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Leading Youth Research Group Releases Analysis of Where Young Americans Stand on Immigration Policies

CIRCLE Analysis Drawn from National, Post-Election Survey of Youth (18-24); Young People Most Concerned about Immigration Favor Liberalization

MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, MA – Only a relatively small portion of young Americans rated immigration as their top issue in the 2012 election, yet those young people overwhelmingly favored creating paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, according to a new analysis by [the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement \(CIRCLE\)](#).

[The analysis by CIRCLE](#), released today, is drawn from data included in a post-election survey commissioned by the group consisting of 4,483 young Americans, ages 18-24. The telephone survey, conducted in Spanish and English, began the day after the 2012 election and included oversamples of African American and Latino youth. The topline from the survey were [released earlier this year](#).

All respondents in the post-election survey were asked to choose one issue they considered most important. Given a choice of six options (unemployment, the federal deficit, immigration, gay rights, health care, and abortion), 7.8% of the whole sample chose immigration. Out of the respondents who had chosen immigration, they were then asked to express their own opinion on the issue. Most young people who were especially concerned about immigration in 2012 were motivated to liberalize immigration laws. Three quarters (75.3%) favored “a law that would allow illegal immigrants brought to the US as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college” (often referred to as the DREAM act). Twenty percent opposed such a law, and the rest were unsure.

Among the immigrants of Latino background who were included in the analysis, 29.0% said that immigration reform was the most important issue--close behind unemployment (31.4%)--underscoring how important this topic is to Latino youth. Two thirds of respondents from recent immigrant backgrounds recognized that President Obama was more likely to allow immigrants to remain in the country, and a vast majority (81.6%) felt that President Obama was in touch with people like themselves. This suggests that immigrant youth generally felt that President Obama shared their collective vision, which was to create a path to citizenship. However, many seemed unaware that the President had endorsed the DREAM Act.

“Although immigration reform was not the top issue for most young Americans in 2012, the politics are clear,” said CIRCLE director Peter Levine. “Significant numbers of young people are primarily concerned about immigration, and they are almost all on the side of liberalization.”

Additional analysis and results from the survey can be viewed on CIRCLE’s website at: <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=5353>

Today’s analysis is derived from the post-election survey which was funded by the Spencer Foundation. Spencer, along with the S.D. Bechtel, Jr., Foundation, the W.T. Grant Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust, are supporting CIRCLE’s recently announced [Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge](#), which will consider the data released today as well as

other research on the 2012 election in developing its recommendations for how to enhance young people's informed voting.

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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 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.