

Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes  
Toward Politics and Public Service:  
17th Edition

Institute of Politics, Harvard University



March 9, 2010

For more information:

Esten Perez, Director of Communications  
[Esten\\_Perez@harvard.edu](mailto:Esten_Perez@harvard.edu)

John Della Volpe, Director of Polling  
[John\\_Della\\_Volpe@harvard.edu](mailto:John_Della_Volpe@harvard.edu)

The Institute of Politics  
Harvard University  
79 JFK Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 495-1360

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	Page 3
Overview.....	Page 4
Demographic and Political Profile.....	Page 5
President Obama’s Job Performance Stable Since November; Republicans Eying Midterms; and U.S. Military Most Trusted Institution.....	Page 6
Economic Anxiety is Palpable; Majority Concerned About Keeping Their Head Above Water; Nearly Half of Undergraduates Concerned About Staying in College.....	Page 9
Millennials Remain Committed to Community Service, the Honor of Political Engagement is Questioned.....	Page 13
Millennials’ Emerging Ideology Shaped by Social Justice and Role of the U.S. Military.....	Page 15
Conclusion.....	Page 20
The Survey Group.....	Page 21
Appendix.....	Page 22

# Introduction

Conceived by two Harvard undergraduate students during the winter of 1999, Harvard University's Institute of Politics Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes toward Politics and Public Service began in 2000 as a national survey of 18 to 24 year old college undergraduates. Over the last ten years, this research project has grown in scope and mission, as this report now includes an analysis of 18 to 29 year olds on a broad set of longitudinal and current events issues.

## Methodology

The first survey of N=800 college undergraduates was completed in the Spring of 2000 and all interviews were conducted over the telephone; since that time 16 subsequent surveys have been released. Over this period, a number of modifications have been made to the scope and methodology in order to ensure that sampling methods most accurately capture the view of the population of young adults in a manner that will be useful to both the Institute of Politics and the broader research and political communities.

- In 2001, the survey was expanded from N=800 to N=1,200 college students in order to capture a robust sample of the undergraduate population;
- In 2006, the survey expanded to N=2,400 interviews, as we began interviewing members of the 18 to 24 year old cohort who were not currently attending a four-year college or university; in addition, because of changing uses of technology among younger Americans, in 2006 the survey moved from a telephone poll to a survey that was administered online;

- In 2009, we expanded our scope a third time to include the population of young adults aged 18 to 29. While we will continue to report on the attitudes and opinions of U.S. college students, this change in our research subject was made to allow for better and more direct comparisons to the broader set of election and general public opinion research tracking data which tends to track the 18 to 29 year old demographic group. Our Fall political tracking surveys will include samples of N=2,000 while the Spring semester's research project will be more in-depth and include N=3,000 interviews in both English and Spanish. Using Knowledge Networks as our research partner, the Institute of Politics surveys use RDD and Address-Based Sampling (ABS) frames and are administered online (see appendix for more information).

The interviewing period for this survey of N=3,117 18 to 29 year-olds was January 29 to February 22, 2010. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 2.3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. During the interviewing period, the health care debate was the major political issue covered in the media, along with other stories on "Don't Ask Don't Tell," Sarah Palin's CPAC speech, Senator Evan Bayh's retirement and the Austin plane crash.

IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe supervised the survey group of undergraduate students. As always, the IOP survey group would like to thank IOP Director Bill Purcell and Executive Director Catherine McLaughlin for their insight and support over the course of this and all IOP projects.

## Overview

Three months ago, when our 16<sup>th</sup> Institute of Politics survey was released, we found that the Millennial generation was no longer the “deep blue” outlier in American politics that it had been for much of 2007 and 2008. Our poll found that while a majority approved generally of President Obama’s job performance, most disapproved of his handling of major issues such as the economy, health care and the war in Afghanistan. We found a growing concern about America’s federal budget deficit that transcends this generation.

Our latest survey of 3,117 young Americans between 18 and 29 years old, with interviews in both English (91%) and Spanish (9%), is one of the most comprehensive views ever of this generation. The following pages of this report summarizes Millennial views on issues ranging from:

- Political preferences and activity, including voting in the 2010 midterms;
- Opinions of President Obama and Congress;
- Trust in American and international institutions;

- Political ideology and world view;
- The personal effects of the current economy; and
- The use of social networking tools such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter.

Since 2000, our research has consistently shown that young Americans care deeply about their community and their country -- and are willing to participate in public life and all aspects of the political process.

The objective of this survey is to measure the extent to which young adults are likely to remain active in politics and public affairs; understand the drivers of their involvement and uncover ways in which America’s leaders can engage and inspire this generation.

In addition to this report, a top-line report is available that provides responses of the total sample and college students. A SPSS data-file and verbatim responses to relevant questions are available upon request.

## Demographic and Political Profile

For this survey we completed N=3,117 web-enabled interviews with 18 to 29 year old young adults in the United States.

### Demographic profile:

- 50 percent male, 50 percent female;
- 58 percent are between the ages of 18 and 24, 42 percent are between the ages of 25 and 29;
- 61 percent White (non-Hispanic), 19 percent Hispanic, 13 percent African-American (non-Hispanic), 5 percent other and 2 percent 2+ races;
- 42 percent of Hispanics are bilingual, 28 percent are English dominant, 30 percent are Spanish dominant;
- 21 percent are Catholic, 13 percent Protestant, 12 percent Fundamental/Evangelical, 2 percent Jewish, 2 percent Mormon, one percent Muslim, 12 percent another religion, 20 percent cite no religious preference, and 13 percent decline to answer;
- 22 percent are married, 13 percent are living with a partner, one percent are divorced, one percent are separated and 62 percent have never been married;
- 62 percent are employed, 38 percent are not employed (17% are looking for work);
- 83 percent own a cell phone, 35 percent have a landline, and 3 percent have VOIP;
- 79 percent have Internet access at home; 64 percent have a Facebook account, 42 percent MySpace and 15 percent Twitter.

### Current educational status:

- 11 percent of the sample indicated that they are in a 2-year junior or community college, 22 percent in a four-year college, 4 percent in graduate school, one percent in a business or professional school, 2 percent are not enrolled but taking at least one class, and 56 percent of 18 to 29 year olds surveyed are not enrolled in any of these categories;
- 78 percent of college students attend a public institution, 21 percent a private one;
- 53 percent of students attend college in an urban area, 27 percent in a suburb and 20 percent in a small town or rural area.

### Political and ideological profile:

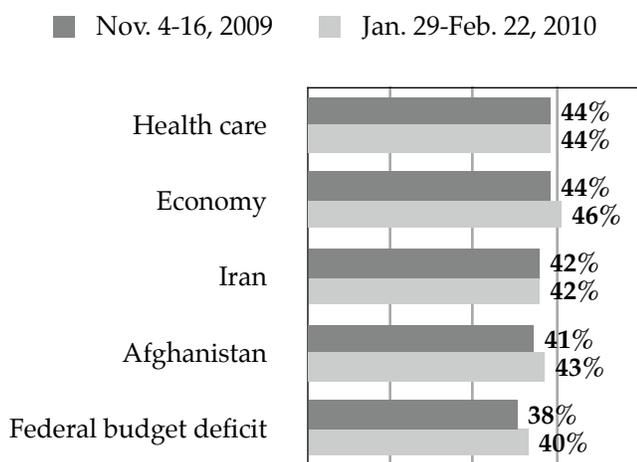
- 67 percent say they are registered to vote;
- 60 percent said they voted in the 2008 general election (43 percent at a polling place, 11 percent by absentee ballot and 6 percent early);
- 31 percent say they definitely will vote in the 2010 midterm elections for Congress;
- 24 percent consider themselves to be politically engaged or active;
- 38 percent self-identify as liberal or leaning liberal, 27 percent moderate and 35 percent conservative or leaning conservative;
- 36 percent consider themselves Democrats, 23 percent Republicans and 40 percent Independents.

# President Obama's Job Performance Stable Since November; Republicans Eying Midterms; and U.S. Military Most Trusted Institution Surveyed

## Job Performance of President Obama, Democrats and Republicans in Congress

Among 18 to 29 year old Americans, the job approval ratings of President Barack Obama have held stable between this survey and the last one conducted by the Institute of Politics between November 4 and November 16, 2009. The President's overall approval rating is down slightly from 58 percent to 56 percent -- while his job approval ratings on five major issues have not changed more than two percentage points. Approval ratings for his handling health care and Iran are unchanged compared to November's survey, while his handling of the economy, Afghanistan and the federal budget deficit have increased two percentage points.

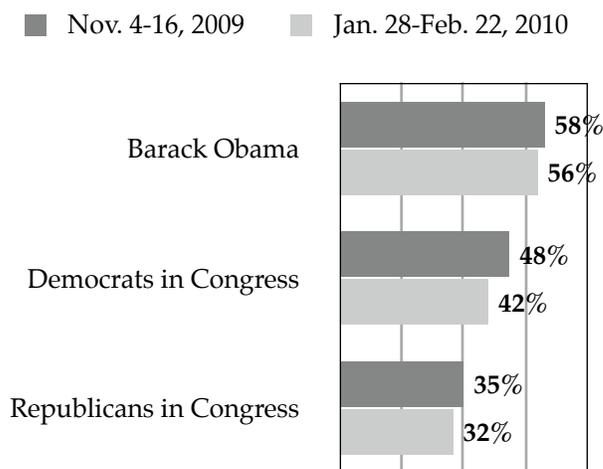
DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE WAY BARACK OBAMA IS HANDLING:  
-- APPROVAL RATINGS --



During this same timeframe, the job performance of Republicans in Congress has decreased three percentage points (from 35% to 32%), while approval of Democrats in Congress

has decreased six percentage points, outside the margin of error.

DO YOU APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF:  
-- APPROVAL RATINGS --



As further evidence perhaps of the discontent in Washington, especially in Congress as noted above, the number of self-identified Independent voters increased six percentage points to 40 percent since November, with Democrats losing four points (36%) and Republicans losing three (23%).

## Behind the President's Job Performance

Similar to our November 2009 polling, the President remains popular among most Democrats (84% approve currently, 86% in November), unpopular among Republicans (21% approve currently, the same as in November) -- with Independents split nearly evenly, 49 percent approve and 47 percent disapprove (the same as in November). Most of the other subgroups

have not changed considerably since November, with the exception of Hispanics who as a group rate the President 12 percentage points lower than they did in the November survey (see below). The following table illustrates the overall approval ratings of the President by subgroup.

OBAMA JOB PERFORMANCE  
BY SUBGROUP

	APPROVE NOV. 2009	APPROVE FEB. 2010
18-29 TOTAL	58%	56%
18-24	60%	55%
25-29	56%	57%
IN 4-YR COLLEGE	57%	60%
DEMOCRAT	86%	84%
REPUBLICAN	21%	21%
INDEPENDENT	49%	49%
WHITE	48%	45%
AFRICAN-AM.	84%	83%
HISPANIC	81%	69%
MALE	56%	53%
FEMALE	60%	59%
NORTHEAST US	66%	56%
MIDWEST US	57%	51%
SOUTH US	52%	53%
WEST US	64%	64%

## Looking Ahead to the Midterm Elections

When 18 to 29 year olds were asked their likelihood of voting in the 2010 elections for Congress, 31 percent indicated that they “definitely will be voting,” which is down five percentage points since our November poll. Among the four-year college segment, 38 percent indicate that they will “definitely be voting,” which compares favorably to our 2006 polling when 34 percent indicated the same in the weeks prior to the election.

A warning sign for Democrats in Congress -- young Republicans under 30 are statistically more likely than young Democrats to say that they will “definitely be voting in November.” Slightly more than two-in-five (41%) Republicans are planning on definitely voting, compared to 35 percent of Democrats and 13 percent of Independents. Additionally, 2008 McCain voters are more likely to say they will definitely vote than 2008 Obama voters (53% to 44%); and lastly, those who disapprove of President Obama’s job performance are more likely to vote than those that approve of his performance (35% to 30%).

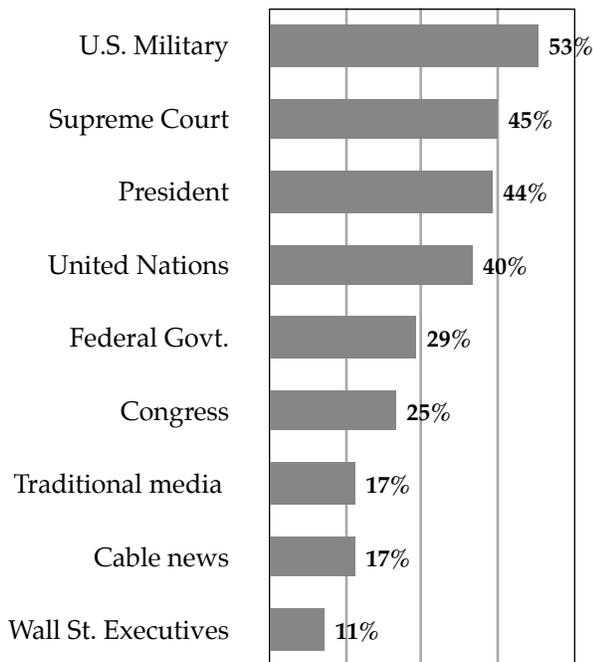
The percentage of young Hispanics who plan on voting is less -- 18 percent -- and even lower when Hispanics who prefer to speak and take our interview in Spanish are polled. One quarter (25%) of English Speaking Hispanics say they will definitely vote, compared to about half that number who prefer to speak Spanish (12%).

## Trust in Government and Other Institutions

In the Fall of 2008, when our polling focused only on 18 to 24 year olds, we found that trust in most of the government institutions we had measured had fallen three years in a row. At that time, the highest rated institutions measured, the U.S. military and the Supreme Court, were considered trustworthy (47%) by less than half of 18 to 24 year olds polled. Trust in the President had fallen to 30 percent.

Today, 52 percent of 18 to 24 year olds trust the U.S. military “to do the right thing,” followed by the Supreme Court (45%) and the President (45%). Despite these improvements among the youngest segment of the 18 to 29 cohort, this generation still holds serious concerns about the trustworthiness of America’s institutions.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU TRUST ...  
TO DO THE RIGHT THING?  
(ALL OF THE TIME / MOST OF THE TIME)  
-- ALL 18-29 YEAR OLDS --



Issues related to trust are confounded further when race is considered. For example:

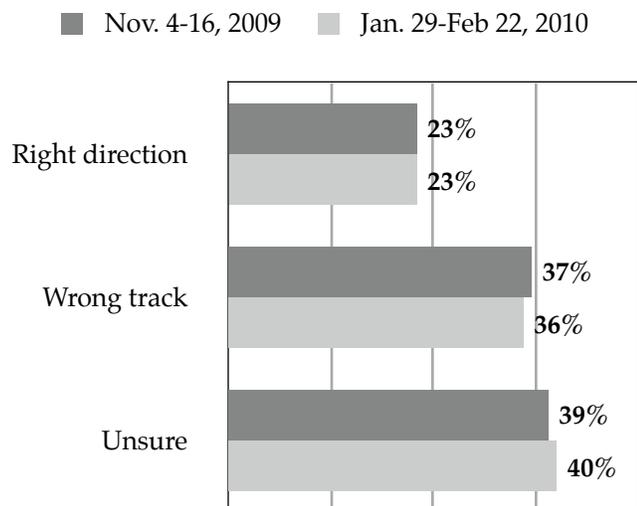
- Whites are more likely to trust the military (57% trust all or most of the time) compared to African Americans (45%) and Hispanics (49%);
- African Americans (61%) are more likely than Whites (39%) and Hispanics (50%) to trust the President;
- Hispanics are more likely than Whites and African Americans to trust the United Nations, the federal government, Congress, traditional and cable news media, and Wall Street Executives; and
- Hispanics who prefer to speak in Spanish are significantly more likely than those who prefer English to trust the United Nations and the federal government -- but not Congress, the military, Supreme Court or the President.

# Economic Anxiety is Palpable; Majority Concerned About Keeping Their Head Above Water; Nearly Half of Undergraduates Concerned About Staying in College

## State of the Country and the Top Issues of National Concern

Similar to the approval ratings of President Obama, the general mood in the country is largely unchanged since our November survey. At the moment, less than one in four (23%) 18 to 29 year olds believe things are generally headed in the right direction, 36 percent say things are off on the wrong track -- with a slight plurality (40%) unsure which direction the country is headed. Nearly two-in-five (36%) Democrats believe the U.S. is headed in the right direction, which contrasts sharply to Republicans (11%) and Independents (15%).

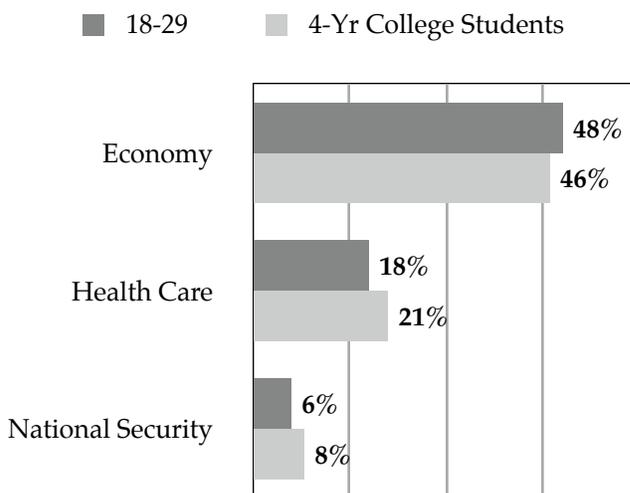
ALL IN ALL, DO YOU THINK THAT THINGS IN THE NATION ARE ...



In an open-ended question about what national issue concerns them most, nearly a majority (45%) of all young voters between 18 and 29 cited the economy -- with health care (17%) and the wars (6%) trailing far behind. Other domestic issues such as education (3%), energy and the environment (2%) dwarf in comparison to the priorities of improving the economy and resolving the health care debate.

The graph below highlights the slight differences in the way that four year college students view these issues compared to all 18 to 29 year olds.

THINKING ABOUT NATIONAL ISSUES FOR THE MOMENT, WHICH ISSUE CONCERNS YOU MOST? (OPEN-ENDED)



## Millennial Views on the Economy and the American Dream

Asked to rate their personal financial situation today, 45 percent report that things are very bad (12%) or fairly bad (34%) and a slight majority (52%) of Millennials report that things are very good (5%) or fairly good (47%).

Perhaps more than any other question in our survey, the answer to this question is predicated on education and race.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR PERSONAL FINANCIAL SITUATION THESE DAYS?  
-- BY SUBGROUP --

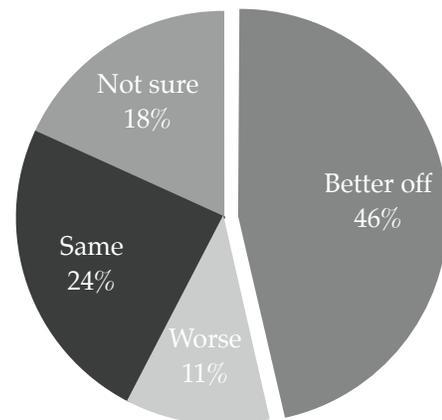
	VERY / FAIRLY BAD	VERY / FAIRLY GOOD
18-29 TOTAL	45%	52%
18-24	47%	49%
25-29	42%	56%
IN 2-YR. COLLEGE	51%	48%
IN 4-YR COLLEGE	39%	59%
IN GRAD. SCHOOL	28%	72%
GRADUATE	26%	71%
NO DEGREE	54%	43%
DEMOCRAT	44%	53%
REPUBLICAN	37%	62%
INDEPENDENT	59%	38%
WHITE	43%	54%
AFRICAN-AM.	38%	57%
HISPANIC	59%	39%

	VERY / FAIRLY BAD	VERY / FAIRLY GOOD
HISPANIC / ENGLISH INTERVIEW	50%	48%
HISPANIC / SPANISH INTERVIEW	67%	31%
MALE	48%	50%
FEMALE	43%	54%

Millennials tells us that the current view of their parents' financial situation is slightly stronger, with 40 percent saying that it is very (30%) or fairly bad (11%) and 57 percent indicating it is very (10%) or fairly good (47%).

Currently, reaching the "American Dream," is a serious concern for approximately half of the 18 to 29 year olds in America. When Millennials are their parents' age, less than half (46%) believe that they will be better off financially; 11 percent say they will be worse off, with the rest saying that their situation will be the same (24%), or they are not sure or refused to answer (18%).

IN GENERAL, WHEN I AM MY PARENT'S AGE, I BELIEVE THAT I WILL BE ...



With half or more of most subgroups believing that the “American Dream” may be out of reach -- among the financially most optimistic members of this generation are:

- African Americans (60% better off, compared to 43% of Whites and 41% of Hispanics);
- Hispanics who speak English (51% compared to those who prefer Spanish, 32%);

An insight into survey methodology and telephone coverage of the 18 to 29 year old demographic cohort, there is a significant difference on this question based on whether or not the respondent has a landline telephone. Those who do not have one (49% believe they will be better off) are significantly more likely to be optimistic about the future than those who do (39%).

**Deficit First**

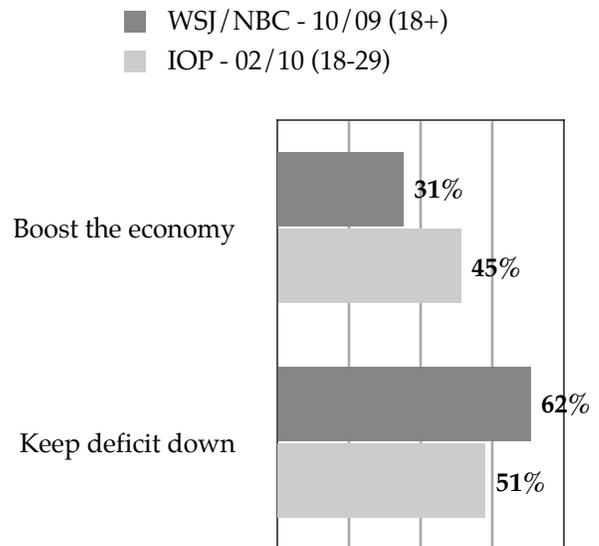
To compare the opinions of Millennials with America in general, our survey group asked a question that has been asked numerous times by the *Wall Street Journal* and NBC News. The comparison shows that Millennials are more supportive of government stimulus than America as a whole, but a majority support managing the deficit even if it means a slower recovery.

When offered the choice, a majority of Millennials (51%) believe that the “President and Congress should worry more about keeping the budget deficit down, even though it may mean it will take longer for the economy to recover;” forty-five percent (45%) responded that the “President and the Congress should worry more about boosting the economy even though it may

mean (larger budget) deficits now and in the future.”

- 43 percent of Democrats argue for keeping the budget and deficit down, 67 percent of Republicans feel the same way -- and Independents are split evenly 47 percent to 47 percent.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TWO STATEMENTS COMES CLOSER TO YOUR POINT OF VIEW? ...



## The Economic Anxiety of Millennials is Intense

After a series of focus groups with Millennials in Ohio and Tennessee in 2009, our survey group drafted a number of questions regarding Millennials' concern with various levels of financial commitment.

- 60 percent of Millennials are concerned about meeting their current bills and obligations;
- 59 percent are concerned about affording a place to live;
- 56 percent are concerned about affording health care;
- 46 percent of those in the workforce are concerned about losing their job;
- 46 percent are concerned about their ability to live in the city or town they want to.

The level of economic anxiety in America today is intense with this generation -- especially among African Americans and Hispanics -- who tend to view these economic questions from the same prism. For example, 68 percent of African Americans and 69 percent of Hispanics are concerned about meeting their bills and obligations (56% of Whites say the same) and 65 percent of African Americans and 68 percent of Hispanics are concerned about affording a place to live (54% of Whites).

## Nearly Half of College Students Question Their Ability to Stay in School

The ability to just stay in college is of serious concern for nearly half of all four-year undergraduates and nearly two-thirds of America's community college students.

- 45 students of four-year college students -- and 64 percent of community college students -- are concerned about staying in college.

When four-year college students were asked, how easy or difficult it would be for members of their class to find jobs after graduation, 14 percent indicated that it would be easy -- one percent said "very easy" -- and 84 percent indicated that it would be difficult. Two years ago in the Spring of 2008, when this question was asked by our different polling partner, 30 percent of college students said it would be easy to find a job; in 2006 it was 37 percent, and in 2004 it was 31 percent.

# Millennials Remain Committed to Community Service; the Honor of Political Engagement is Questioned

## The Image of Politics and Community Service

In 2000, during the first edition of this research effort, our students found that there was a disconnect among college students between community service and politics. Community service was tangible, relevant, honorable -- while politics was much less so. While our data indicated in the days after 9/11 that politics had become more relevant and more honorable, there are many indicators from our latest, more expansive survey of 18 to 29 year olds, that a significant gulf remains.

More than four in five (81%) college students believe that community service is an honorable thing to do, while 46 percent of college students believe the same to be true of running for elective office, or getting involved in politics more broadly (42%). Among the entire 18 to 29 year old cohort, the gap is more pronounced: 70 percent believe community service is honorable compared to 35 percent who believe running for political office is honorable and 31 percent who believe getting involved in politics is honorable.

The political malaise cuts across most every age group in the survey and most other demographic groups as well. With less than half of all key subgroups believing that political involvement is honorable, the groups with the most positive attitudes toward politics include:

- College students (42% agree that getting involved in politics is honorable) and grad school students (48%), compared to community college students (33%);

- African Americans (37%) compared to Hispanics (26%);
- and in terms of religion, Jews (52%) are more likely to consider politics honorable than Catholics (29%), Protestants (34%) or those who report no religious affiliation (31%).

Continuing a pattern that emerges throughout the survey, attitudes related to political engagement are viewed differently based on race. Barack Obama's presidency seems to have held the inspiration of the African American community longer than others -- as African Americans (24%) are significantly more likely than Whites (16%) to indicate that the idea of working in politics or government is appealing to them, and more likely than Hispanics (44% to 30%) to agree that running for office is an honorable thing to do.

Alternatively, compared to other races (42% African Americans and 39% Hispanics), Whites (62%) are significantly more likely to believe that elected officials are motivated by selfish reasons.

Following is a table that displays a series of questions related to this subject based on responses of the entire sample of 18 to 29 year olds, and also four year college students.

LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS  
(STRONGLY / SOMEWHAT AGREE)<sup>1</sup>

	18-29	IN 4-YR. COLLEGE
COMMUNITY SERVICE IS AN HONORABLE THING TO DO.	70%	81%
ELECTED OFFICIALS SEEM TO BE MOTIVATED BY SELFISH REASONS.	54%	58%
ELECTED OFFICIALS DON'T SEEM TO HAVE THE SAME PRIORITIES THAT I HAVE.	52%	56%
I FEEL LIKE I NEED MORE PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT POLITICS BEFORE I GET INVOLVED.	46%	56%
POLITICS HAS BECOME TOO PARTISAN.	46%	50%
RUNNING FOR OFFICE IS AN HONORABLE THING TO DO.	35%	46%
THE IDEA OF WORKING IN SOME FORM OF PUBLIC SERVICE IS APPEALING TO ME.	33%	41%
GETTING INVOLVED IN POLITICS IS AN HONORABLE THING TO DO.	31%	42%
THE IDEA OF A PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAM AFTER GRADUATION IS APPEALING TO ME.	NA	37%

### Community Service and Political Engagement

We found that 54 percent of college students engaged in some form of community service in the last 12 months, with 38 percent of this group volunteering at least a few times every month. Among all 18 to 29 year olds, the percentage of those engaged in community service in the last year is 35 percent.

When it comes to politics, college students are also more active than others in this generation. For example:

- 31 percent of 18 to 29 year olds have signed an online petition; 40 percent of college students did the same (55% of grad students);
- 18 percent of 18 to 29 year olds have written an email or letter advocating for a political position or opinion; 24 percent of college students (39% of grad students);
- 16 percent of 18 to 29 year olds have attended a political rally; 24 percent of college students (28% of grad students);
- 15 percent of 18 to 29 year olds have donated to a political campaign; 18 percent of college students (24% of grad students);
- 14 percent of 18 to 29 year olds have contributed to an online discussion or blog advocating for a political position or opinion; 18 percent of college students (25% of grad students);
- 9 percent of 18 to 29 year olds have volunteered on a political campaign for a candidate or an issue; 15 percent of college students (20% of grad students).

<sup>1</sup> Full question offered 5-point scale, with option for neutral response.

# Millennials' Emerging Ideology Shaped by Social Justice and Role of the U.S. Military

As Millennials begin to age and further develop their personal and political personas, we see four distinct ideological groups emerge from our statistical modeling<sup>2</sup> that is based on responses to twenty issues and values questions developed since 2004.

Two of the segments mirror the traditional view of American politics and ideology: progressives and conservatives. The other two groups are distinct in that one group holds qualities that fall within both the progressive and conservative camps -- and the other is recognized as being far less involved in political and policy activities and discussions.

## **New Progressives**

New Progressives, 17 percent of the total sample,

- Are very supportive of President Obama (90% voted for him in 2008, 81% job approval currently);
- Agree strongly that basic health insurance and other necessities like food and shelter should be provided for those who cannot afford them;
- Agree strongly that the U.S. should consider the opinions of other countries when making foreign policy decisions; and
- Are more likely than others to believe that the government should do more to curb climate change.

More than half (52%) of the members of our New Progressive group are Democrats, 43 percent are Independents and 4 percent are Republicans. Nearly two-thirds (65%) are White and they are more likely than others to be from the West Coast (30%).

Asked to send a message to President Obama, the New Progressives write:

*"Please fight for your support base. The progressive agenda is feeling alienated, and we've sacrificed a lot to appease the Republicans, but no matter what you do, they're going to fight against it."*

*"President Obama, Be strong. You were elected on a mandate by the people for change. You face an opposition party in the Republicans focused on letting you pass nothing, determined to not let you achieve anything. Rally the Democrats in Congress, pass health care reform. Let's not make the first year of your presidency come to naught."*

## **New Conservatives**

Thirteen percent of the 18 to 29 year old population, the New Conservatives, look much like the "children of Reagan's America." Sixty-four percent (64%) are Republicans, 28 percent are Independents and six percent say they are Democrats (6%). They -

- Are very concerned about the moral direction of our country; believe homosexual relationships are morally

---

<sup>2</sup> Analysis based on Latent Class GOLD Analysis; 90% of total sample classified.

wrong; believe religious values should play a more important role in government;

- Disagree strongly in the notion that government spending is an effective way to increase economic growth; are opposed to universal health care and government regulation of climate change; and
- Believe strongly in a military that should intervene in other nations in order to protect itself from hostile countries.

New Conservatives are 90 percent White, 57 percent male and most likely to live in the South (41%, compared to 23% Midwest, 20% West, 17% Northeast). Asked to write a message to President Obama, two Millennials from this group wrote:

*"We do not need bigger government. You talk about your belief in the American people yet you are trying to take away our power to choose for ourselves. Help us make decisions, don't make them for us."*

*"I would tell him that he needs to get out of his luxurious life, and spend some time down in a real business with real people to actually learn how everything works before making decisions from his office without even understanding the ramifications of his currently bad ideas."*

### **New Religious**

Representing one-in-five (20%) 18 to 29 year old's, the New Religious look a lot like the "old religious" that have played integral roles in American politics for more than 50 years.

For example, they believe in protecting the environment; they believe strongly in social justice, defined in our survey as providing health care and basic necessities to those in need.

They also believe in social conservative principles including that homosexual relationships are morally wrong -- but what makes this group the "New Religious" is that they also believe in a strong military. They strongly believe that:

- In today's world it is sometimes necessary to attack potentially hostile countries rather than waiting until we are attacked to respond;
- The U.S. should intervene militarily in other nations in order to protect itself from terrorism; and
- The U.S. should intervene militarily in other nations in order to spread democracy.

The New Religious trust the U.S. military and the United Nations. They supported Barack Obama in 2008 against John McCain, 68 percent to 25 percent, and approve of the President currently (65% approval). The New Religious have significant pockets that are African American (27%) and Hispanic (20%) and are disproportionately located in the South (45%).

Verbatim responses from the New Religious include:

*"President Obama keep your head up and always look to God and pray before you make a answer. I know your job is difficult but with God on your side nothing is impossible."*

*"Dear Commander in Chief, Good afternoon Sir, my name is [redacted], and I serve our country in the US Navy. My job in the Navy is as a Hospital Corpsman, a rate that shares a long and rich history of caring for the sick and injured. We do so at sea, on land, and in the air. We do so at times of war, and at times of peace. Sir, we have seen our fair share of bloodshed. The only thing I*

*would like to ask: is that you only send our warriors in harms way when it's absolutely necessary. Only at a time when war is the only option; and only then we go in, do the job as we have trained to do, then get out when we have vanquished our enemies. Sir, I'm not interested in building infrastructure for another nation. I don't want our sons and daughters to die or get injured protecting some corporations' assets overseas. Thank you for your public service, sir."*

**New Passives**

The fourth and final segment is the largest at 40 percent, but also the segment that is the least engaged. With the highest proportion of Hispanics who prefer to speak Spanish -- they are less likely to vote and volunteer than all other segments -- and rate nearly every question within this battery "neutral."

More than two-in-five (44%) members of this group consider themselves Independents, 35 percent are Democrat and 21 percent Republican. Thirty-four percent (34%) self-identify as liberal, 34 percent conservative and 32 percent moderate. Even when it comes to rating the direction of the country, 45 percent say they are "not sure."

This group is not likely to play an active role in the 2010 midterm elections.

A verbatim message to President Obama indicative of this group is:

*"Don't just be all talk; follow through with your promises. Our nation is clearly in need of a leader who will make changes that are beneficial to everyone."*

**Millennial Ideology**

The complete list of questions used to determine political ideology are below:

LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS (STRONGLY / SOMEWHAT AGREE)<sup>3</sup>

	18-29	IN 4-YR. COLLEGE
I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE MORAL DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY.	52%	57%
BASIC HEALTH INSURANCE IS A RIGHT FOR ALL PEOPLE, AND IF SOMEONE HAS NO MEANS OF PAYING FOR IT, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE IT.	47%	49%
BASIC NECESSITIES, SUCH AS FOOD AND SHELTER, ARE A RIGHT THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE TO THOSE UNABLE TO AFFORD THEM.	45%	50%

<sup>3</sup> Full question offered 5-point scale, with option for neutral response.

	18-29	IN 4-YR. COLLEGE
THE U.S. SHOULD CONSIDER THE OPINIONS OF OTHER COUNTRIES WHEN MAKING FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS.	45%	53%
GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROTECT AMERICAN JOBS, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF GLOBAL FREE TRADE.	44%	44%
CUTTING TAXES IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO INCREASE ECONOMIC GROWTH.	42%	40%
THE U.S. SHOULD INTERVENE MILITARILY IN OTHER NATIONS IN ORDER TO STOP GENOCIDE.	41%	52%
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SPEND MORE TO REDUCE POVERTY.	40%	39%
IF PARENTS HAD MORE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE WHERE THEY COULD SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL, THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THIS COUNTRY WOULD BE BETTER.	38%	39%
THE U.S. SHOULD INTERVENE MILITARILY IN OTHER NATIONS IN ORDER TO PROTECT ITSELF FROM TERRORISM.	36%	35%

	18-29	IN 4-YR. COLLEGE
THE U.S. SHOULD INTERVENE MILITARILY IN OTHER NATIONS IN ORDER TO PROTECT ITSELF FROM HOSTILE COUNTRIES.	31%	31%
HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE MORALLY WRONG.	30%	26%
GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO MORE TO CURB CLIMATE CHANGE, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH.	29%	37%
I AM WILLING TO GIVE UP SOME PERSONAL FREEDOM AND PRIVACY FOR THE SAKE OF NATIONAL SECURITY.	28%	27%
GOVERNMENT SPENDING IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO INCREASE ECONOMIC GROWTH.	25%	30%
RELIGIOUS VALUES SHOULD PLAY A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE IN GOVERNMENT.	25%	20%
OUR COUNTRY'S GOAL IN TRADE POLICY SHOULD BE TO ELIMINATE ALL BARRIERS TO TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT SO THAT WE HAVE A TRULY GLOBAL ECONOMY	24%	27%

	18-29	IN 4-YR. COLLEGE
IN TODAY'S WORLD, IT IS SOMETIMES NECESSARY TO ATTACK POTENTIALLY HOSTILE COUNTRIES, RATHER THAN WAITING UNTIL WE ARE ATTACKED TO RESPOND.	23%	26%
RECENT IMMIGRATION INTO THIS COUNTRY HAS DONE MORE GOOD THAN HARM.	23%	23%
QUALIFIED MINORITIES SHOULD BE GIVEN SPECIAL PREFERENCES IN HIRING AND EDUCATION.	15%	14%
THE U.S. SHOULD INTERVENE MILITARILY IN OTHER NATIONS IN ORDER TO SPREAD DEMOCRACY.	12%	13%

## Conclusion

At no time since our original survey in 2000 has the mood among America's youngest cohort of voters seemed so dour. A little more than one year after the inauguration of President Obama, there are millions of young people scattered across the country who are losing faith in government, politics and in too many cases -- the American Dream.

Solid majorities of Millennials tell us that they are seriously concerned about paying their current bills and obligations -- saving for the future is a luxury too few can afford. Nearly half of all college students are concerned about staying in college, given their current financial situation. Perhaps of greatest concern is that more than half of the members of this generation believe that they will be worse off than their parents.

Seemingly buoyed by Barack Obama's election, young African Americans are more optimistic than others about America, yet more than two-thirds of the Millennials of color are concerned today about real-life issues such as affording monthly bills and a place to live.

When we offered survey respondents the opportunity to draft a message to President Obama, this 26-year old community college student seemed to speak for millions of Millennials when she said:

*"Please help the Michigan economy, there are so many people suffering from job loss and pay cuts. People (including myself) are losing their homes and having trouble even making sure their children have food to eat everyday!!! The pay cuts and job losses really have took their toll here."*

After our poll in 2000 highlighted disaffection within this generation, the tragic events of 9/11 and Katrina brought America together. When Millennials were disappointed by the outcome of the 2004 election, they organized in 2006 and rallied in 2008 for Barack Obama.

Several times in the last decade, Millennials responded to America's call. The question at this moment is: Will our political leadership in Washington and around the country heed this new call -- a call from Millennials to make government work and follow through on the bright promise that a generation dedicated to public service has come to passionately believe in.

# The Survey Group

Bill Purcell

Director, Institute of Politics

Catherine McLaughlin

Executive Director, Institute of Politics

John Della Volpe

Director of Polling, Institute of Politics

Founder, SocialSphere, Inc.

Esten Perez

Director of Communications, Institute of Politics

Laura Simolaris

Director of National Programs,

Institute of Politics

Jonathan Chavez, '05

Student Chair '03-05

Director of Analytics, SocialSphere, Inc.

## Student Survey Chair

Eric Lu, '12

## Student Survey Committee

Pamela Ban '12

Kristen Eberts '13

Louis Evans '13

Samantha Fang, '10 (Student Co-Chair 2009)

Rebecca Goldstein '13

Jonathan Gould, '10 (Student Co-Chair 2008)

Kimberly Herrmann, '12

Kevin Huang '13

Min Hwang '13

Heidi Liu '11

Damon Meng '13

Dennis Mwaura '12

Gabriel Neustadt '13

Elizabeth Newton '11

Neil Patel '13

Bill Rose, '11 (Student Co-Chair 2009)

Nancy Xie '13

Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP) was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy. The IOP's mission is to unite and engage students, particularly undergraduates, with academics, politicians, activists, and policy-makers on a non-partisan basis and to stimulate and nurture their interest in public service and leadership. The Institute strives to promote greater understanding and cooperation between the academic world and the world of politics and public affairs. The Institute has been conducting national political polls of America's college students since 2000. More information, including past results, is available online at [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu)

# Appendix

## Methodology

The survey was conducted by Knowledge Networks. The goal of the survey was to conduct 3,000 interviews in English and Spanish. approximately 2,500 cases were to be collected on the KnowledgePanel® with the remaining 500 coming from Knowledge Networks' opt-in panel sample source. A short pretest of 29 cases was conducted to make sure that the data was collected accurately and the survey was within the predetermined timing limit. The cooperation rate for the Knowledge Networks sample was 67 percent; cooperation rate for the opt-in panel was 10 percent. Just over 10 percent of the KnowledgePanel® interviews completed the survey in Spanish (N = 273, 10.7%). All of the opt-in panel interviews were done in English.

The web-enabled KnowledgePanel® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, Knowledge Networks provides a laptop and ISP connection at no cost. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research. More technical information is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html> and by request to the IOP.

Key personnel from Knowledge Networks involved in this project include:

- Mike Dennis – Senior Vice President, Government & Academic Research.  
Phone number: (650) 289-2160  
[mdennis@knowledgenetworks.com](mailto:mdennis@knowledgenetworks.com)
- Wendy Mansfield – Vice President, Research Development.  
Phone number: (202) 686-0933  
[wmansfield@knowledgenetworks.com](mailto:wmansfield@knowledgenetworks.com)
- Charles DiSogra – Vice President, Chief Statistician.  
Phone number: (650) 289-2185  
[cdisogra@knowledgenetworks.com](mailto:cdisogra@knowledgenetworks.com)
- Sergei Rodkin – Associate Vice President.  
Phone number: (650) 289-2041  
[srodkin@knowledgenetworks.com](mailto:srodkin@knowledgenetworks.com)

## About Knowledge Networks

Knowledge Networks delivers quality and service to guide leaders in business, government, and academia – uniquely bringing scientifically valid research to the online space through its probability-based, online KnowledgePanel®. The company delivers unique study design, science, analysis, and panel maintenance, along with a commitment to close collaboration at every stage of the research process. Knowledge Networks leverages its expertise in brands, media, advertising, and public policy issues to provide insights that speak directly to clients' most important concerns. For more information about Knowledge Networks, visit [www.knowledgenetworks.com](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com).