



Voting as a Social Work Intervention

Engaging Social Workers and Students in the 2024 Election
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2024

Objectives

1. Present voting and voter engagement as a social work intervention
2. Share new tools and resources for students, schools, and organizations on VotingIsSocialWork.org



About Voting Is Social Work

The National Social Work Voter Mobilization Campaign seeks to integrate nonpartisan voter registration, education, and outreach into social work education and practice.

- All new website and resources at VotingIsSocialWork.org
- Endorsed by more than 20 professional social work organizations

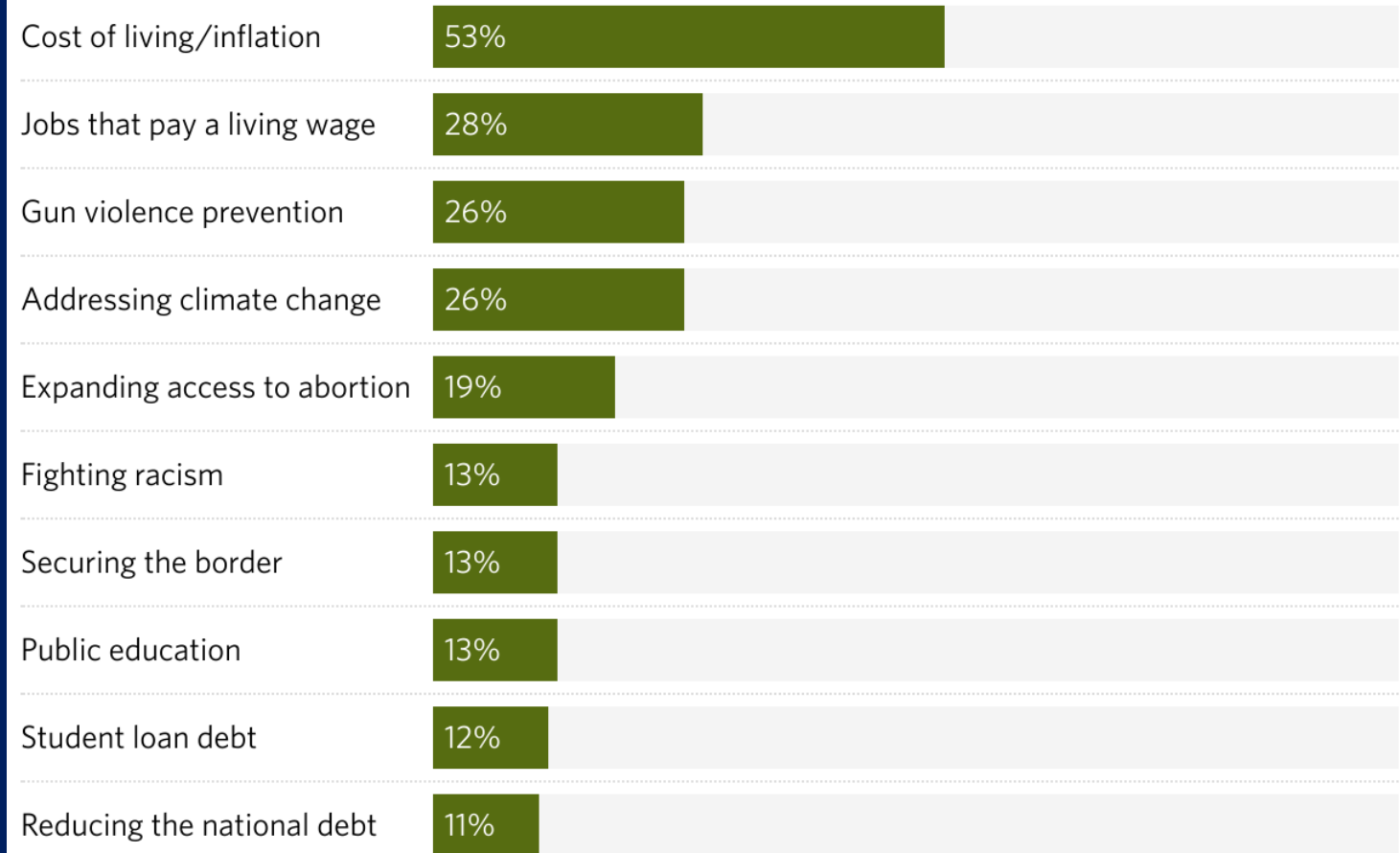


Students are not apathetic but face barriers to participation

- Confusing and changing election policies
- Lack of outreach and information
- Inequities and neglect in basic civic learning

The Economy, Gun Violence, and Climate Are Young People's Top Issues

The percentage of youth, ages 18-34, who selected each issue as one of their top three priorities.



Note: Only issues chosen by at least 10% of all youth are shown

CIRCLE Tufts University Tisch College · CIRCLE

Source: CIRCLE Pre-2024 Election Youth Survey

Why Voting Matters to Social Work's Mission and Impact

Voting is good for people

- Communities and individuals who vote are better off in important and numerous measures of well-being.
- Voting is associated with higher earnings, education, and health; stronger connections within communities; less risky behaviors in young people; and lower rates of recidivism.

The first time I voted in 2018, I was able to vote in the first Black man from Upstate New York into Congress and elect New York's first Black female Attorney General and that was really important to me."

[Sahara Williams '22 University of Hartford](#)



Voting Benefits Communities

Health and Democracy Index

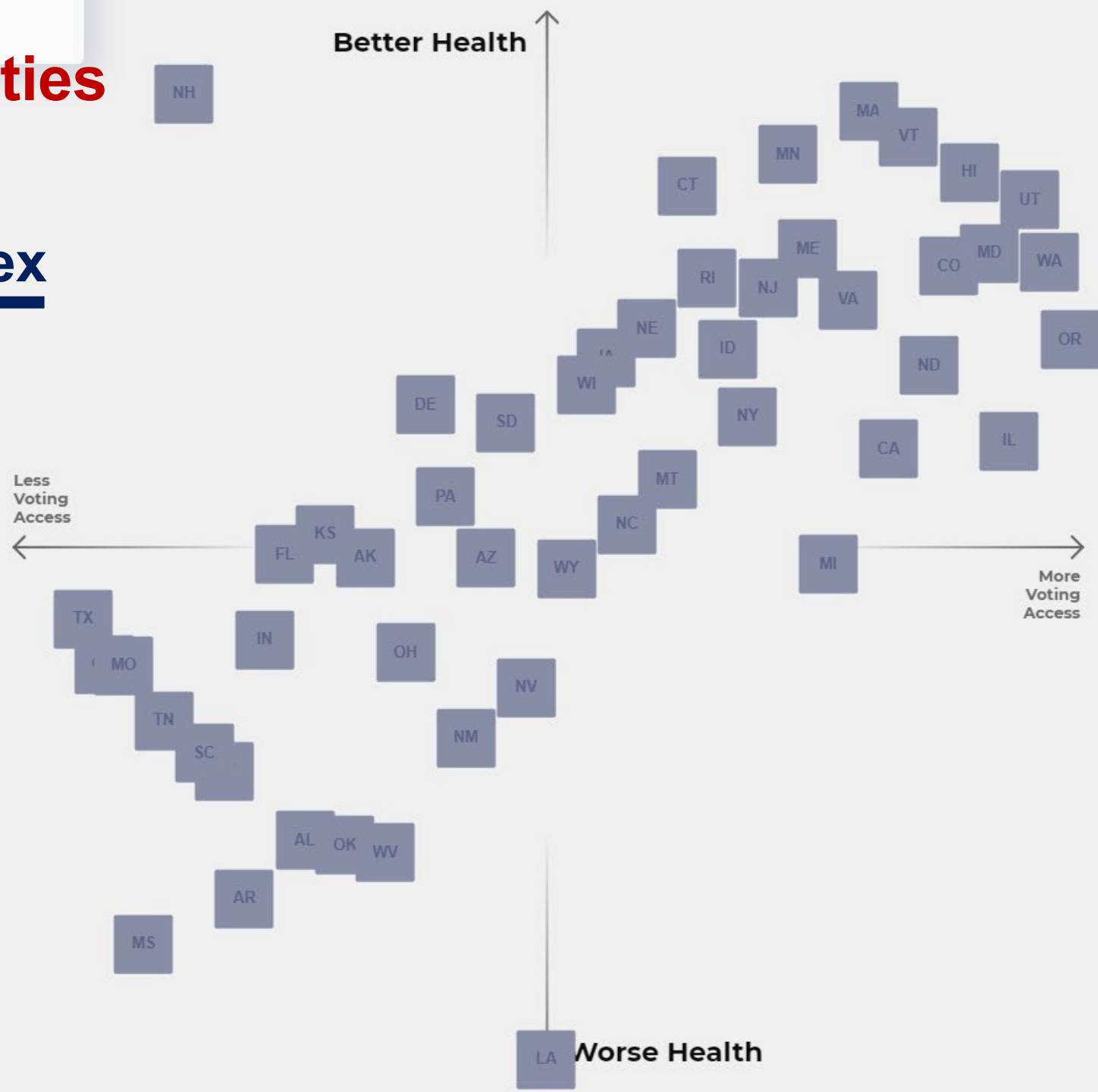
OVERALL FINDINGS:

More Voting Access, Better Health Outcomes

States with more inclusive voting policies and greater levels of civic participation are healthier.

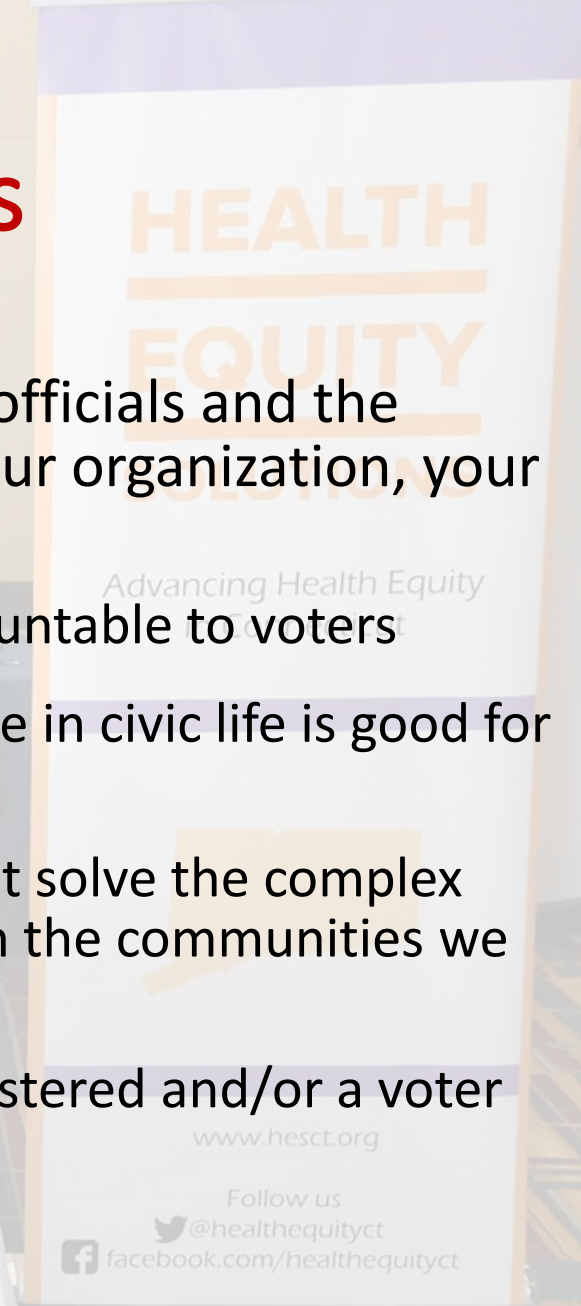
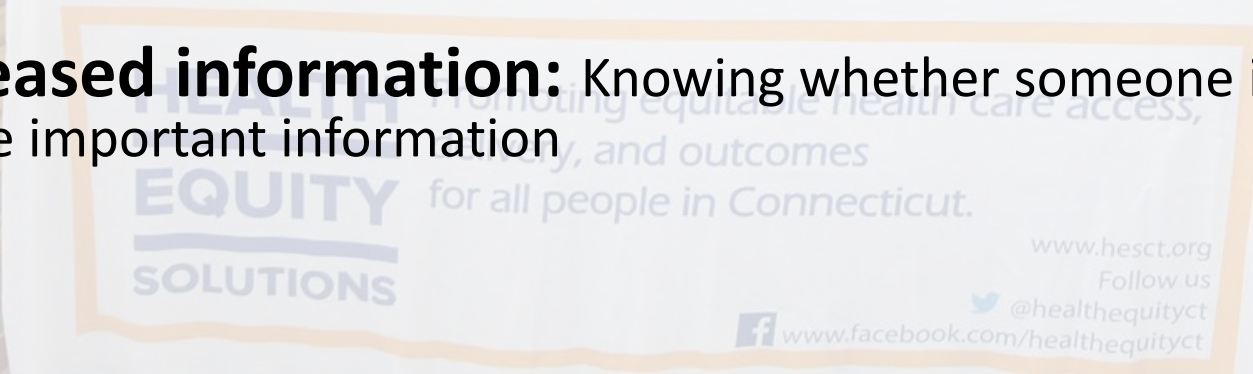
democracyindex.hdhp.us/

References: <https://www.healthydemocracyhealthypeople.org/>
Schraufnagel, S. (2024). Voting Restrictions and Public Health: An Analysis of State Variation 1996–2020. *State and Local Government Review*, 56(1), 60-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160323X231202421>



Engaging voters benefits organizations

- **Increased visibility:** Building relationships with elected officials and the community you serve brings awareness and attention to your organization, your mission and your clients.
- **Increased accountability:** Elected officials feel more accountable to voters
- **Increased impact:** Supporting people to vote and participate in civic life is good for communities and outcomes.
- **Increased funding:** Philanthropy is recognizing that we can't solve the complex issues facing our communities without building political power in the communities we serve.
- **Increased information:** Knowing whether someone is registered and/or a voter can be important information





Fixing anything
starts by shifting
power to those
most impacted





Elected officials prioritize the needs of voters.

Studies confirm strong correlations between voter turnout, resource allocation and policy priorities at the federal, state and local levels.

Barriers to Voting

- **Voting is complicated:** 50 sets of deadlines, rules and voting processes
- **Inequities in civic learning and civic resources**
- **One-party dominant and safe voting districts through gerrymandering**
- **Felony disenfranchisement:**
Generational impact on political power
- **Lack of outreach and connection.**

Engagement Barriers

- **Nothing changes**
- **I hate politics**
- **My vote doesn't matter**
- **System is rigged**
- **I don't like the candidates**



INTENTIONAL DISENGAGEMENT:

Structural barriers feed
engagement barriers:

**Social Workers reach people who
are less likely to vote**

Intentional disengagement

“Yeah, it’s intimidating like I said, going up to [the ballot]. I don't know nothing, it’s like being illiterate. I can't explain it, it is very intimidating. So suddenly, I don't want to learn about it...but I need to know it because my vote will make a difference. But until I get educated about it, I'm nervous.” [Focus group participant, recently released from prison, April 2023](#)

“(I didn't vote) because I didn't know where to go at and they didn't send me any mail tell me where I could vote,” [Baltimore Resident](#)

““We internalized and almost embraced this idea that our voices don’t matter regardless of what we want to do. Regardless of what we actually believe in, our voices won’t make an impact,” Mehra said. “I think that prevents people from going to a lot of polls, because if everyone around you is telling you, and everyone around you believes in the idea that your voice doesn’t really matter, you’re not necessarily motivated to go out and actually vote and engage with these elections.” [Aakrisht Mehra, a 16-year-old senior from Dublin, Calif.](#)

Implications fo social work education

- “Shoulds” are not enough. We need to prepare students to fulfil our Code of Ethics:
 - Why voting matters
 - Basic civics, including how to vote and engage others and levels of government
 - Opportunities to practice registration and engagement in the classroom and field
- Voting is a WE activity
- The consequences of not voting are steep, especially in local and state elections.
- Voting creates connections to ones community.
- Social workers and social services reach the people who are least likely to vote.



So where do I
start?

Give students the WHY & the HOW of Voting and Basic Civics

- At an all-school event (with civic partners)
- In all required micro and macro course(s) and field
- Through a skills lab

Voter engagement skills are best learned by doing!



Support Practice Innovations

- Share voter activities for educational contracts with field instructors in orientation, supervision and training.
- Provide free CEs to field supervisors on nonpartisan voter engagement and/or basic civics



Create a Culture of Civic Awareness

- Share information about all elections with students, faculty and field agencies
- Promote upcoming elections and important dates
- Provide links for registration and nonpartisan resources
- *Allow students election day off to vote*
- *Give field credit for volunteering or serving as election officials.*



Check out our website Votingissocialwork.org

Tools for Democracy

This website provides tools and resources for social work educators, students, professionals, and organizations to integrate voter registration, education, and outreach into practice, service delivery, and community life.



Why Voting Matters

LEARN WHY



Get Ready to Vote

GET READY



Help Others to Vote

LEARN HOW



Resources for Schools and Organizations

RESOURCES

**Take the Power of
Three Pledge and
engage at least three
voters this election**

**Check your voter
registration**

Preparing Social Work Students for Practice: Sample Political and Voter Activities for Educational Contracts

The Nine CSWE Competencies:

- C1: Demonstrate Ethical & Professional Behavior
- C2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial Economic & Environmental Justice
- C3: Engage in Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice
- C4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research & Research-Informed Practice
- C5: Engage in Policy Practice
- C6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
- C7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
- C8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, & Communities
- C9: Evaluate practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, & Communities

Example Practice Activity	Alignment with Core Competencies								
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9
Help clients and/or staff look up who represents them at the local, state and federal level and how to contact them.	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Use supervision to identify policies that negatively impact their clients and/or communities and which branch of government has the power to change them.	✓	✓			✓				
Look up voting rules and deadlines in your state, including when general, special and primary elections take place, rules for voting with a felony conviction, and how other special populations can register and vote.	✓	✓	✓						
Using resources on VotingisSocialWork.org, identify ways your agency could add nonpartisan voter engagement activities to services and culture. Discuss in supervision.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Implement one or more voter engagement activities at your agency (e.g., add questions to intake form)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	

Help students fulfill the profession's Code of Ethics to support political participation and action. Include civic engagement activities to your student's Education Contract

Promote Civic Engagement all year

- ☐ Host trainings about a variety of topics that connect to democracy and the issues your agency cares about
- ☐ Invite elected officials to your agency to hear about issues facing your clients
- ☐ Post and contact information about elected officials and encourage clients and staff to reach out
- ☐ Help clients contact their elected officials
- ☐ Encourage clients and staff to sign up as poll workers.
- ☐ Provide training and opportunities for staff to learn about local and state government
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Notes and questions:

Next steps

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Support the political power of the individuals and communities you serve. Use our Voter Guide for Organizations to get ideas.

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Questions??



Thank you!

For voting resources and information: go to

www.VotingIsSocialWork.org

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