

# **NEWSFLASH: YOUTH AND THE 2012 ELECTION**

*With 8 Days Until the Election, Polls Show Opportunities for Both Campaigns*

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **YOUTH IN THE HORSERACE: 52% Obama v. 35% Romney**

*In Three Months, Intention to Vote Rises 9.9 points*

Medford/Somerville, Mass.: - More than two-third of voters under 30 say they are very likely to vote, and more than half of those say they'll back President Barack Obama. Former Gov. Mitt Romney has 35 percent support in that age group, and nine percent are uncommitted, according to a recent survey of young voters.

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University's preeminent youth research organization, today released [groundbreaking poll results](#) on young people's views of Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney and key policy issues. The poll, commissioned by the Youth Education Fund, is unique in that it polled 1,695 youth (ages 18-29) in June/July and 1,109 of the same youth between October 12 and 23. Surveying the same people twice provides powerful evidence of change over time.

### **With just 8 days until the election, the youth poll shows the following:**

- The proportion saying they are extremely likely to vote has risen 9.9 points, from 44.7% to 54.6%. Two-thirds (67.3%) of young adults are "very" or "extremely" likely to vote, up 7.1 percentage points since June/July.
- The proportion who are paying attention to the election has also risen, from 56.1% to 71%.
- If the election were held today, Obama would win the youth vote by 52% to 35% among those registered voters who are "extremely likely to vote."

"The conventional wisdom holds that youth enthusiasm is down compared to 2008," said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. "But intent to vote is rising fast. President Obama has a majority of likely young voters behind him, but a significant proportion are open to voting for Governor Romney, who has a clear opportunity to improve over John McCain's record-low support in 2008."

If the election were held today, Obama would win the youth vote by 52% to 35%. Support for Obama rose more than 7 points among likely voters: up from 44.4% in July. Support for Romney is down slightly from 36.9% to 35.1% among likely, registered voters (within the margin of error). The proportion open to voting for either candidate is 8.8%. Based on an average of national polls, about 5 percent of likely voters of all ages are considered undecided now. The slightly higher youth undecided rate is mainly due to the influence of first-time voters (those 18 to 21).

Obama continues to lead Romney on all aspects of leadership, from sincerity and experience to the likelihood that he will help the economy.

In both surveys, we asked young people to pick their top issue. The percentage of youth who chose "Jobs and the economy" rose and it remained the number-one issue, at 37.9%.

Young adults have now seen more information about politics posted on social network sites than they did in the summer. Although a slightly higher percentage of young people reported being contacted by at least one of the campaigns (12.6% in the summer and 15.1% in Mid-October), over four fifths of young people (84.9%) had not been contacted or were unsure if they were contacted. "Young people vote when they are asked to vote," said Heather Smith, president of Rock the Vote, a nonpartisan organization that mobilizes young people. "But the parties and national candidates still fail to reach most young adults."

Alexandra Acker-Lyons, director of the Youth Engagement Fund, noted, "Young voters have been targeted in the last few weeks. But with young voters comprising one quarter of the electorate, the campaigns -- having spent one billion dollars each -- and the media remain focused on seniors and other sectors of the electorate. Politicians underestimate the youth vote at their own peril. Young voters have the power to decide this election."

72.6% believe that, as a group, young people have the power to change things in this country. They say that appeals from parents (46.9%) and friends (41.6%, asking in person) have the most influence on making them more likely to vote.

For more data and analysis on this youth poll, please visit: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=4579>

**Youth Polling Data to be released by CIRCLE:**

- **TOMORROW:** Poll data on youth knowledge of state voting laws.
- **WEDNESDAY:** Youth poll data analysis by race and ethnicity.
- **THURSDAY:** Youth poll data analysis by education experience.

GfK Knowledge Networks administers nationally representative surveys built on a standing panel of randomly sampled English- and Spanish-speaking households. Recruited households are given Internet access if needed. The second wave of the survey, presented here, was administered to 1,109 respondents--US citizens between the ages of 18 and 29, between October 21 and October 23, 2012. All those respondents had also been surveyed in a first wave fielded between June 22 and July 2, 2012, with a sample of 1,695. African Americans, Latinos, and individuals who have never attended college were oversampled, but this press release reports nationally representative statistics. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish. This release is part of CIRCLE's [#YouthTruth](#) campaign.

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*CIRCLE ([www.civicyouth.org](http://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 has 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 (<http://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.*