



For Immediate Release

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**Younger Voters Were Racially Diverse, Voted Democratic, and  
Approved of President Obama  
Mostly a Subset of the 2008 Electorate, they Held Mixed Views of What to  
Do About the Economy  
New Exit Poll Analysis Released today by the Generational Alliance and  
CIRCLE**

Young voters in the 2010 midterm elections were racially and ethnically diverse, voted for Democrats, and approve of President Obama, according to new analysis of exit poll data released by CIRCLE and Generational Alliance (GA). The complete research findings, compiled from data of the National Exit Poll by Edison Research, can be found in a new CIRCLE fact sheet, "Young Voters in the 2010 Election," at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

An estimated 20.9 percent of all eligible young people ages 18-29 voted in the 2010 midterms. Younger voters chose Democratic House candidates over Republican House candidates by a margin of 57%-40%. By a 60%-40% margin, younger voters approved of Barack Obama's handling of his job as president. By a 55%-41% margin, they said that his policies will help the country in the long run. In contrast, a 54%-45% majority of all voters disapproved of the president and a 52%-44% majority of all voters said his policies will hurt the country.

"Since 2004, young voters have been one of the strongest Democratic constituencies," said CIRCLE director Peter Levine. "Democrats need to engage them better than they did in 2010, and Republicans need to make inroads in a generation that continues to prefer Democrats."

Most (84%) of young adults who voted in 2010 had also voted in 2008. The 2010 young electorate was mostly a subset of the 2008 electorate.

In U.S. elections, young adults who have never attended college (about half of the young population) are consistently much less likely to vote than their counterparts who have some college experience. In the 2010 midterms, it appears that the turnout rate of younger voters with college experience was at least twice as high.

All groups of younger voters saw the economy as the top issue facing America. But the young voters without college experience were substantially more likely to choose health care as the most important issue facing the country. Young voters without college experience believed that spending more to create jobs was an important priority, while they were more likely than their college counterparts to believe that Congress should let the Bush-era tax-cuts expire.

In 2008, the strong turnout was driven by youth of color. Again in 2010, younger voters were more racially and ethnically diverse than the electorate as a whole. Among younger voters, 66% were White, 14% Black, 15% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 2% "all others" (this last category includes Native Americans and those who choose to classify themselves in any of the other categories). In contrast, among voters 30 and older, 80% were white, 10% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 2% "all other." Seven percent of younger voters said they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual, compared to 4% of all voters.

Younger Blacks represented 14% of all younger voters, about the same as their proportion of the whole 18-29 population (14.4%). In 2008, they had represented 18% of younger voters and had the highest turnout rate of any racial/ethnic group of young Americans. This year, it appears that their turnout was about on par with younger voters as a whole.

Meanwhile, younger Hispanics represented 15% of younger voters, again close to the same as their proportion of the 18-29 population as a whole (14.2%). In past elections, the turnout of young Latinos had lagged behind other racial/ethnic groups, but the exit polls suggest that they may have narrowed or even erased the gap in 2010.

Youth of color and low-income youth are voting while dealing with institutional barriers such as disenfranchisement because of felony convictions at much higher rates. Other obstacles were evident at the polls, according to reports from members of the Generational Alliance this past November 3rd. According to Christina Hollenback, Director of the Generational Alliance, "In places like Florida, South Carolina and California around campuses with high numbers of Hispanic and African-American youth, young people were given misinformation in reference to their polling location and election day, had their legitimate forms of ID questioned

and rejected, and were subjected to protests from people outside the polling locations trying to deter them from voting.”

Young voters of all racial backgrounds felt that the economy was the most important issue facing the nation today. Despite their similar sense of the most important issue, younger white voters held views that were quite different from young voters as a whole. For example, 48% of young white voters said that the next Congress should focus on reducing the budget deficit, compared to 39% of the entire young voter population.

Young voters in the 2010 election varied greatly in their party and ideological identification. Among young Black and Hispanic voters, nearly three in ten self-identified as liberal democrats, compared to 20% of their white counterparts. White youth, on the other hand, were most likely to self-identify as Independents/Something Else (31%) or as Conservative Republicans (27%). White youth were more likely to support the Tea Party Movement (33%) than Black and Hispanic youth (15% and 16%, respectively), although White youth were less supportive than their White adult counterparts (47% of whom supported the movement).

“We are a force that is fighting for change not just for ourselves but for our communities- but this fight cannot continue to happen alone,” said League of Young Voters Education Fund Executive Director Rob biko Baker. Additionally, Kierra Johnson Executive Director of Choice USA expressed that, “Crucial investments need to be made in these communities. The voices of these communities need to be recognized by the progressive movement and decision-makers so our political power can be fully maximized on and it has to happen now- not next year, or in 2012, but now.”

### **About CIRCLE**

**[www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)**

*CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts and promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. A part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, CIRCLE has received funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations.*

### **About Generational Alliance**

**[www.generationalliance.org](http://www.generationalliance.org)**

*The Generational Alliance is a collaboration of 15 national youth organizations building collective power for underrepresented & low-income communities. We're working together to make sure our communities are voting and engaged on the issues that are impacting our everyday lives before and after the election.*

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