

## CENTER FOR YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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### **Young Elected Leaders' representation in the NJ Assembly & Senate has declined.**

#### ***The election of young leaders to serve in the New Jersey State Capitol has decreased since 2019***

**New Brunswick, New Jersey (December 19, 2023)** – According to new data collected by the Center for Youth Political Participation at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, only two members of the New Jersey State Legislature are 35 years old or younger, Honorable William B. Sampson (D-31) and Honorable Cody D. Miller (D-4). The NJ State Legislature has no senators under the age of 35. This marks a decline from 2021 when the legislature saw a significant increase in the number of Young Elected Leaders from zero in 2019 to five in 2021.

The low number of Assembly and Senate members in the State Capitol reflects a representational deficit of the state's youngest citizenry. Approximately 25 percent of the New Jersey state voting-age population is aged 35 or younger, yet they are just 1.7 percent of state legislators. The significant underrepresentation of young adults in the New Jersey State Legislature indicates that more work is needed to balance age representation in the state's legislative bodies.

Despite a drop in legislators under the age of 35, Millennials (born between 1981-1996) have increased their representation in the General Assembly and Senate since 2019. Today, Millennials are 11.3 percent of Assemblymembers and 7.5 percent of Senators, an increase of +1.3 and +5.0 percent, respectively since 2019.

- Millennial representation in General Assembly in 2019 was 10 percent, today it is 11.3 percent
- Millennial Representation in the NJ Senate in 2019 was 2.5 percent, today it is 7.5 percent

Gen X (born between 1965-1980) and Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) maintain significant representation in both the General Assembly and the Senate.

- Approximately 48 percent of the NJ Assemblymembers are Gen X
- Approximately 40 percent of NJ Senators are Gen X
- Approximately 35 percent of NJ Assembly members are Baby Boomers
- Approximately 48 percent of NJ Senators are Baby Boomers

The continued representation of the Millennial generation has led to an overall decrease in the average age of the legislature. The average age in the NJ General Assembly is 54.8, a decrease of 5.1 years from 2019 (59.9 years old). Similarly, the average age in the NJ State Senate is 59.1, a decrease of 7.7 years from 2019 (66.8 years old).

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This is important as age diversity in legislative bodies has important impacts on political engagement, trust, and efficacy, especially as young people feel inspired to get out the vote when they see candidates who look like them. Moreover, research has demonstrated that younger representatives bring important perspectives to decision-making tables, leading to enhanced democratic representation. Continued efforts to increase young adult representation in the NJ State Legislature are, therefore, needed.

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### **YOUNG ELECTED LEADERS PROJECT (YELP)**

The [Young Elected Leaders Project](#) (YELP) is an initiative of the Center for Youth Political Participation, which is a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. Launched in 2002 with funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the YELP studies and works with young people who run for or hold public office. We provide unique insight into youth representation in U.S. political institutions and study young leaders' experiences in public office.

### **CENTER FOR YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

The [Center for Youth Political Participation](#) (CYPP) is a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. CYPP celebrates and supports political learning and engagement among young people through research, public service and education, driven by the potential impact of Gen Z on American democracy. Comprised of three programs; RU Ready, RU Voting and the Young Elected Leaders Project, the Center's work encourages young adults to see themselves as part of the political process at all stages of life.

### **THE EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS**

The [Eagleton Institute of Politics](#) at Rutgers University—New Brunswick studies how American politics and government work and change, analyzes how the democracy might improve, and promotes political participation and civic engagement. The Institute explores state and national politics through research, education, and public service, linking the study of politics with its day-to-day practice.

### **RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEW BRUNSWICK**

[Rutgers University—New Brunswick](#) is where Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, began more than 250 years ago. Ranked among the world's top 60 universities, Rutgers's flagship university is a leading public research institution and a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. It is home to internationally acclaimed faculty and has 12 degree granting schools and a Division I Athletics program. It is the Big Ten Conference's most diverse university. Through its community of teachers, scholars, artists, scientists, and healers, Rutgers is equipped as never before to transform lives.