people in American politics. From the March for Our Lives to the Sunrise Movement’s call for a Green New Deal, young people stepped up to challenge Donald Trump and the Republicans and make progress on the issues facing our generation.

NextGen’s staff and volunteers come from every corner of the country and used the power of electoral organizing to rebuke the bigoted politics espoused by the President. We elected a new generation of leadership from State Houses to Washington, DC, and we did it by being fiercer, hungrier, and more committed than any opposition who stood in our way.

Together, powered by joy and compassion, we showed the world just what can happen when young people speak with one unified voice — and we’re not done yet. For now, we hope you enjoy this report and celebrate our successes. But then we hope you will roll up your sleeves and join us as we turn out the youth vote in 2019 and 2020!

Thank you,
The NextGen Rising Team
To get involved, visit our website at nextgenamerica.org/rising
For questions or concerns, please email feedback@nextgenamerica.org