

Adolescents hold differing views on civic and political activity

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The record numbers of young people who took part in last year's presidential election, along with high schools' raised expectations that students participate in community service, have led to growing research on teens' civic beliefs and behavior. A new study finds that most young people consider civic activity to be obligatory, but their judgments and justifications about different types of civic involvement vary by gender and a variety of other factors.

"There is growing interest in adolescent civic and community involvement, because involvement during adolescence is thought to lead to increased civic activity in [adulthood](#)," notes Aaron Metzger, a postdoctoral research specialist at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the study's lead author. The research, conducted when Metzger was at the University of Rochester, appears in the March/April 2009 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

The study looked at more than 300 primarily White middle-class American teens ages 15 to 19. It found that on the whole, teens thought it was more important to be involved in community service and standard political activities like voting than in social movements like taking part in political protests. Boys put a higher priority on political involvement than girls, who thought community service was more important. The more [teens](#) took part in civic activities, the less they saw such involvement as a personal issue and the more they viewed it as an obligation.

"Adolescents' civic involvement may lead them to view different types of civic activities as moral and conventional rather than personal, which then could contribute to their continued involvement into adulthood," according to Metzger.

Source: Society for Research in Child Development ([news](#) : [web](#))

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