

# Economic and social disadvantage can affect young citizens' voter turnout

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A study recently published in the *Journal of Social Issues* illustrates how certain disadvantages experienced in adolescence, such as early pregnancy, dropping out of high school, being arrested, or going to an underprivileged school, contribute to lower voter turnout in young adulthood. In addition, the types of disadvantage vary across racial groups.

Julianna Sandell Pacheco and Eric Plutzer of The Pennsylvania State University used data from the National Education Longitudinal Survey to measure disadvantage and voter participation.

Hardships affected cumulative turnout of disadvantaged youth, but in a manner specific to each racial group. For White youth, early pregnancy or parenthood leads to dropping out of high school, and the combined impact of these two events resulting in a turnout decline of more than 30 percent. For Blacks, being arrested is associated with dropping out of high school, subsequently decreasing turnout by more than 30 percent.

Institutions have both a positive and negative influence on youth voter turnout, acting to both increase and decrease the impact of these disadvantages on political participation. Whites who are poor are more likely to attend disadvantaged middle and high schools, which additively decreases turnout. Community colleges, however, increase youth voter turnout immensely among Blacks.

"The cumulative disadvantages experienced by some youths contribute

to lower voter turnout," the authors conclude. "Rising economic segregation and economic inequality has the potential to increase political inequality in the United States."

Source: Wiley

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