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New Study Dispels Stereotypes About Young Voters Ahead of 2012 Elections

*Research Details Political Behaviors of Millennial Voters, Finds
More Diverse Engagement Despite Generalizations*

MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, Mass. – Today, Tufts University's Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement ([CIRCLE](#)), the nation's leading, nonpartisan research center studying the civic participation of young Americans, released an in-depth study analyzing the political behaviors and civic engagement of young voters ahead of the 2012 presidential election. The findings of the study, "Youth Civic Engagement in the United States, 2008-2010: Understanding a Diverse Generation," shatter stereotypes and dispel conventional myths about the ways in which young people ages 18-29 are involved in the United States political system.

The study from CIRCLE, which is part of Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, uses U.S. Census data on young voters from across the United States and compares youth engagement in the 2008 and 2010 election cycles. The findings show that, regardless of the over-simplified portrayal of young Americans in the news media, their political engagement is diverse. The full report and findings are available at : http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/CIRCLE_cluster_report2010.pdf. In addition to the report, you may also download an accompanying infographic of the study's findings, here: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=2977>

"Americans are obsessed with trends over time," said Peter Levine, director of CIRCLE. "We stare at graphs showing test scores and voter turnout rising or falling from year to year. But the gaps among people of the *same* age are much bigger than any of these changes."

"No one knows how many young adults will vote in 2012," Levine continued. "But we can be virtually certain that college students will vote at twice the rate of their peers who have no college experience, because that has been the case in every election for decades. This study should help move campaigns, reporters and citizens beyond stereotyped and over-simplified views of young Americans."

The study released today by CIRCLE shows that at least three quarters of youth were somehow engaged in their community or in politics in both 2008 and 2010. But they engaged in very different ways. The key finding of the study is that young Americans were divided into six distinct patterns of engagement in recent years. In 2010, the clusters were:

- The Broadly Engaged (21% of youth) fill many different leadership roles;
- The Political Specialists (18%) are focused on voting and other forms of political activism;
- The Donors (11%) give money but do little else;
- The Under-Mobilized (14%) were registered to vote in 2010 but did not actually vote or participate actively;
- The Talkers (13%) report discussing political issues and are avid communicators online, but do not take action otherwise; and
- The Civically Alienated (23%) hardly engage at all.

According to Levine, this analysis illustrates important opportunities to increase the civic engagement of young people in 2012. "Today's youth show a strong potential to participate," Levine said, "which represents an opportunity to recruit and mobilize them. In 2010, 14% were 'Under-Mobilized,' 13% were 'Talkers' (discussion only) and 11% were 'Donors.' These groups of voters show a willingness to participate in our democratic process, but in order to keep them engaged and involved, it is crucial they receive ongoing support and encouragement."

Today's in-depth study of the millennial generation's civic engagement is one of the first in a series of studies and reports that CIRCLE will publish over the next 13 months during the 2012 presidential election cycle. In addition to the publication of ongoing research documents, CIRCLE provides next-day turnout estimates for each of the presidential primaries and caucuses.

To sign-up to receive copies of CIRCLE's cutting-edge research on young Americans and next-day voter turnout estimates for the 2012 elections, please email amy@lunamedia.com.

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CIRCLE (www.civicyouth.org) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous gift from the Pew Charitable Trusts and is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. CIRCLE's reputation for reliable, independent, timely research has been hailed by experts in the field of civic partnership, such as Harvard University professor Robert Putnam who said CIRCLE had brought "the best and most serious research to one place."

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education's role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.

Tufts University (www.tufts.edu), located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.