

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

*7 Days Until the Election, Polls Show Youth Still Need Basic Info. on Voting*

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## **Recent Polling Shows an Improvement in Knowledge of State Voting Laws, but over 40% still “Not Sure” about Specific Laws**

*20% Do Not Have Current State-Issued Driver’s License*

**Medford/Somerville, Mass** -- In a mid-October poll question released today, at least 40% of young people report not being sure of important state voting laws.

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), Tufts University’s preeminent youth research organization, today released results of a nationally-representative youth poll on knowledge of state voting laws. The survey, commissioned by the Youth Education Fund (YEF), 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.

“The comparisons between July and October’s polling shows that knowledge of state voting laws by voters 29 and under remains a serious problem heading into Election Day,” said Peter Levine, director of CIRCLE. “Our complicated and rapidly changing electoral system is hard to navigate, especially for first-time voters, and they need more guidance and information.”

**With just 7 days until the election, the [youth poll shows the following results and analysis for knowledge of state voting law:](#)**

- The proportion of youth who report not knowing their state’s voting laws is decreasing, but large numbers still lack critical information. Over 40% of young people polled reported not being sure or not knowing their states’ registration deadlines, 43.3% said the same about early voting laws in their states, and 41.7% said they were unsure of their states’ voter ID laws (down only slightly from 44.2% in June/July).
- Of those youth who thought they knew the voting laws in their states, respondents were most likely to know the early voting requirements (84.1% correct) and least likely to know whether the registration deadline was 30 days or

more before the election (22.5% correct). A little over half (53.5%) were able to correctly identify the photo ID requirements for voting in their state.

- 80.7% had a current state-issued driver's license and 39.9% had a current U.S. Passport. These were the two most common forms of photo ID.
- Non-college youth (40% of all eligible young voters) were 5 times more likely than youth with college experience not to have any photo ID, and were less likely to be correct about their states' voting laws.

For one third of the youth eligible to vote in 2012, this is their first opportunity to vote in a Presidential election. Yet, changes in state voting and registration laws create additional steps, even though research has shown that turnout is higher when the system is accessible and easy to understand. Young people who are 18-24 were less likely to know their states' current voter ID laws (49.6% correct if a response was chosen) when compared to those ages 25-29 (59.8%).

Additionally, we found that African American youth were more likely to assume that there are strict rules in their states than youth of other backgrounds. Partly because of the differences in the assumptions about the laws, African American youth were more likely to be incorrect (61.2%) about ID laws. Hispanic American youth were also likely to be incorrect about the photo ID law (59.3%) and white youth were least likely to be incorrect (39.8%). However, African American youth were more likely to correctly identify early voting laws and early registration rules than white and Hispanic Americans youth.

Yesterday CIRCLE released [poll results on candidate support and issue preferences](#).

Further data and comparative analysis to be released by CIRCLE throughout the week, includes:

- **WEDNESDAY:** Full youth poll data analysis by race and ethnicity.
- **THURSDAY:** Full 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.*